By Andrew Looney

How many times has this happened to you? You go over to a friend's house to play ***Magic.*** You're all set to try out the new deck you finished building at 2 a.m. the night before. But he's not ready. He still has to finish building his deck. So you sit around for an hour watching TV while he paws through his boxes of cards. And when you finally do play, you discover that your deck is hopelessly outmatched by his deck of Drudge Skeletons and Bad Moons. So you have to go off and retool your deck while he sits around watching TV. Now the evening's half shot and you've barely played a game. So, where's the fun?

Because of these difficulties, I developed an alternate way of playing ***Magic.*** Now, when my wife and I play, we just use one big deck, rather than each having a deck of our own. I deal us each the usual 7 cards, then the deck goes in the middle and we each consider it our library. We share the discard pile too. And if we run out of cards in the draw pile, we just shuffle and keep going.

To some, this might seem absurd, perhaps even blasphemous. "What do you mean, not have your own deck?" For most people, that's what the game is all about: building a deck, then using it. The game has two parts: First, there's the pregame, in which you build your own deck, then there's the actual game, in which you use that deck against someone else's.

I will readily admit that deck construction is one of ***Magic's*** most important design features. Some people spend more time designing and redesigning their deck than they spend actually playing with it. But even so, I think the whole deck building aspect of ***Magic*** is the main thing that's keeping ***Magic*** confined to the world of gamers.

Lately, I've been seeing these commercials for ***Magic*** on TV, and I've looked over the latest expansion, ***Portal,*** which has been designed to be easier to learn and targeted more for the mass market than ***Magic*** has previously ever been. So although ***Magic*** is currently a game played only by gamers, Wizards of the Coast seems determined to change that, to get ***Magic*** played in every home in America.

But I think this is going to be difficult. Although they've made some significant changes to ***Magic*** with the release of ***Portal,*** with learning decks that come in a specific order and a few slight improvements to the card design, I believe that more radical changes to the game must be made in order for it to penetrate the elusive Mass Market. My feeling is that the very things that have made ***Magic*** an incredible success in the gamer's market will work against them in the their attempts to expand their audience.

Because although gamers love the whole deck construction phase, most non-gamers won't. First, not everyone enjoys, or even grasps, the issues of deck building. Most people who wish to sit down and play a game want to start playing with as little delay as possible. They don't want to worry over the design of the deck, they just want to start playing. This is an issue that WotC has attempted to address in ***Portal,*** with those cards that explain how to build specific decks, but the problem still remains, since ***Portal*** is just meant to get players started. The logic seems to be that learning the game, and getting your mind around the concept of building a deck, is the problem, but that once players climb this learning curve, they'll be buying more cards and building new decks just like hardened ***Magic*** players.

But the barriers to non-gamers run deeper than this. For even if both players use preconstructed decks, there is still the problem of the Unlevel Playing Field.

As long as two players have different decks, the loser can end up feeling that they lost because their deck wasn't as good as the opponent's. Of course, when you build the deck yourself, you realize you lost the game during the pregame, and go back to retool the deck. But if your deck was built by someone else, even someone who really knows how to build a deck, the loser can wind up with a nagging feeling that they were screwed from the outset. And that just doesn't make for fun gaming.

This is why I recommend using a central deck, especially when playing with non-gamers. All those worrisome problems go away -- everyone has the same odds of winning, and no one has to worry about building a deck before we start. And indeed, that's the only way I play ***Magic*** nowadays.

A final note about deck building before this article comes to an abrupt halt. When playing with a central deck, I recommend a five-color deck filled with a broad range of cards. This way, there is little chance of me and my opponent ending up with the same types of cards, which would make the game less interesting. My deck has over 150 cards with no duplication at all (not even in the land). It's got lots of really fun, cool cards, but at the same time, doesn't have any of those irritating cards that tend to cause arguments. Five-color decks provide the coolest range of options, and while their tendency to be slow starters can be bad in a two-deck game, it's no problem when both players are drawing from the same deck.

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The Secret Crossover

by Steven Michael Graham

You walk into wherever your group plays, and say, "Guys, I was thinking of running a ***GURPS Supers*** campaign. What kind of characters do you want?"

"I want my character to have lots of psionics, especially cyberpsi, and maybe some astral projection."

"I'll be a wizard, specialized in just a few related colleges."

"Can I be a Garou? Please?"

"How about bringing in my alien character from that last campaign?"

Sure, you could just, "NO!" and hit them all repeatedly with your copy of the ***Basic Set*** (I hope it's not the hardcover.) until they all agree to make nice, simple characters with just ***GURPS Supers,*** but an unconditional "no" is never as fun as a conditional "yes." Besides, diversity is essential to the superheroic genre. If you have all the rules for their widely divergent choices, complete with more detail and an individual "feel," and they can be mixed together, then why not use them? One of the strengths of ***GURPS*** is its ability to accommodate elements from different worlds and genres. However, you also chose ***GURPS*** because you wanted it to be realistic. How do you realistically explain such a hodgepodge of different creatures and abilities? ***GURPS Wild Cards*** offers one explanation. But there's another worldbook that offers a more devious rationale: ***GURPS Mage: the Ascension***

Mage postulates that the laws of reality are set by the consensus of the beliefs of all sentient beings in a region. Because of reality's true malleability, those with enough spiritual strength and conviction in a belief system can force local reality to conform to their personal reality model, and thus accomplish feats people of a different paradigm would consider "paranormal." Of these miracle-workers, those enlightened enough to understand this are said to be Awakened, and the near-infinitely versatile acts of Local Reality Adjustment they perform are called "dynamic magick." However, there are also those who, lacking true understanding of reality's nature, can only perform those wonders that their own beliefs consider possible, and can only bring about those effects by means of whatever their reality model considers an appropriate cause. Such phenomena are known as "static magic," and those who cause them are called "hedge magicians," at least in a normal World of Darkness campaign. In this one, they may also be called "mutants," "aliens," "psions," "cyborgs" or dozens of other things.

The system the players use to simulate a given paranormal effect is merely a reflection of the unique paradigm their characters imprint upon local reality to perform static magic. The wizard's Shape Earth spell, the psi's Telekinesis, the werewolf's Persuasion gift, and the immortal's Regeneration may all follow different rules, at both the game and story levels, but they are all static magic because the axiom that says, for example, that focused thought can set in motion a hyperspatial waveform that imparts kinetic energy of a desired amount and direction to an remote object, is not part of consensus reality. (Indeed, the personal paradigms of different telekinetics may not match completely, explaining the nuances of power usage that are represented in the ***GURPS*** rules by things like Enhancements and Limitations.)

So it's all static magic of different flavors. This ties everything together into one huge weird secret that it will take the party months to figure out. It sets the stage for some interesting crossovers with creatures from the World of Darkness. It also presents the potential for the PCs and everything around them to evolve into something totally different from what they had originally seemed to be, breathing new life into the campaign once it grows stale.

Adjustments

Superficially, this alternate requires little modification from any standard ***GURPS Supers*** setting, or any mixture of them. However, a few areas need to be rethought in light of the underlying magickal elements. For example, alien PCs

"know" that space is an airless void. They've traveled through it to here. They "know" that their home is a sphere of rock circling the third Pleiades from the left. But unless they possess a terribly straightforward form of hyperflight, they probably took a shortcut through "hyperspace," a strange separate layer of the universe wherein space/time is distorted -- you know, like the Umbra. Their "home planet" is an Umbral Realm. Their limited ability to enforce the reality of their home may give them an edge over normal Earthlings. As for the "airless vacuum of space," if the aliens in question can survive in vacuum, their paradigm is free of void engineering. Tell the player his people never noticed that space was a vacuum. Characters who have never been exposed to space may just assume it's airless. (The question is why would other races assume that? Do they have their own equivalents to the Void Engineers?)

The super-advantages Time-Jumper and World-Jumper present difficulty because they provide an astounding degree of mobility that could prematurely puncture the secret nature of the campaign. Besides, travel into the actual past is one of the very few things no magi can do. Conversely, travel to an Echo of Earth's history shouldn't be a problem. Echoes (see ***GURPS Time Travel***) would be part of the High Umbra. (Perhaps they are the collective memory of the past.) The World-Jumper advantage presumes that other worlds are directly adjacent to the Jumper's home dimension. In the World of Darkness, differing realities are all separated by the Umbra. However, just as gates provide a "tunnel" through the Umbra from one realm to another without exposing travelers to the environment in between, World-Jumpers can traverse through the Umbra without seeing it or realizing what they are doing. Nevertheless, it should not be easy. Have them take limitations like Unreliable, Fickle, and Nuisance Effect. Even with such limits, someone with such ability would be sought out for "study" -- possibly including dissection. -- by Nephandi, Void Engineers, and other unscrupulous magi.

Speaking of which, some thought must be given to the placement of Awakened mages and other "monsters" native to the World of Darkness. Be careful not to overstock them. Not only would a glut of such beings give away the surprise, it would also become ludicrous. (Of course, if ludicrous was what you were going for, then by all means . . .) They are, after all, supposed to be rare, and the PCs should have plenty of other problems to concern themselves with. An occasional vampire, werewolf, "siren" or "zombie" is normal for the supers genre. An entire society of them is a different story. Considering the Masquerade and the Veil, it should take unawakened protagonists a long time to uncover such a subculture. The Daughter of Cacophony isn't going to casually mention that she drinks blood, much less her weaknesses and alliances, and anyone attempting to read her mind should find it quite disconcerting, thanks to the unearthly music they'll find there. (If you're using Fright Checks in your campaign, now would be a good time for one.) Note that a capacity for static magic doesn't make one Immune to the Delirium. That must be purchased separately, and the players haven't been given any reason to.

The least conspicuous way to insert magi and the like into the campaign is to turn preexisting appropriate NPCs into monsters retroactively. For example, any exceptionally powerful or particularly versatile super could be Awakened. Villains such as Chemico or Doctor Radiation, with their scientific backgrounds, wide-ranging powers, and tendency to use pawns, make excellent Technomancers. Their actions show the masses how dangerous all this paranormality is, and allow them the opportunity to study and sometimes capture reality deviants. Even their fabricated "origins" serve to support the Technocratic line concerning the workings of superhuman powers.

Building the Mystery

The true nature of reality is, not surprisingly, quite difficult to figure out, so if you want your players to do so, you should plant a few clues early on. PCs with connections to government projects or cutting-edge scientific organizations may have received a number to call should they uncover certain "unnatural" phenomena. Regardless of whether their number is called, Men In Particular Colors may show up at the end of a scenario, intending to confiscate all the evidence "in the interests of national security." Certain types of characters, such as extra-dimensionals (In this case, that includes extra-terrestrials), gadgeteers, those who have been magically altered, and those who practice static magical paradigms like the ones in ***GURPS Magic*** and ***GURPS Voodoo,*** may have encountered the Technocracy or Nephandi before the campaign even starts, although they probably don't know them by those names. Perhaps an enigma in the area is the result of Awakened activity. (*Example:* Local Virtual Adepts use the Tapping the Line rote to reach the Net from the middle of the park, leaving those with Electrokinesis or Magnetic Sense to wonder why certain patches of grass and dirt are now electrically conductive.)

PCs will also discover that, regardless of how they know their paranormalities function, the scientific community and general public believe that all such abilities are the result of some single mechanism: genetic mutation, psionics, bioenergetics or something else. This is part of the Technocracy's massive offensive to hem in and limit magic. This is a setback for them compared to a normal World of Darkness campaign. Unfortunately, a weaker paradigm dictatorship is a gain for the Nephandi and Marauders. In a variation where the Technocracy was more in control, the public would be completely unaware of the existence of supers. The players would be sure to wonder who or what is hushing up all the weirdness.

Awakenings

At some point, you may decide it's time for your PCs to Awaken. You shouldn't feel required to allow this, but likewise you should not hesitate if you feel it's the right time and direction. It doesn't matter whether the party has uncovered any of the World of Darkness elements in the campaign, although having Awakened allies helps the process along. Any climactic event could be the catalyst.

Since true magi cannot work static magic, you should replace all the newly Awakened characters' static abilities, including any super-equipment or technology beyond the current tech level, with equivalent dynamic traits. External devices become fetishes, talismans, or magickal foci. (Remember that any ultra-tech is actually technomagical in this setting.) Inherent or implanted abilities blossom into instinctive knowledge of the appropriate Spheres, at levels sufficient to re-create all or most of their previous effects. The GM should handle any such arbitrary selection of "equivalent" magickal abilities. Those seeking more rigid guidelines could base each Sphere skill on the average skill for controlling related effects, and require that the new mage receive a Sphere level only if she was previously capable of at least one effect from each previous Sphere level. (These only apply to the translation from static to dynamic. The fledglings may improve through experience normally.) Alternately, the Game-Master could "melt down" the points in each character's paranormal abilities and use the points to purchase each PC's new traits, or even allow the players to, subject to GM veto.

by Alison Brooks and Phil Masters

The world is so full of a number of things -- that some interesting entries were, regrettably, squeezed out of ***GURPS Places of Mystery*** in the editing stage. This article is another in an occasional series dealing with some of these exclusions, and appropriately enough, it concerns the oldest of all -- the famous and mysterious "Cave Paintings" of Europe.

The Paintings

Cave paintings are among the earliest truly human remains, and the most important. The one thing that most clearly separates modern humans from extinct near relatives, such as the Neanderthals and *Homo erectus*, is art, which apparently developed as part of religious or magical ceremonies. (However, there are recent, highly debatable theories that suggest that very early art may actually have emerged as a sort of courtship ritual. "Come up and see my etchings" may be an older chat-up line than previously thought.)

The Era of Origin

Art was a creation of the Paleolithic period. Some crucial inventions -- sewing needles, harpoons, and fishing nets, as well as the beginnings of art and personal adornment, music, and magic -- all date from this era. Not that it was an easy time; the average life expectancy was about 30 years, and many individuals died in childhood. Clan elders -- the few who survived to old age -- were probably important in transmitting ideas and history to the young. This was the beginning of human culture, as we understand the concept today -- and art was doubtless a part of it.

Despite the heroic hunting scenes of the cave paintings, most of people's food was probably gathered by the women, as it is in modern-day hunter-gatherer societies. People lived in small, shifting bands of 20-30 adults, which were part of a larger clan of over a hundred, which would keep in touch with occasional gatherings, possibly at the "painted" caves. Relations with other clans were probably more tense, although warfare and its mass slaughter did not arise until the development of farming.

The "Upper Paleolithic" is divided into several parts. In the period 30-28,000 B.C., ivory beads, small carved figures of humans and animals, were created -- the first kinds of art. During the period 28-20,000 B.C., the first cave hand-prints were made, and clay figurines from this era, especially of females, have been found in eastern Europe. Large, impressive reliefs, often at living sites, were developed in 20-16,000 B.C., but most cave art (about 80%) is from 16-

8,000 B.C., when the deep cave paintings were made. Both Altamira and Lascaux are from this time. At the end of the Paleolithic, the cave art tradition died out, and people began to make geometric patterns instead. Perspective and the sense of movement were not rediscovered in Europe until the Renaissance.

The Discoveries

The first modern cave painting discoveries occurred in the 19th century. Archaeologists quickly dismissed them as fakes, because they were *too good*. According to their theories, art from such an ancient time must be crude, not graceful and stylized to give the impression of movement, let alone using the natural bumps and hollows of the rock surface to produce a relief picture. But in the early 20th century, cave pictures were discovered covered with limestone which had taken millennia to deposit. This turned the tide of opinion.

The most famous cave paintings are at Lascaux, discovered in 1940 by four boys searching for a lost dog. A great many sites -- over 100 -- are now known, including some which are underwater in the Mediterranean, thanks to rising sea-levels since the Ice Ages. One set of underwater caves got a great deal of publicity in 1992 with the discovery of pictures of "penguins," birds from the distant Antarctic. Actually, the pictures were of the extinct great auk.

Cave art is found mainly in western Europe, particularly France and Spain, although finds from the Urals show that it may have been more widespread. One problem is preservation; the Lascaux caves have had to be shut because of the damage caused by the warmth and humidity of visitors' breath. Even though art was made in inaccessible parts of caves, away from living areas, several thousand years' worth of decay makes preservation a matter of luck as well as remoteness. (Actually, just to complicate matters, art from the living areas is also known, but not much, and it differs from the art of the inaccessible areas.)

The earliest paintings may be simple stencil outlines of hands, made by blowing paint through a reed onto the wall. The earliest graffiti, perhaps, or part of a ritual, perhaps to symbolize unity with a deity? The art of the hunt, portraits of mammoths, bison, horses and wild cattle, comes later. One feature of the art is twisted perspective; the animals are portrayed in profile, but their horns are shown in front (or three-quarters) view.

Horses, bison and oxen make up about 60% of the images, but were not so very important in the diet of the people. Carnivores are rare. Along with the animal art are dots, chevrons, curves, zigzags and other geometric shapes. Were these symbolic hunting paraphernalia? Symbols of male and female principles? Or shamanic visions? A rare kind of image is the human-animal hybrid, which is usually interpreted as magicians in ritual dress. However, such images might have come from shamanic visions.

Similar types of art are found in other parts of the world, some even older than the cave art of Europe, although less well preserved. There were living traditions of painting hunting scenes among the San people of the Kalahari when Europeans arrived, as well as among the Australian aborigines. Aboriginal religious sites, together with the Tassili Frescoes of Africa, are covered in ***GURPS Places of Mystery.***

Lascaux

First comes the hall of the bulls, a long cavern dominated by four gigantic white bulls outlined in black; they are accompanied by a riot of other beasts, large and small, stampeding along the walls towards the deep recesses of the caverns. There are two exits from the hall of the bulls: one leads to the Axial Gallery, a narrow passageway which is richly decorated, although the visitor has to perform contortions to see some of the creatures in the narrow space.

The other exit leads to a winding cavern 80 yards long, and difficult to pass in places. It, too, is decorated. About halfway along is a 20-foot-deep hole, large enough for a single person to climb down the metal ladder (in the

Paleolithic, they used ropes). On the walls of the hole is a dramatic scene of a black bison poised to charge. The bison is hurt: its entrails are spilling out. In front of it is a fallen stick-figure man. A record of a hunting accident? At the end of the cavern, extremely difficult to reach, is the Chamber of Felines, where lions are portrayed, a rarity in cave art.

Altamira

The Altamira cave art, which has been described as "the Sistine Chapel of the Paleolithic," was discovered by the landowner, Don Marcellion de Sautuola, or rather by his small daughter. The Don was a keen amateur archaeologist, and had been prowling the caves beneath his land on and off for ten years, but he had found only a few axes and other remains. One day, in 1879, he took his daughter with him. She was able to stand up in caves which he had been forced to crawl through, and she looked at the ceiling.

"Look, Papa, bulls!"

She had found the first cave art -- magnificent bison. When de Sautuola revealed the paintings to the archaeological world, he was shocked and hurt to be met with thinly veiled accusations of fraud; he closed the caves, and died in 1888, some years before his (or his daughter's) great discovery was vindicated.

Vallon-Pont-d'Arc

Just as ***GURPS Places of Mystery*** was being completed in 1995, the French Ministry of Culture announced a new cave art discovery in the Ardche gorges near Vallon-Pont-d'Arc. In this cave complex, a series of large galleries (each about four or five yards long and wide) connect several huge halls (up to 30 yards on a side); the galleries are decorated with paintings and engravings representing animals, either isolated or organized in scenes containing over 50 at a time. More than 200 black or red ochre paintings or engravings have been discovered so far.

A particularly large and unusual variety of animals is depicted: horses, rhinoceros, lions, bison, wild ox, bears, a panther, mammoths, ibex, an owl -- at least 13 different species, more than any other cave, along with symbols, panels filled with dots, and both positive and stenciled hands.

The area with red paintings includes several panels filled with dots, sometimes with complex and original signs added. On one wall alone there is a huge rhinoceros with a disproportionately large horn, plus three more rhinos, a mammoth, two lions, four "positive" hands and two or three stenciled ones, a semicircle of red dots, a large bovine, and a sign made up of two linked semicircles. There are around 30 red representations of animals overall, and two small yellow horses' heads, in addition to the dots and other signs. The main animal is the bear, followed by the mammoth, the horse, the rhinoceros, and the lion; there is only one example each of the stag, the ibex, and the wild ox.

About a hundred black figures have so far been counted; the majority are rhinoceroses, followed by lions, then horses, bears, reindeer, bison, and oxen. There are also mammoths, megaloceroses (giant deer), an ibex, and two unidentifiable creatures. The engravings include five mammoths, three ibexes, two rhinoceroses, two horses, one wild ox, and one owl. (The official French government information on the discovery, including images, can be found at http://www.culture.fr/culture/gvpda-en.htm. The oldest form of graphical data transmission meets the newest . . .)

Pictures and Power

And, just to show that such things can be relevant in non-supernatural modern-day games . . .

The new government of Portugal has just stopped all work on a planned 144MW hydroelectric dam at Foz Coa, on the Douro River. The main reason that this project has been attacked appears to be that the new lake would have flooded the site of a recent archaeological discovery -- what may be the oldest and most important Paleolithic rock-carvings in the world.

Not surprisingly, this is a controversial decision; the dam might have supplied up to 20% of Portugal's electrical needs,

and brought substantial employment to a depressed region. Nor is the significance of the carvings certain; some experts believe that they may not be as old as was first thought. (One hoaxer -- a Portuguese expatriate living in Canada -- briefly had people believing that they were a modern fake.) However, the government is looking hard at an alternative site that some engineers believe is markedly better, so the carvings will probably survive. On the other hand, this change of plan is set to cost between $140 million and $320 million, so it is not a trivial decision. In fact, every party involved seems to be suing someone for compensation, or reimbursement of research costs.

In a game, characters might become involved in a similar, fictional, situation, and have to determine the authenticity of an archaeological find while dealing with various factions. It would not be too implausible to depict some NPCs as becoming underhanded or even violent over such amounts of money -- from devious politicians to construction companies (which might be highly corrupt in the game setting) to unemployed "locals." In games with weird or supernatural elements, the decision to preserve such finds could be influenced by stranger forces, especially if they are potentially or actually a source of mystical power -- or even if some NPCs merely *think* they are.

Cave Art in Games

Cave Art and Magic

The rituals preserved in cave art were probably intended at least partly to ensure success in hunting and abundance of game. The fact that hunting rituals were apparently performed in inconvenient nooks at the back of the cave, as far from the hunting grounds as possible, is fascinating. The tribes may have seen the inner places of the caves as the womb of an earth mother; or they may have wanted privacy for their rituals; or the shamans may have found that these dark, secret places enhanced the worshipers' sense of awe and hence respect; or the reasons may be entirely different.

GURPS Places of Mystery includes brief notes on using "Cave Art Magic" in games. The following extends this idea, repeating some of the book's text for convenience.

Shamanic Spells and Trances

Games using shamanic magic (see ***GURPS Ice Age*** or ***GURPS Religion***) could incorporate magical cave art; a sacred, painted cave might give bonuses (from +1 to +5 or even more) to dice rolls to enter a Trance state (see p.118 of ***GURPS Religion,*** or p.32 of ***GURPS Ice Age***) or to spell-casting -- but probably only when dealing with spirits associated with the painted images.

Optionally, spirits may be drawn to the cave, usefully for a spell-caster -- except that they are subsequently similarly hard to drive out of it. Many spells would still be at a bonus, because they benefit from the presence or aid of a spirit (GM's option as to which spells are enhanced, and how much), but *Banish* and *Exorcism* would be at a *penalty*!

Cave Art in GURPS Voodoo

Spirit-based magic is also covered by the rules in ***GURPS Voodoo***; in games using that system, the painted caves may permit characters to invoke and contact some very *ancient* spirits. They would have been associated, originally, with the Stone Age tribe and the hunt. Summoning such a spirit in the Paleolithic probably felt like a scary but necessary exercise; in a modern-day game, such a ritual would be even more chancy. Assuming that spirits do not grow old and fade away -- which would leave the caves with academic interest only -- the paintings may be associated with some extremely ancient powers, with unpredictable attitudes to *any* modern human. Perhaps such spirits have changed with the times, and now form elements within the categories recognized by the Lodges and Bizongues -- or perhaps they

lurk unchanged in the shadows of the spirit-world, grown twisted and far from any human understanding. Re-establishing "working relationships" with such beings might be a tough mission for a group of PCs.

Incidentally, as the caves have not been in *continuous* use for many thousands of years, they cannot be considered as truly "established" ritual sites, and they will not therefore give large bonuses to ritual skill rolls. However, their original significance, the skill of the painting, and the fact that they preserve something of that ancient spirit world, could still make them good locations for ritual activity, giving +1 or possibly +2 to skills. Some idea of the sort of spirits that may once have been invoked in these caves may be given by the nature and character of the Loa known as Ochosi (***GURPS Voodoo,*** p.92); simply replace references to Jungle environments with "Sub-Arctic Plains." Alternatively, a tribe might have a "guardian spirit" similar to a Genius (p.97), or worship an unpredictable nature-spirit resembling Pan (p.96). GMs wishing to introduce a corrupted, perverted hunter-spirit who might somehow be associated with such places could model it on the Mayombe Mbua (p.94).

Assuming that archaeologists are correct in thinking that the rituals held in the caves were primarily concerned with hunting, then the paintings would serve as "symbolic representations" of the subject of some spells -- the animals. As good-quality images, they would provide +1 or +2 to the relevant ritual skills. They, and the accompanying abstract designs, would also serve as "very detailed" symbols of the spirits invoked, worth from +1 to +3 on many ritual rolls. The following is an example of the sort of ritual that may have been conducted in the caves:

Hunter's Blessing Defaults to Path of Luck-3

This ceremony assists a group of people, who are present when it is performed, in hunting members of one species of animal, which is selected at the time the ritual is cast. The *individual* animal cannot be specified; the hunters must take their opportunities as they arise, in the usual way. However, the animal *is* considered to be the "target" of the ritual; for example, Multiple Target penalties apply if the hunters are to be assisted in bringing down more than one animal. (This is rarely considered necessary for the tribe, and most casters will limit the ceremony to a single prey-animal.) Of course, animals are unlikely to have much in the way of magical protections.

If the ritual is successfully performed, then any hunters present throughout the ceremony gain a bonus for the duration of its effect, on all skill rolls *directly* related to the pursuit of the specific animal species; this is a base +2, with a further +1 for every 2 full points that the ritual roll was made by. This usually adds to Tracking and Weapon Skills, and often Stealth and Camouflage when the hunters are setting up an ambush; the relevance of other skill rolls to the hunt is left to the GM's judgment. The hunters do *not* have to be Initiates, or to know anything about the ritual, but they do have to be present, conscious, and moderately attentive throughout the procedure.

Example: Chants-Like-Hyena, shaman of the Broken Branch Tribe, has been requested to ensure the hunters' success in bringing down a bison this day. Fortunately, he has use of the caves in what will one day be called Lascaux. Chants-Like-Hyena has Path of Luck at 13, which would give him a default Hunter's Blessing of 10, but he has bought it up to 11. He assembles the hunters and his ritual drums, pointing-sticks, and so on in the Hall of the Bulls, and invokes the tribal totems. (As a second-level Initiate, he is aware when they arrive.) He then begins the ritual, taking about an hour over it; there's no hurry, but nor is their the option to take days -- so there's no penalty or bonus for time. The caves have already been in use for two or three generations, so they give a +1 for "Consecrated Ground." The superb symbolic representation of the bulls gives +2, but these images are only linked to the spirits of the hunt in an indirect way, giving a further +1 (rather than the +3 that some symbol-laden cave paintings provide some shamans). The tribe has not learned to offer material sacrifices to the spirits -- the whole point of this ceremony is that they are hungry -- but their prayers and thanks are enough to avoid any actual penalty. They only want to kill one beast, so there is no Multiple Targets penalty either.

With a modified skill of 15, Chants-Like-Hyena's player rolls a 10, giving all the hunters present +4 in the hunt. This bonus first applies to the tracker's attempts to identify bison trails; then one of the hunters, with a base Camouflage

skill of 12, gets ahead of the herd. His player rolls 14 as he attempts to hide in cover; he's painfully obvious to his friends, and a passing ibex, but thanks to the +4 bonus, the bison seemingly look right through him. The hunting party then attacks with +4 to their Spear and Spear Throwing skills (except for one poor fool, who dozed off during the ceremony), carefully ensuring that they are all going for the same animal -- because they know that, once one bison falls, all the benefits of the ritual will end.

Normally, this ritual is not resisted. However, at the GMs option, animals may sometimes be protected by either "nature spirits" or malicious entities who wish the tribe ill. In that case, roll the "interfering" spirit's Will; if this is successful, reduce the shaman's effective skill by the amount by which it was made.

Creating Magical Cave Art

The creation of a "magical cave" would be a major exercise in enchantment magic or rituals. It would require Artist skill at 18 or better, several shamanic spells or high levels of skill in Ritual Magic (and preferably Sanctuary), and months of work. GMs should usually treat such a project as a major campaign theme in itself, but the following rules may be taken as guidelines. The caves must be carefully prepared and purified, with a successful casting of the *Bless* spell or use of Ritual Magic skill. Subsequently, for the several days, weeks, or months that the painting will demand, the caves must be carefully watched and guarded against evil influences or mischievous intruding spirits. Some determined spiritual assaults will probably occur during this time, and should be played out in full as "fights" between the shaman characters and the spirits.

Each image or panel will require a successful Artist skill roll; time taken to create images will vary, but should never be less than a day, even for the smallest and simplest, and will often be much more. On a failed roll, the work must be carefully repaired and improved; on a critical failure, that wall will have to be scrubbed down and restarted from scratch. The artists will require the finest pigments, which may demand travel to areas with particular soils, clays, charcoal, or whatever. For each type of animal to be depicted, or each individual spirit to be invoked or influenced, the GM should require skill rolls from the artists (to master the effective depiction of the species) and the shamans (to identify the important symbolic elements). If the artists and the shamans are different people, the GM may also require IQ or Teaching rolls to ensure that the two groups are communicating effectively.

Lastly, the general population must be persuaded actually to use the caves and attend rituals there. This should not be too difficult if they respect shamanic authority enough, but some Oratory rolls may certainly help. After a big "blessing" ceremony and a few other impressive events, the cave can be considered a Sacred Place or "ritual center," with all the practical benefits that this implies for magic-workers.

A Time Travel Scenario Seed: Vision Quest

As a major marker in the history of human development, cave paintings can play a part in a Time Travel campaign. See ***GURPS Timeline*** for notes on one fairly straightforward mission; a PC party might be dispatched simply to observe the creation of the images, and to establish exactly what purpose they served. This would be challenging enough; surviving in the Paleolithic, with no high-tech devices that might startle or frighten the "locals" (and thus disrupt this crucial cultural development), would require considerable skill, and gaining the trust of a suspicious and insular clan enough to determine their motivations, let alone to obtain access to the depths of their sacred caves, would be extraordinarily difficult.

In a "Time War" campaign such as the Stopwatch/Timepiece setting detailed in ***GURPS Time Travel,*** this development would doubtless be of interest to both sides -- although its precise significance, and the ramifications of any intervention, would probably be far too difficult to assess reliably. The most likely occurrence would probably be that two teams of observers would find themselves in the same area at the same date, and would circle round each other, each on the alert for an intervention by the other, both nervous of the danger of doing anything too obviously anachronistic in front of the local tribespeople.

Alternatively, PCs could become involved in a more subtle and complex intervention. For example, they might be required to help a Dark Ages artist discover cave paintings which incorporate certain artistic techniques. The artist can

be relied on (with *fairly* high probability) not to reveal his discovery to the world -- but it seems that it will inspire him to produce a series of magnificent church paintings, which will, later, inspire a particular local movement -- in either art or the Church, as the GM wishes -- that will benefit Timepiece in subtle but ultimately very substantial ways. (Yes, it's extremely indirect -- but that just makes it harder for Stopwatch to change, once the mission is complete.)

The artist turns out to be a hermit who will regard the time travelers as either angels, or tempter demons sent by Satan. Which, will depend on how the PCs behave. A Dark Age hermit would expect an angel to behave with modesty, gentleness, humility, and thoughtfulness. Devils may be suave, but they reveal themselves through arrogance, impatience, greed, and by appealing to the base lusts of humanity. The PCs may also be required to visit the original painting work, to ensure that the right techniques are used.

Rise of the Knights Templar

An In Nomine Resource

By Emily Dresner

The First Crusade

"The Holy Roman Empire was neither Holy nor Roman, nor an Empire. Discuss."
-- Mike Myers

As Laurence ascended to the position that Uriel once held, he found himself inheriting a Western Europe of the Viking and Icelandic sagas, a land split by strife and bloodshed caused by marauding bands of barbarians and warlords. European Christendom had been long neglected by the Archangel of Purity in his crusade to destroy the creatures of myth, and the people suffered under the hand of the Dark Ages.

Laurence, through his soldiers and angels, tried to influence the local warlords to change their ways and bring the Word of Christ to the populace. In the early days, it was through chivalry, a valiant attempt by the young Archangel to instill a Christian ideal of the warrior into the unruly nobility. He imagined creating a glorious shining knighthood from the barbarian warlords, a brotherhood that was to become an almost religious calling, entwined with vigils, weapon blessings, and vows of chastity that were Laurence's hallmarks.

"A knight must be merciful without wickedness, affable without treachery, compassionate towards the suffering, and open handed. He must be ready to help the needy and to confound robbers and murderers, a just judge without favor or hate. He must prefer death to dishonor. He must protect the Holy Church for she cannot defend herself."
-- Chrtien de Troyes, *Lancelot (Vulgate Cycle)*

Eventually the notion of chivalry became popular among the young nobility. The old sagas were replaced by the romances of King Arthur, the berserker was replaced by Don Quixote, and the Catholic Church slowly civilized the hordes of the Roman Empire. Unfortunately, this was slow, and Laurence desired a more expedient method of civilizing Europe to compete with Gabriel's flourishing Moslem lands to the East. The only way to accomplish that, Laurence surmised was with a good, solid, galvanizing crusade to bring all the people under one banner and one quest. It certainly worked for his people. The concept of reclaiming the Holy Land from Gabriel's rogue untamed religion also appealed to Dominic on a base level, and with that he threw in some quiet, discreet political support in Heaven for this decision.

Laurence's original vision, through his Soldier, Pope Urban II, was one of a beautiful spiritual pilgrimage to the Holy City to unify the Christian peoples of Western Europe under the banner of Rome. He hoped to bring together the peoples who had been long neglected, left behind in the ravages of Uriel's Crusade, and unite them with Gabriel's enlightened Islamic society to demonstrate the true soul of Christianity.

Pope Gregory VII, strongly pulling together the Church, had set the papacy on a course to become the leader and judge of Western Christendom in a new enlightened era of optimism. In 1095, Pope Urban II, changing a precept handed down from Laurence's angels to suit his own vision of himself as the Pope-Emperor, called upon the faithful to recover Jerusalem in a pilgrimage to strengthen the faith and bind them into one unifying force under the banner of Rome. Inspired by a new vision of Christ's humanity, prevalent among the enlightened and educated of the day, the faithful set forth to free the Holy City from the infidel.

The noblemen knights, their ranks sown with bloodthirsty feudalistic warlords who wished nothing more then to bring home the spoils of war, saw the crusade as a method in which to win new lands, manors, and treasure beyond their wildest imaginations. They marched off to the Holy City, singing the ancient hymn, *Vexilla regis prodeunt:*

"Behold the royal ensigns fly,
The Cross's shining mystery;
Where Life itself gave up its breath
And Christ by dying conquered death"

The march was marked with massacres. Infused with the belief of being the "Chosen of God" by the Pope, the crusaders believed they could murder recklessly and their souls would be safe in Heaven. As they moved toward the Holy City, through Turkey, they fell on Moslem cities, viciously killing the residents, uncaring if their targets were women and children. They impaled those who resisted their attempts to take the cities, and beheaded their foes. There were even reports of cannibalism, where, prompted by demonic cruelty, the crusaders boiled women in pots and burned children on stakes over open flame. Demons giggled in glee.

In 1099, the crusaders besieged Jerusalem. In the name of God, and to Laurence's horror, the barbarians of Europe fell upon the Moslems, and put 70,000 men, women and children to the sword. In places, men waded in blood up to their ankles. Weeping, the devout conquerors went barefoot to pray at the Holy Sepulcher before rushing back to battle. Tethers to Death and Nightmares formed and dissipated as the demons goaded the crusaders onto higher and higher acts of depravity.

Neither Moslems nor their patron Archangel, Gabriel, accepted this travesty nor the loss of Jerusalem to such invaders. The Turkish Saracens, in retaliation, attacked the travelers and pilgrims who wished to visit the now Christianized Holy City. The fight for the liberation of Palestine had begun, and the traditional peace between the Moslem and Christian communities would never be the same.

Laurence despaired at his first major failure as an Archangel. The Malakite had underestimated the humans of medieval Europe. It was a hard lesson in both Celestial and human politics for the young Archangel. He needed a new tool to fight the horror of his own making. Defeated, he turned to his other ally, Archangel Michael, for help. From their talks was born the concept of the first warrior-monks.

Beginning of the Templars

"Certain noblemen of knightly rank, devoted to God, professed a wish to live in chastity, obedience and without property in perpetuity, binding themselves in the hands of the lord patriarch to the service of Christ in the manner of secular canons. Among these, the first and most important were the venerable men, Hughes de Payens and Godefroi de Saint-Omer . . ."
-- William, Archbishop of Tyre

In Heaven, Michael was helping Laurence to recover from the crushing embarrassment of the First Crusade. Laurence, Michael knew, needed something other than inspired humans slaughtering other humans in a quest to purify the Holy Land in the name of Christ. He needed a symbol of shining knighthood to which the true Christian nobleman could aspire, a purity the young Malakite Archangel embodied passed down to the mortals. Instead of influencing a Pope to call down a bloody Crusade to unite Europe all at once, an act which had resulted in disastrous results to Heaven, Michael encouraged Laurence to think in manageable sizes, small groups, and work up towards great Wars through inspiring Christian ideals. Michael even acquiesced to giving Laurence a little human help in his aims.

In 1118, nine religious knights in Palestine were brought together under the strong leadership of a remarkable, charismatic man, a Soldier of Michael named Hughes de Payans. They called themselves the Order of the Poor Knights of the Temple of Solomon, named for the location of their housing. They were dedicated to the selfless protection of travelers on the road between Jaffa and Jerusalem from the deadly Saracens. The Order slowly formed into a volunteer police force in the East, dedicated to the protection of the helpless pilgrim on its quest.

The knights took solemn oaths of chastity, obedience, and honor, transforming themselves from the murderous barbarians into a new brand of hero, holding high Archangel Laurence's own brand of ethics. They emerged from the horrors and devastation of the First Crusade as a band of shining knights who would inspire the population back home in Western Europe. The Templars were formed.

Simultaneous with the rise of the Knights Templar was the copycat order, the Knights of St. John, better known as the Order of the Hospitallers. This order was influenced by a Mercurian of Michael to be healers of the sick and wounded after the battle. They grew in parallel with the Templars, emerging from the same devastation, but their ultimate aim was at a tangent, to heal instead of do battle. In the East, they flourished, and soon spread across Europe as well.

St. Bernard of Clairvaux

"Indeed, the knights of Christ fight the battles of their lord in safety, by no means fearing to have sinned in slaying the foe, nor fearing the peril of their own deaths, seeing that either dealing out death or dying, when for Christ's sake, contains nothing criminal but rather merits glorious reward. On this account, then: for Christ! hence Christ is attained. He who, forsooth! freely takes the death of his foe as an act of vengeance, the more willingly finds consolation in his status as a soldier of Christ. The soldier of Christ kills safely; he dies the more safely. He serves his own interests in dying, and Christ's interests in killing!"
-- St. Bernard

When the Order was founded, it was a "poor order," whose primary function was the protection of pilgrims. A transformation took place when the new Order was given a shove in the right direction by St. Bernard of Clairvaux, a powerful Saint of Dominic and nephew of one of the founding members of the Order. Dominic had no interest in seeing the young Archangel Laurence falter in his purpose once again, considering he backed him the first time, and Bernard was ordered to throw his weight behind the newly formed Knights.

The command from Heaven was carried out easily, as St. Bernard took a strong liking to Hughes and his purpose. In Hughes, Bernard recognized a means in which to channel the feudal nobility's destructive energy. Bernard saw that Hughes would convert them from the warlike barbarians, easily swayed by a well-placed demonic suggestion, to the shining knighthood of the legends the Archangel Laurence envisioned. He recognized a method in which the nobility could truly fight the battle of the Lord and nurse their destinies to become soldiers of God, while still holding fast to their warlike tendencies. The military Christianity that Laurence embodied was finally finding an outlet in which to express itself.

The Knights Templar

In 1139, backed by St. Bernard, Pope Innocent II granted the Order the privilege to build their own churches, and made them beholden to only the Pope himself. They became the holy knights of the Pope, the true Defenders of the Faith in the most literal sense. Given the ability to expand, the Order grew at an amazing rate. As heroes of the First Crusade, and defenders of the innocent, they captured the public's imagination and drew many young men to their service.

As warriors in the Service to the Sword, the Grand Masters formed the Order from a small group of Knights into a vast following of warrior-monks, held in check by the chains of vows, often mirroring Laurence's Malakim in Heaven. The Knights lived under vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience, similar to and influenced by the rules of the Cistercian monks of St. Bernard. They were forbidden to touch women, even their sisters and mothers. They were instantly obedient to any of the commands of their superiors, and they built their own codes of laws and systems of punishments, all the way up to and including the death penalty, should the crime be suitable. They lived a life of a mendicant, participating in daily religious services that emphasized the books of Joshua and Judas Maccabees, intertwined with military duty, and they often carried out their duties in

complete silence.

Above all, the Knights were marked for their bravery, as the Templars were forbidden to flee from battle unless they were outnumbered three to one, a softer refracted mirror image of Michael's angels in Heaven. This edict made them fierce fighters, loyal unto the death to their Order, and they believed the greatest honor that could be bestowed upon them was to die on the battlefield. Many of them did die in just that manner, out in the East, fighting the Turkish Saracens who raided Christian towns and fortresses they defended. The Knights were willing to die on the field rather then retreat to safety, and the tales of their prowess spread through Europe.

The initiation rites of the Order were held in secret. Once a young applicant was found to be of sound mind, free of disease, unmarried, unattached, and of proper birth, they were free to join the Order itself. They committed themselves to being "Servant and Slave" to God and the Virgin Mary, and finished their vows with Psalm 133. While the secrecy made the vows all the more holy to those who chose to take them, it would later serve to undo the order as a whole.

The Growth of the Order

Once the Knights reported to no one but the Pope, the growth of the Order was nothing short of explosive. Donations flooded into Templar coffers, and not just the usual donations of a few pennies or trinkets. The Templars were bequeathed huge tithes of land, jewels, and treasure brought back from the East, with the belief that giving to the Templars, as Soldiers of God, would reserve a place in Heaven for those who donated. Laurence watched his Order grow. He saw that his knights were beginning to have the imagined effect upon the human populace where his Crusade failed.

The Templars strove to meet Laurence's ideals, and became more than just the defenders of pilgrims and those that held the Holy Land. They were held up as those who defended Christendom as a whole, and the young flocked to serve. The numbers swelled, and by the Second Crusade in 1180, the Knights held a chain of fortresses and castles that lead from Spain all the way to the Holy Land in the East.

The First Bankers

The Knights were in a unique position of holding land and gold all across Western Europe. They took vows of poverty, so the knights had little interest in spending the money they accumulated. As they were trusted to transport pilgrims

from one end of the empire to the other, they became trusted also to transport the pilgrim's cash. Since the money system of the time was still based on gold, a traveler, interested in going to the Holy Land, could place their money into the hands of the Templars on one side of Europe in return for the first bank notes. In the East, their bank notes would be exchanged for hard cash. From this, the first banks were formed, and Marc, the Archangel of Trade, felt his Word grow among the population of Europe.

In time, they became widely trusted with large amounts of capital. The Templars became the bankers of the papacy itself. They were entrusted with the taxation of the held lands in the East, since no one would dare refuse payment to the Knights, and doing so would be to refuse God himself.

The Order grew and there evolved a split in the duties and the needs of the Order. Safe in Western Europe, the Templars became less militant and more interested in being farmers, financiers, bankers, and glorified travel agents. In the East, on the front lines with the Saracens, they were known as battle-hardened veterans who held the lands for the Pope and for God. They served different Archangels, in different ways, and were no longer under the pure jurisdiction of Laurence.

The Templars began to reach the height of their power. They were spread from France, through Spain and Italy, across Central Europe, all the way to Palestine. They held vast tracts of land, dozens of fortresses, enormous coffers of money and stores of holy relics. They influenced nobility and the church alike. The Templars inspired poems of King Arthur and Camelot, and tales of great quests. They had made their mark on history, and entrenched themselves as the protector of the Christian faith. With so much prestige, it couldn't last forever. It was only a matter of time before they fell.

Bernard of Clairvaux, Saint of Judgment

Corporeal Forces -- 1 Strength -- 2 Agility -- 2
Ethereal Forces -- 3 Intelligence -- 7 Precision -- 5
Celestial Forces -- 3 Will -- 6 Perception -- 6
Status: 4
Charisma: +2
Skills: Knowledge/4 (Religion), Emote/4, Savoir-Faire/4
Songs: Healing (Corporeal)/4
Attunements: Incarnate Law

At the time of the First Crusade, Bernard, the charismatic abbot of the Cistercian Abbey of Clairvaux in Burgundy, was amongst the most powerful men in Europe. He had enormous political leverage on the Pope and the King of France. His eloquence had convinced scores of young men to leave their homes and to follow him into the Cistercian order, which sought to reform old form of the Benedictine religious life.

Bernard was destined to preach the Second Crusade in 1146, a pronouncement that was so enthusiastically accepted he was nearly torn to pieces by his audience. Recruits flocked to the armies in such numbers that Bernard wrote to the Pope, mentioning that the countryside seemed deserted.

Bernard was a man of great intelligence, who gave the external piety of Western Europe a new dimension. He heartily mistrusted intellectualism and rationalism in religion, and encouraged faith.

Hughes de Payans, Soldier of War

Corporeal Forces -- 2 Strength -- 5 Agility -- 3
Ethereal Forces -- 2 Intelligence -- 4 Precision -- 4
Celestial Forces -- 2 Will -- 3 Perception -- 5
Status: 3
Charisma: +2
Skills: Fighting/3, Emote/2, Dodge/3, Large Weapon/3, Tactics/3

Hughes de Payans was originally from Champagne, and on traveling to the Holy Land during the Crusades, was a cadet in the service to the Count of Troyes.

Hughes was a remarkable man, a master of organizational skills, and charismatic enough to drive the Templars to success. He was instrumental in the founding of the Knights as first a volunteer police force, and then later, an order of warrior-monks. At one time, soon after the First Crusade, the Templars were on the verge of extinction, but through Hughes's contact with Bernard, and later the endorsement of nobility and the Papacy, allowed it to prosper and thrive. He returned to Europe when the order needed assistance, and convinced St. Bernard of Clairvaux to support him.

Hughes became the first in a line of many Grand Masters of the Knights Templar.

Adventure Seed: Guarding the Pilgrims

The year is 1184, and the Crusaders have fought long and hard to liberate the Holy City, Jerusalem, and now it is held by the Franks. After hearing tales of miracles, pilgrims from all over Europe are traveling to the East to worship and find enlightenment. The problem is, they are being attacked by marauding groups of raiders along the coast.

A group of angels has been ordered to provide escort to group of travelers headed toward the Holy City. They will meet them as they disembark the boat at Jaffa. One of the members is an old Catholic Priest, and his wish is to see the Foundation Rock under the Dome of the Rock. But why is this man so important? This ornery, stubborn, frustrating old man has a great destiny to be deeply moved by this spiritual experience, return to Europe and establish a chain of monasteries which will evolve over time into institutes of great learning.

[*Editor's Note:* This is the first of a two-part series. Look for the rest next week. What happens? Remember the axiom, "What goes up . . ."?]

by Steve Hatherley

Managing your power structure is essential in the course of world domination. A well thought out, balanced structure provides good defensive bonuses and group support with opportunity for expansion. A poor power structure with groups clashing and no coherent strategy means one of three things. Either,
a) the player has no real grasp of the game -- and if he cannot master his power structure he is hardly suited to dominate the world, or
b) a Reorganization is in the pipeline and he will bring order out of chaos, or
c) you're not cleared for that. Fnord.

As the game progresses and your power structure grows, arranging your groups perfectly is not always possible. This article, based on cryptic notes stolen from the Bermuda Triangle, exposes some tricks in reorganizing your groups and reveals the sort of sneakiness that separates those who are fit to rule the world from those who are not.

Is Structure Essential?

Your groups dictate how your power structure should be organized. Many groups give bonuses to masters and puppets, and their location is an important weapon in an Illuminati's arsenal.

Control Arrows: The simplest reason for keeping a careful watch on your structure is to keep your control arrows open. Poor structure leads to blocked control arrows and limited opportunities to expand. A powerful group, such as the Multinational Oil Companies, is nearly useless if other groups block its control arrows. You should keep at least one arrow free -- if only to prevent your enemies from guessing which group will be attacking them next.

A good strategy is to keep groups with many control arrows close to your Illuminati. This usually provides the best defensive bonuses, which is important if that group has several puppets -- and they also have puppets. The loss of that single group could be disastrous.

Defensive Bonuses: Closeness to your Illuminati and matching alignments both provide defensive bonuses. Illuminati bonuses only count when the group is controlled directly either by the Illuminati or by one of its puppets. Alignment bonuses (where a puppet shares alignments with its master) occur anywhere in your structure.

While proximity to the Illuminati may seem like the safest position to be, sometimes this is not so. If a puppet has two matching alignments with its master it gets +8 to defense -- and if your Illuminati directly controls its master, it gets another +5. Net total is +13, better than its master's +10 closeness bonus.

(A word of warning about matching alignment bonuses -- they don't apply in an Attack to Destroy, which is worth bearing in mind when the Servants of Cthulhu are on the prowl.)

Saturday Morning Cartoons, Ross Perot, Secret FisTemple and Daycare Centers all give themselves, their master or puppets matching alignments, all helping defensively.

OverMan Philo Drummond makes his Weird puppets SubGenius. As this is not an alignment (SubGenius is an attribute instead) it does not count for defensive bonuses. However, Drummond's puppets are now eligible for the Drs. for Bob free move defense . . .

Several groups give other defensive bonuses. Prince Charles and his puppets are immune to Privileged attacks, a Media group controlling the Intellectuals cannot be captured, and any puppet of Wall Street, TV Preachers or SubGenius FisTemples has an additional Resistance bonus. Illuminati University, Connie Dobbs and Teddy Kennedy all give defensive bonuses to their puppets and masters.

Other Groups

As well as the defensive groups mentioned above, several other groups require careful positioning in your power structure. **Action Tokens:** Three groups (China, Brazil and Hawaii) give their Corporate masters additional action tokens each turn. Loading up one group to let it amass action tokens is tempting, but risky. First, that group screams "Target" at the top of its voice (and if that goes, you lose four groups in one attack). Second, that group cannot control any more groups -- all its control arrows are blocked. On the other hand, if the actions power a special ability, the fact that they block the control arrows is of no concern. The Nuclear Power Companies is a typical beneficiary, but other groups are worth considering, such as the Fnord Motor Company, Las Vegas, Drug Companies and the Liquor Companies. (The list grows longer if you Privatize other non-Corporate groups.)

Local Clenches also gives its master an action token -- but only if it is SubGenius. Of course, with OverMan Philo Drummond in play, that's not necessarily a problem.

Disasters: The token-giving groups are prime targets for Disasters, and you might consider having those Places control Al Amarja, the Red Cross or the Survivalists, all of whom give bonuses to their masters against Disasters. Alternatively, stock up on Near Misses and A Brief Attack of Conscience.

Controlling Personalities: The Clone Arrangers have the ability to clone (take control of) any just-killed Personality. Similarly, to use your Vampires, they need an open control arrow for grabbing Personalities. Therefore you need to make sure that they have control arrows ready for use. Otherwise you may as well control the Boy Sprouts.

Power: Local Police Departments, Lyndon LaRouche, Dittoheads, Church of Middle America, South American Nazis, and the Libertarians all have abilities that increase Power, either their own or their puppets/masters.

Plot Cards: The Pentagon and Orbit One both grant additional Plot cards while they control groups of a specific alignment or attribute. Again these groups are both Places, so some Disaster protection might be a good idea.

Attacks: Manuel Noriega can "borrow" his alignments for the purposes of making or aiding an attack. This becomes particularly useful with Truck Bomb which needs a Violent group to use it. If you want to use Truck Bomb with a non-Violent group, then simply move Manuel Noriega and borrow his alignment for the attack.

Structure in Offense

The above points cover group management. However, two sneakier tricks rely on a flexible power structure and are employed by the truly illuminated.

The Direct Attack (known in Illuminated circles as "The Big Slurp"): This method of offense revolves around a single group with a large bonus for direct attacks. Madison Avenue has a +10 for direct control of any Media group. If you also control Big Media, this gives a total of +14 to control any Media group. If you can arrange for Madison Avenue to get an additional Action token each turn (Center for Weird Studies, say), you can almost guarantee controlling two groups a turn. Once the Direct Attack strategy starts rolling, its biggest problem is keeping Madison Avenue's control arrows open -- which is why this is a favorite tactic for the Bermuda Triangle . . . Attack, then clear the control arrows at the end of your turn, ready for the next.

One weakness of the Media-based Direct Attack is that only Madison Avenue has the +10 bonus. Lose that and your strategy falls apart. Luckily, the following combinations are less vulnerable.

Computer: Several cards give "any attempt" bonuses to control Computer groups -- Finland, Hackers, Library of Alexandria, Phone Phreaks, Science Fiction Fans, Silicon Valley, Video Games and Wargamers. Japan and Finland also have +6 "direct control" bonuses. Combined with the Science Fiction Fan's +6 for its master's attack, and you have an ideal combination for the Network or anyone opposing them.

Government: Bill Clinton and the Congressional Wives have huge bonuses for direct control of Government groups. Combine them with the United Nations and NATO (who both have "any attempt" bonuses for control of Nations) and you have a steamrollering Empires deck. Disaster protection in this deck is essential!

Green: Canada and Al Gore lead a Green Direct Attack, supported by the Green Party, Bigfoot and Anti-Nuclear Activists. The Assassins expansion makes this deck stronger with cards such as Oil Spill, Global Warming and Earth First! But beware of World Hunger -- it kills Green decks.

Other cards: The Computer, Government and Green Direct Attack decks all rely on Government groups for their "direct control" bonuses. Two cards are especially useful for this strategy: NASA gives its action token to other Government groups and Black Helicopters makes their attacks Privileged.

Direct Attack strategies are also available for Space groups (L-4 Society and NASA) and Magic groups (Adepts of Hermes, Library of Alexandria and Der grosse Magier -- a German Personality with +10 to control Magic groups).

Defending the Direct Attack is not easy. Whatever you do, make sure you don't become the target of those big guns. The best strategy is to try to destroy the offending group (if Cthulhu is in play, offer to help him destroy it). Where alignment is involved, the Orbital Mind Control Lasers can be essential in negating that massive bonus. Zaps, Attribute Freezes and Paralyze cards may also work, but predicting which particular Direct Attack monster you will be facing is difficult.

The Discovered Attack: A Discovered Attack works when the pieces for your strategy are in full view in your power structure and simply need assembling. The key to adopting this strategy are groups that change alignments or increase Power. That and the ability to reorganize your power structure completely. (This strategy works best if you are playing to twelve groups -- any less and a rival might win before you are ready.)

The South American Nazis give +3 power to Weird Science groups they control. This ability is useful for the Discordian Society (or anyone with the Hail Eris! goal) as Weird groups of Power 3 or more count double. The only existing Weird Science groups are the L4 Society, Evil Geniuses for a Better Tomorrow, Illuminati University and General Disorder. None of these have a power greater than 2 and so are not worth double to Discordia -- unless the South American Nazis control them.

A Discovered Attack strategy would therefore consist of waiting until you have three groups left to go, and you are already controlling two Weird Science groups. Make an automatic takeover of the South American Nazis, reorganize so that their groups count double and you've gone from seeming relatively innocuous to a winner! (And if you use Hail Eris! who's going to suspect anything?)

As the South American Nazis only have two outgoing control arrows, you might want to use Let's Get Organized and

pull a win from even further back.

Local Police Departments: A similar trick can be pulled with this group, although as they do not specify a particular alignment or attribute they can also be used with Corporate Groups (such as the Liquor Companies) for the Gnomes of Zurich or the E.F.F. for the Network.

Libertarians and Lyndon LaRouche: These groups inherit their masters' power (given certain restrictions) and can work as a Discovered Attack for Bavaria (or the Power For Its Own Sake goal), especially if you can convince your rivals that you are using the Libertarians for their other special ability.

Ross Perot: Ross makes his puppets Straight and Conservative, which is particularly useful with Let Them Eat Cake! For example, suppose you have already destroyed Canada and California (aren't Disasters wonderful?) but your power structure is a bit of a mess with three Liberal and three Conservative groups. Well, play Ross Perot and rearrange your power structure so that he controls two Liberal groups. Suddenly you have control of six Conservative groups and have destroyed two Liberal groups, which is a win for Let Them Eat Cake!

Liberal-Conservative decks also benefit from Fred Birch Society and the Triliberal Commission, although they lack subtlety and your rivals may wise up to an upcoming Discovered Attack (particularly if they have also read this article).

(A sample deck that uses a combination of a Bill Clinton direct attack and a Ross Perot Discovered Attack can be found at I am Not Left-Handed! and is just one of many fiendish decks kept at the Deck of the Week site.)

Saturday Morning Cartoons: The Hand of Madness and Up Against the Wall goals require controlling Violent groups, and the Saturday Morning Cartoons makes its puppets Violent . . . do you see a link here? These two goal cards also require the destruction of Peaceful or Government groups. As Japan, Canada and the Center for Disease Control all fit the bill, destroying them counts for both goal cards, possibly fooling your rivals still further.

Up Against the Wall requires the destruction of Government groups, and you can be extra sneaky by building a vicious Corporate deck (including the Corporate Masters goal for good measure) and smash several Government groups "for fun" before playing Saturday Morning Cartoons.

Other useful cards: Dittoheads and Daycare Centers adopt their masters' alignments and the OMCLs and Gay Activists are obviously essential. Rewriting History makes sure that your destroyed groups have the appropriate alignment, and Alien Abduction brings Ross Perot into play without using an Automatic Takeover.

The beauty of the Discovered Attack is that you don't look threatening until it is too late.

The best defense against the Discovered Attack is keeping a careful watch on the groups in play. Keep a particular eye on those groups that add or change other groups' alignments or power -- and destroy them if you can.

Reorganizing -- How and When

Unfortunately, not everyone is perfect, not even the Illuminati. Groups are sometimes controlled in the wrong order and an ideal structure can prove difficult to achieve. Luckily, there are a number of ways to rearrange your power structure, starting with the best . . .

Bermuda Triangle: The Bermuda Triangle can rearrange its power structure at the end of its turn for free. For nothing

-- it doesn't cost anything to do this. As a result, the Triangle should do it every turn. It does not matter if you already have your groups arranged in their best positions, just switch everything by 180 degrees. Why? Because you can. Also because your opponents will become weary of your constantly moving groups and they may miss an important change as you set up your victory conditions.

The Direct and Discovered Attack should be important in a Bermuda Triangle game plan, mainly because its Illuminated Goal is difficult.

Antitrust Legislation: If you're not the Bermuda Triangle and you don't have a Corporate-heavy power structure, then this New World Order is the best way to reorganize your power structure. Why? Because it's free. And the fact that your rivals will also be reorganizing is immaterial --after all, you have a plan while they are merely making the best of what they've got.

Evil Note: Antitrust Legislation is the only card that lets you reorganize during an attack -- which can be useful if you also have Connie Dobbs or Teddy Kennedy in play. A truly Illuminated (if risky) trick is to combine a mid-attack reorganization with the Arise! goal . . .

Elders of Zion: A poor man's Triangle, the Elders of Zion's special ability lets you reorganize your power structure -- except that this requires not only their Action token, but the Illuminati's as well! However, despite the Triangle's predilection for changing groups every turn, you only need to reorganize occasionally. For an Illuminati like the UFOs, the Elders of Zion might be the best way to work a Discovered Attack.

Reorganization: If you neither are the Bermuda Triangle nor control the Elders of Zion, then the Reorganization Plot card is your best bet. The advantage of this card is that it is unexpected. Unfortunately, in order to rely on Reorganization you need to use Crop Circles or the Rosicrucians to ensure it is in your hand when you need it.

Offshore Banks: This group can move a single group to another control arrow in your power structure. This can be invaluable if you have just controlled a group and want to move it to somewhere more defensible. As this is a free move, it is always worth moving something (as if you were Bermuda) to conceal an upcoming Discovered Attack.

Phone Phreaks: The Phone Phreaks have a similar ability to the Offshore Banks but theirs costs an Action token -- and you can also move your rivals' groups. This ability makes the Phone Phreaks very useful in offense and if you need them to reorganize your groups they are wasting their abilities. However, link Eliza to the Phone Phreaks and they can quickly become an integral part of a computer Direct Attack plan for anyone other than the Bermuda Triangle.

Evil Note: You can use the Phone Phreaks to force a rival to discard a group: if you move a group so that its puppet overlaps with another group, that puppet must return to its owner's hand. This means that the Phone Phreaks is one of the few cards that can actually prevent a rival from winning!

Action Tokens: Groups may also be moved by spending an action token -- theirs, their new master's, their old master's or your Illuminati's. This is an expensive way to rearrange your power structure and because you can only do this during your turn, your groups may look vulnerable.

The Dallas Catacombs: This group allows you to be lazy and not worry about whether your power structure's control arrows are blocked. It is useful if you have several groups with few control arrows, but is not really suitable for a Discovered Attack.

Let's Get Organized: This and Let's Get REALLY Organized, its rarer cousin, give additional outgoing control arrows to weak groups. While it can be played on a group such as Bjorne, who gains Action tokens for each Media group he controls, it works very well on the Direct or Discovered Attack -- Finland and Saturday Morning Cartoons become much more powerful if they have three outgoing control arrows.

Why Reorganize?

Well, you don't have to rearrange your power structure at all. You don't have to make the best of your groups, you can ignore sneaky Discovered Attack strategies -- and maybe you will even win the odd game here and there.

Taking good care of your power structure results in maximizing your groups' effectiveness as well as the occasional game-winning strategy. Even if you are not playing the Bermuda Triangle there are always ways of moving groups. Your power structure is flexible: use it to its full potential.

by James L. Cambias

[*Editor's Note:* This article originally appeared in *Challenge* Magazine, Issue #73.]

I had just got back to old Syrtis after a few months poaching liftwood up in the highlands, and was feeling in need of a little rest. So it seemed like a stroke of good luck when I met Miss Clarendon strolling in the bazaar. She's a schoolteacher, and the sweetest thing under a bonnet on three planets. She mentioned a little trip she was planning. "Just an excursion to view the old Martian locks on the Moeris Canal. Would you like to come along, Doctor Blogsworth?"

"I'd be delighted to come, Miss Clarendon." I felt as though I was made of liftwood myself.

"I'm pleased that you will. And the children will be so happy."

"Er -- children?"

"Yes. The schoolchildren from Reverend Lutwidge's School. We're taking a dozen of them along."

I'm usually a brave man, but suddenly I felt a pang of dread.

A Little Excursion

Reverend Louis Lutwidge, head of Rev. Lutwidge's School in Syrtis Major, is taking a group of students on a field trip. They will travel by steamer to the locks and pumping station on the Syrtis Major-Moeris Lacus canal, where they can get a first-hand look at ancient Martian engineering.

Involving the Players: There are two ways to handle this adventure. In an ongoing campaign, the adult player-characters can be invited along by Miss Clarendon, a teacher at the school. (She can be assumed to be an old friend or distant relative of one of the PCs.) Or they may simply be passengers aboard the steamer.

If the Gamemaster chooses to run this as a one-shot adventure, than the players can choose characters from the list of students.

The Martian Queen

The canal steamer *Martian Queen* is similar to the riverboats of the Mississippi. Normally she carries mail, passengers and freight from

Parhoon to Moeris Lacus via Syrtis Major, but Reverend Lutwidge has chartered it for the trip. There will be nobody aboard besides the school group (unless the adult PCs are passengers).

Description of the Ship: The deck plans show the layout of the *Martian Queen.* The rooms are labeled on the plan. The students will be housed two to a room in staterooms 2, 3, 6, and 7. Reverend Lutwidge will be in stateroom 1, and Miss Clarendon will be in stateroom 5. Any other adults will be in rooms 4, 8, 9 or 10.

The Crew: The *Martian Queen* has a crew of 14. The master is Isaac McTavish, the first officer is Arthur Penryth, the pilot is Donald Greene (a former Mississippi riverboat pilot), and the engineer is Antonio Fornaccia. The ship's cook is a Martian named Vymoos. The deckhands, stokers, and stewards are all Martians.

The Voyage

The *Martian Queen* sets out from Syrtis Major early in the morning. Reverend Lutwidge will excuse the children from their morning lessons, so the youngsters can spend a few hours exploring the ship and getting into mischief. The galley and the engine room will be natural magnets for inquisitive children.

If the players are running adult PCs, they will have their hands full keeping order. Young Waffles will try to take the engines apart, little Lord Smallbridge will try to climb the mast, "Lizard" will go to the kitchen and make herself sick on Martian treats, and Smith Minor will try to talk the pilot into letting him steer. Clarissa Douglas and Smith Major will both develop massive crushes on the most attractive PCs of the opposite sex.

After luncheon, Reverend Lutwidge and Miss Clarendon will gather the children in the saloon for lessons. The adults can take the afternoon to study the ship themselves and meet the officers.

The ship will anchor at sunset. Although the *Martian Queen* is equipped with an electrical searchlight, Captain McTavish doesn't want to risk navigating in the dark. After a hearty English meal of boiled beef and pudding ("those Martian foods always disagree with me," says Reverend Lutwidge), the children will be put to bed.

The adults, including the ship's officers, gather in the saloon, and Reverend Lutwidge opens an old bottle of port which he has been saving. After an hour, everyone is sleepy and all go to bed.

Captives!

At midnight, a gang of Fenians will invade the ship from an aerial flyer. There will be little chance of their being discovered, for both the port and the pudding were drugged. (If any character specified that he was not drinking the wine, and did not eat the dinner, then roll a Difficult task of Observation to be awakened.)

The Fenians will take each adult's cabin one by one, knocking out the characters and tying them up. When everyone at last wakes up, all the adult characters and the ship's officers are in the saloon, securely tied to chairs, and guarded by a masked man with a Winchester rifle. (A Routine Intellect task roll reveals that Reverend Lutwidge, Mr. Greene, and Signore Fornaccia are missing.)

The Martian crewmembers have been put ashore and bribed to keep quiet about the incident. They will try to alert the authorities, but will be unable to accomplish anything until it is far too late.

The Children's Hour

Once the adults are helpless, the Gamemaster should allow the players to choose characters from among the children on board. With the adults held prisoner and the ship in the hands of unknown enemies, can a group of British boys and girls save the day?

The children will wake up when the ship's engines are restarted and the *Martian Queen* begins to move again. If any of the students try to leave their cabins, they will find that there are masked men with guns posted at the stairways, who will roughly order anyone back to their rooms.

The children can communicate between adjacent rooms, as the walls are thin enough to allow limited conversation. They have whatever equipment is listed on the character descriptions. The rooms are all sparsely furnished, with a washbasin, bunk beds, a chair, and a small writing-desk.

Fenian Plot

The villains who have seized the ship are actually a gang of desperate Fenians. They are trying to disrupt the flow of supplies to the British army fighting the rebels in Shastapsh. The Fenians have loaded the *Martian Queen* with dynamite, and intend to set off the explosives as the ship enters the canal locks. This will close the canal to boat traffic. With the canal supply line cut, the British army at Shastapsh will have to withdraw.

The bad guys are led by a heavily bearded man wearing a captain's uniform. He is really Reverend Lutwidge/Liam O'Connor in disguise. There are six other Fenians aboard, all armed with Winchester rifles, heavy revolvers, and knives. They are all Veteran NPCs. One is guarding the adult characters in the saloon, one is in the pilothouse, where Donald Greene has been forced to steer the ship, two are in the engine room overseeing the Martian stokers and Signore Fornaccia, and two are on the upper deck, at the top of the stairways. Lutwidge/O'Connor will initially be on the lower deck, setting up the dynamite, but will move to wherever there is trouble.

The dynamite is in a dozen big crates, lined up along the sides of the ship on the lower deck, with a timer apparatus set up atop the coal bunker. Lutwidge's plan is to set the timer while the ship is in the locks, then escape aboard the aerial steam launch secured atop the ship. The ship will reach the locks by noon the next day.

Defeating the Villains

The children must somehow overcome the Fenians and regain control of the *Martian Queen.* They can either try to fight the Fenians themselves, or release the adults and let them recover the ship. The primary advantage the children have is that the Fenians, while fanatics, are not completely inhuman. They will not shoot innocent children (though they have no qualms about blowing them up). If the children are armed, or if they have killed anyone, then the Fenians will no longer be so tolerant.

The Gamemaster should let the players come up with their own plan, and play it through. Initially, the children will not know about the dynamite, or the aerial steam launch -- the intentions of the Fenians should be a complete mystery. If at all possible, Lutwidge/O'Connor should survive the adventure, so that he can be unmasked at the end, snarling "And I would have succeeded, if it hadn't been for you meddling kids!"

Non-Player Characters

Rev. Louis Lutwidge

Reverend Lutwidge is in fact the notorious Fenian Liam O'Connor. With dyed hair, thick spectacles, and a clergyman's clothing, it is very difficult to recognize that the stern, priggish schoolmaster is really a colorful revolutionary. Only after he has been defeated, and is no longer playing the part, will anyone be able to recognize his true identity.

`Attribute:  Skills:`

```
Str: 4      Fisticuffs 3, Throwing 2, Close Combat 2 (edged)
Agl: 5      Stealth 4, Crime 4 (pick locks), Marksmanship 3 (pistol)
End: 3      Wilderness Travel 2 (mapping)
Int: 6      Observation 4, Engineering 2 (explosives), Science 1 (chemistry)
Chr: 5      Eloquence 5, Theatrics 3, Linguistics 2 (Gaelic, Parhooni)
Soc: 3      Riding 2 (horse), Leadership 2, Medicine 1
```

Motives: Hatred (of English), Adventuresome, Leader.

Description: Liam O'Connor is a tall, handsome man with dark red hair and piercing eyes. He has great personal charm and is a superb natural leader. Disguised as Reverend Lutwidge, he wears a much-mended black suit and thick tinted spectacles. His hair is dyed gray and his famous side-whiskers are shaved off. His Irish brogue will be covered by a Midlands accent. O'Connor always carries a pistol and knife hidden on his person.

Captain Isaac McTavish

Captain Isaac Edward McTavish is a full-blooded Scotsman who came to Mars with one of the earliest expeditions and never left. Despite the reputation for frugality which adheres to most Scots, McTavish is in fact quite generous. He certainly spares no expense where the *Martian Queen* is concerned. Though McTavish has no family of his own, he is fond of children.

```
Attribute:  Skills:
Str: 5      Fisticuffs 5, Throwing 3, Close Combat 1 (bashing)
Agl: 6      Stealth 5, Mechanics 2 (steam), Marksmanship 2 (rifle)
End: 2      Wilderness Travel 1 (mapping), Swimming 1
Int: 4      Observation 4, Science 1 (physics), Engineering 1 (naval)
Chr: 1      Linguistics 3 (Parhooni, Koline, Hespesian)
Soc: 3      Riding 2 (gashant), Leadership 1, Piloting 2 (steamship)
```

Motives: Generous, Friendly.

Description: McTavish is a stout, cheerful man who dresses in a merchant captain's uniform. He has a red face and enormous white sideburns. Despite his weight he is amazingly nimble. His voice is deep and loud, with a Scots accent that becomes stronger when he is excited. McTavish is normally unarmed.

The Children

Smith Major

Cyril Smith (age 15) is the older of the two Smith brothers at Reverend Lutwidge's School. He is very athletic, and excels on the cricket field or on horseback. But his real love is shooting, and he lives for the day when he can have his very own rifle. Until then, he will hone his skill with a slingshot. Smith Major is aware that his younger brother has all the brains, and is very protective of him. Anyone who harms Smith Minor will have Smith Major to answer to.

```
Attribute:  Skills:
Str: 4      Fisticuffs 4, Throwing 2, Close Combat (Bashing) 1
Agl: 5      Stealth 4, Marksmanship (Slingshot) 3
End: 4      Wilderness Travel (Mountaineering) 3
Int: 2      Observation 1
Chr: 2      Eloquence 1, Linguistics 1 (Pig-Latin), Theatrics 2
Soc: 4      Riding (Horse) 3
```

Motives: Love (of brother), Adventuresome.

Description: Cyril Smith is a tall, good-looking boy. He has unruly light-brown hair and an infectious grin. Smith Major wears the standard schoolboy uniform -- flannel trousers and an Eton jacket. He usually carries his slingshot hidden in his boot.

Smith Minor

Jeremy Smith is Cyril's younger brother. Though he is only twelve, he is already much more intelligent and knowledgeable than his brother. Smith Minor is a quiet boy, but when he does speak up he often startles adults with what he knows. He is particularly interested in the ancient Martians and their ruins. Smith Minor and Syukeem are best friends.

```
Attribute:  Skills:
Str: 1
Agl: 5      Stealth 6, Crime (Pick Locks) 2
End: 2      Wilderness Travel (Mountaineering) 1
Int: 5      Observation 4, Science (Archaeology) 2
Chr: 4      Eloquence 3, Theatrics 3, Linguistics 1 (Pig-Latin)
Soc: 4      Riding (Gashant) 3
```

Motives: Knowledge, Loyal (to brother).

Description: Smith Minor is a small, skinny little boy with the same tousled hair as his older brother. He usually looks very serious, and is much more calm and well-behaved than most twelve-year-olds. He still is in short pants, and wears a cap.

Smalls

Thomas Albert, Lord Smallbridge and Baron Twickenham, is only nine years old. He gained the titles after the tragic death of his father in a gashant stampede two years ago. His mother, Lady Smallbridge, elected to remain on Mars where she heads the Explorers' Club Ladies' Auxiliary. Young Lord Smallbridge is unfortunately all too aware of his exalted position, and seldom hesitates to remind others of his wealth and importance. He is very much a spoiled brat. Though Smalls is not a good student, he has won the grudging respect of the others through his astounding ability to sneak around the school at night, and his accuracy with the slingshot. His only real friend is Waffles, as they share an interest in random destruction.

```
Attribute:  Skills:
Str: 2      Fisticuffs 1, Throwing 1
Agl: 6      Stealth 6, Marksmanship (Slingshot) 4
End: 1
Int: 1
Chr: 5      Eloquence 4, Linguistics 3 (Latin, Parhooni, Pig-Latin)
Soc: 6      Riding (Horse) 5
```

Motives: Arrogant, Greedy.

Appearance: Smalls is a small boy with a large, beaky nose and very pale blond hair. He has a wide range of speech impediments. Smalls wears the same short pants and cap uniform as the other young boys, but his are custom-made by the best tailors. His shirts and socks are silk. Smalls keeps a slingshot in his cap.

Waffles

Waffles's real name is George Whitford. Though only eight years old, he has already learned a great deal about mechanics and chemistry. Waffles is motivated by an intense desire to know how things work. He can seldom resist the urge to dismantle something. And if he can't take something apart, he is equally fond of blowing things up. His parents sent him to Reverend Lutwidge's school after he destroyed one wing of their house in Meepsoor.

```
Attribute:  Skills:
Str: 2      Fisticuffs 1, Throwing 1
Agl: 4      Stealth 3, Mechanics 2 (disassembly), Marksmanship 2 (spitball)
End: 2      Wilderness Travel 1 (mapping)
Int: 6      Observation 5, Science 1 (chemistry), Engineering 1 (explosives)
Chr: 4      Eloquence 3, Linguistics 1 (Pig-Latin), Theatrics 1
Soc: 3      Riding 2 (gashant)
```

Motives: Knowledge, Eccentric.

Description: Waffles is a chubby little boy, unremarkable in appearance. Around adults he is very shy, sometimes to the point of being unable to speak. He is usually very well-behaved, except when he is left alone with some interesting

machinery, or anything that looks as if it might burn . . . He always carries a screwdriver, and starts the adventure with three firecrackers and a book of matches.

Clarissa

Clarissa Douglas is sixteen years old, and is very much aware that she is not a child anymore. She resents any attempt to treat her as a one, and always tries to be included in any "grown-up" activities. However, sometimes she forgets that she is an adult, and has masterminded some awful mischief. Clarissa wants to see the world and have some fun. She is very romantic, and falls in love often. Clarissa is beginning a career as an Adventuress.

```
Attribute:  Skills:
Str: 2      Fisticuffs 1, Throwing 1, Close Combat 1 (edged)
Agl: 3      Stealth 2, Marksmanship 2 (pistol), Crime 1 (forgery)
End: 2      Wilderness Travel 1 (mapping)
Int: 5      Observation 5, Science 1 (archaeology)
Chr: 5      Eloquence 5, Linguistics 2 (French, Parhooni), Theatrics 2
Soc: 4      Riding 3 (horse), Leadership 1
```

Motives: Adventuresome, Stubborn.

Description: Clarissa is already a very striking-looking girl, and is likely to be an utterly beautiful woman. With her long black hair and big dark eyes, she has a slightly Latin appearance. She still wears dull schoolgirl frocks. She always has a hatpin at her disposal (treat as a stiletto).

Lizard

Elizabeth "Lizard" Pinkwood is eleven years old and a determined tomboy. She routinely beats up Waffles, Smalls, and Smith Minor, and once fought Smith Major to a draw. Lizard is most effective when armed with a croquet mallet or cricket bat, but can use an umbrella if necessary. She admires Clarissa enormously, and wants to be like her when she gets older.

```
Attribute:  Skills:
Str: 1      Close Combat 1 (bashing)
Agl: 4      Stealth 5
End: 3      Wilderness Travel 2 (mountaineering)
Int: 4      Observation 3
Chr: 5      Eloquence 4, Linguistics 2 (Pig-Latin, Nonsense), Theatrics 2
Soc: 4      Riding 3 (horse)
```

Motives: Aggressive, Fair.

Description: Lizard is a wiry, skinny little girl with torn stockings and mud on her skirt. She always loses her hat. Lizard has curly red hair and freckles. She is almost constantly in motion. Lizard has no equipment (she would only lose it).

Syukeem

Natuuz Syukeem is the only Martian student at Reverend Lutwidge's school. He is six Martian years old (about twelve Earth years). His family are merchants, who saw the advantage in having a son educated by the English. Syukeem is already a good merchant himself -- he makes quite a bit of money smuggling goodies into the school, selling test answers, and betting on Lizard's fights. But he has also become interested in the history of his people, and would like to learn more about Mars than Reverend Lutwidge teaches.

```
Attribute:  Skills:
Str: 1
Agl: 2      Stealth 4
End: 5      Wilderness Travel 4 (foraging)
Int: 4      Observation 3, Science 1 (archaeology)
Chr: 5      Eloquence 4, Linguistics 2 (English, Koline), Theatrics 3
Soc: 4      Riding 3 (gashant)
```

Motives: Mercantile, Knowledge.

Description: Syukeem is average height for a six-year-old Martian; he is over five feet tall and growing fast. He is very slender and is not as strong as the other students, but his Martian constitution already gives him better stamina than most human adults. He wears English-style school clothes, modified for his alien frame. It was agreed by all that he should wear long pants instead of shorts.

Child Characters in Space: 1889

Since the game ***Space: 1889*** draws much of its inspiration from boys' adventure stories of the past century, it is surprising that all the characters in the game are assumed to be adults. But the rules can easily be adapted to allow child characters.

Age Limits: Obviously, children are less capable than adults. This is reflected by limits on skills and attributes at different stages of development.

At 5 years old or below, characters can have a maximum Strength and Endurance of 1. They get no skills at all, not even the basic skills derived from the character's attributes.

From age 6 to 10, the children can have a maximum Strength of 2 and a maximum Endurance of 3. They get all the basic attribute-derives skills (Fisticuffs, Observation, etc.), and get one of their two free skill points to spend on skills.

At ages 11 through 15, characters can have a maximum Strength of 4; there are no other attribute limits. Characters of this age get both of their two free skill points, but are still too young to take any Careers.

Characters aged 16 to 20 can take one Career plus their two free skill points. Individuals who are 21 or older can have two Careers, and are normal adult characters.

Childhood Career: If the campaign is realistic, then children will be limited in their abilities as described above. But a campaign or an adventure which focuses on child characters must allow them to be more capable. The solution is the Childhood Career. This Career can only be taken by characters between the ages of 5 and 16. There are no other requirements.

Persons taking the Childhood Career can learn a total of 6 levels in skills from the following list:

Stealth
Marksmanship (Slingshot)
Marksmanship (Spitball)
Mechanics (Disassembly)
Theatrics
Linguistics (Pig-Latin)
Linguistics (Nonsense)

The skill levels gained from the Childhood Career are immediately lost as soon as the character enters on his or her first adult career.

Martian Queen Deck Plans

by Steve Jackson

[*Editor's Note:*This article appeared as the *First Quest* feature of *Dragon* Magazine, issue #224. It is copyright TSR, Inc., and appears by their permission.]

My first roleplaying game? It's been a while . . .

I remember the very first time I encountered ***D&D***. I'm not sure exactly when it was . . . either when I was in college, or just afterward. The DM was my old friend Forrest Johnson, who some of you will remember as editor of *The Space Gamer* back in the early 1980s.

Forrest had been talking about this great new game he'd learned. It sounded like fun . . . so one day he ran me, and a couple of others, through a wilderness adventure. I don't think he was using all the rules. In fact, I'm not sure he was using anything but the random-encounter tables and the treasure tables. There must have been some character generation in there someplace, but I don't recall it. In fact, I don't recall anything about my character. Not that it mattered . . .

The play of the game was pretty simple. Forrest had the books and the charts. He rolled the dice a lot -- occasionally, somebody else got to roll. We'd wander through the forest until we had a random encounter -- which, as I remember, was always a group of bandits. We would sneak up on them from upwind. Then our wizard would cast Cloudkill. After that, we'd loot the bodies, and Forrest would roll a *lot* of dice as he totaled up our take. Then we did it again. And again, and again, and again. That must have been one truly bandit-free wilderness by the time we were done.

I do remember asking if there was any chance our prey would fight back. Forrest assured me that there were combat rules, but that they were awfully complicated . . .

No character development. No roleplaying of any kind, in fact. Not a hint of angst. But what do you expect? This was the mid-Seventies.

If we ever played a second game, I don't remember it. But it *was* fun, in a perverse sort of way, and it *did* leave me with a vague idea of what ***D&D*** was about. Slay the foe, loot the bodies. Cool. I could deal with that!

The next time I played was some years later. I was freelancing for Metagaming . . . game development, article editing, game design, advertising, typesetting, a bit of art direction, you name it. Now, from here in 1995, Metagaming is ancient history, but in the late Seventies it was a busy little upstart of a company, halfway between ***D&D*** fandom and "real business." And around 1977 or '78, Robert Taylor started a ***D&D*** campaign for the Metagaming crew. We all talked about how it ought to be possible to design a better game, but back

then, when we played, we played ***D&D***. And we liked it. Howard Thompson, Ben Ostrander and I were the regular players; others joined the game occasionally. We talked about business and how someday we'd take over the gaming world, and we rolled those polyhedra as we wandered through Robert's dungeon.

Robert was a truly world-class GM. I didn't know that at the time, of course, but as I look back, of all the GMs I've ever played with, only Aaron ("Play ***Champions*** till you drop") Allston put on a better show. And this was pre-1980. Robert hadn't had the benefit of years of experience, let alone years of "How to be a better GM, get whiter teeth, and lose 20 pounds" articles. He was just a natural.

You didn't need to know a lot of rules to play with Robert . . . he took care of all that stuff. But you did need to know about the world you were playing in. Specifically, you needed to know what the standard monsters and magic items were like. Because Robert loved puzzles and surprises. He was always fair about it, but those magic items were important parts of his puzzles, and ignorance was a capital crime. I recall one tragic death that could have been avoided if the player had remembered exactly how a Bag of Holding worked . . .

Robert's dungeon featured a museum, complete with curator, on the first level. Every adventure, the museum would have different exhibits . . . clues to what we'd face. And sometimes the curator would give us specific hints, or even powerful magic. Like the spray can that turned out to be death on giant scorpions. That one saved our bacon, once we finally figured it out. Of course, Robert never used the words "spray can" when he described it to us. Good thing the arrow on top was pointing the right direction when someone finally got desperate enough to push the button . . .

It was during Robert's campaign that I had the single most exciting bit of character development that I'd ever experienced. My fighter, Ragnar the Impetuous, came out of the dungeon with some gold. Enough to buy . . . chainmail! Now *that* was exciting. No longer was Ragnar taking his life in his hands every time he faced an orc. Now there was a good chance that he'd live through a fair fight.

In the years since then, I've had characters win fortunes, develop super-powers, conquer empires. But there's never been a vicarious thrill like that of Ragnar getting his chainmail.

Ragnar made it to fourth level before he died, foolishly trying to rescue a friend (one of the disgusting dwarves Howard Thompson loved to play) from the mind-controlling clutches of an Ogre Mage. The dwarf, obedient to his evil master, skewered Ragnar with a crossbow. Robert just shook his head. "You should have known you couldn't rescue him without magic . . . " True. I knew that. Even Ragnar knew that. But he didn't care. He was going to die trying. He did, too.

It was a *great* campaign. Hmm. You know, Robert's still in town. I wonder whether he's running any games these days . . .

An In Nomine Resource

By Emily Dresner

Entering the late 13th century, the Templars were recognized across Europe for their wealth and power, which brought about the dark ire of rival political forces. Paranoia is a powerful tool of Hell, and the uninformed people of Western Europe began to become critical of their benefactors who protected them and their holdings in the East. Were the Templars only killing and looting for their own gain, or bringing back powerful religious relics to use in secret rituals in their locked monasteries? Rumors were spreading like wildfire about the Templars and their secret initiation rites, witchcraft and dark practices.

At the same time, the Templars were dealt a powerful military blow to their organization. During the passing years, the Moslems were not sitting idle. Radical Moslems, upset over the crusades, had formed several military responses to the Knights Templar. One of these was the group known as the Assassins, loyal to the death to al-Hasan ibn-al-Sabbah, who used the European intrusion into their lands for personal and political reasons. After several smaller losses, the Templars were humiliatingly defeated on July 4th, 1187 at the Horns of Hattin, a barren double hill which protected the pass between Tiberias and Acre on the Sea of Galilee. This allowed the Saracens not only access to the Holy City but to Palestine as a whole.

Without being able to protect the Christian holdings in Palestine, the Templars were routed. By the time of the battle of la Forbie in 1244, there were only 44 Knights in the Holy Land. After the Fall of Acre in 1291, there were no more Europeans living in the East. The Knights, suffering grievous loss after loss, were no longer Europe's shining defenders; they became Europe's scapegoats.

Philip the Fair and William de Nogaret

Philip IV of France was a man of action, intensely proud, and often at odds with the Church. He was also a King at the head of an Empire that was nearly bankrupt from the Crusades. His closest advisor, William de Nogaret, accompanied Philip. De Nogaret was a spin-doctor, a master of disinformation, a man who could make anyone look extremely bad, no matter the reputation, no matter how holy, how gifted by the Church, or how enlightened. He was also a weapon.

Although Philip was a pious man, he would not consent to being just another subject to the Pope in any sense other then the spiritual. He refused to stand by idly as Pope Boniface VIII issued the Papal Bull *Clericis Laicos,* which forbade the clergy to pay taxes to any prince without the direct consent of the Church. Philip was annoyed at the Pope's show of power, so he cut off the export of gold and silver from France to the Holy See, nearly crippling it. Boniface retracted his Bull, but a new problem was already in the works.

Philip set his new sights on a bishop in Southern France, and wanted him to be removed from office for personal reasons. Boniface did not agree, and would not consent to degrade the bishop for purely political reasons, even after Philip presented a very creative and interesting list of the bishop's vices, created largely by de Nogaret. Pope Boniface,

in retaliation, reissued the *Clericis Laicos.*

Philip summoned his estates of the realm to gather the people against Pope Boniface. The Pope turned around and threatened Philip with excommunication. Boniface set forth a new Papal Bull, the *Unam Sanctum,* where no earthly prince was above the Pope, not even if he happened to be named Philip. Philip chose to preempt the Bull, and sent de Nogaret down to Italy deal with the troublesome Pope. De Nogaret, who had already shown his hand in the matter of the bishop, drew up a list of vices that would make the most hardened demon cringe. According to de Nogaret, Pope Boniface was guilty of being, among other things, a heretic, a sorcerer, an assassin of sorts, and keeper of a mistress to hide the fact that he was, in reality, a sodomist. In the night with his group of thugs, de Nogaret seized the Pope and held him captive for some days before he was forced to free him by the local nobility. But Boniface, an old man by the standards of the time, never recovered from being kidnaped, and died soon after.

The next pope, Benedict IX, proceeded to blame de Nogaret for what had happened to Boniface, and excommunicated him in 1304. Just as the new Pope was getting ready to take on Philip, Benedict died within a year of taking office. The threat he would have been was ended.

This time, under the advisement of de Nogaret, Philip suggested to the College of Cardinals that he would be quite happy if they chose a Frenchman as the successor Pope. To everyone's surprise, a man clearly under Philip's control, Bertrand de Got, Archbishop of Bordeaux, was selected and chose the name Clement V.

When Clement came to power, De Nogaret, who demanded to be cleared of all wrongdoing in the incidents revolving around Pope Boniface, approached him. Clement was reluctant to allow de Nogaret to get his way. For six years, de Nogaret wheedled and nagged the Pope, until Clement caved and reopened the case. De Nogaret was allowed to present his side of the story, a tale that twisted both lies and truths. He then requested Boniface to be exhumed and publicly burned. Clement gave in, and even claimed that Philip IV had acted justly. All of the King's men were permitted to have their honor back. Clement did not, however, allow the dead Pope to be publicly humiliated.

When the Pope was cowed and out of the way, Philip set his eyes on a larger prize, the treasure of the Templars. Philip's coffers were empty, and he would not allow the existence of a power in his country that did not answer to him and him alone, a power he could not control.

The Inquisition and the Fall of the Templars

A scheme was devised to get the Templar money from the monasteries and into the King's coffers, while permanently destroying their reputation. This required playing on the new public loss of trust in the Knights, and their secret practices and rites. Philip and his advisor chose to have them accused of heresy and witchcraft. As heretics, they knew, the Pope would no longer protect the Knights. The Church would not come to their rescue.

De Nogaret first met with an embittered renegade from the Order, Esquin de Florian of Beziers, who had been expelled for various crimes. With the renegade knight and his knowledge of the inner workings of the Templars, de Nogaret was in position to plant spies in the great Houses and discover their patterns of activities and daily schedules. At the same time, on September 14th, 1307, Philip sent a letter to his nobles, claiming he had been informed of many heinous crimes the Templars had committed by "righteous people," and posed as a staunch defender of the faith. He claimed that he had Papal consent to deal with this blight on his French landscape. The stage was set.

On Friday the 13th, October 1307, sweeping arrests were made throughout the countryside. The knights were taken completely by surprise. Every Templar institution in France was stormed at dawn. The knights throughout France were arrested by the King and transported to dungeons for Inquisition. Enormous inventories were made of the Templar

houses, and not a penny was missed. Large caravans transported the Templar holdings to the Kingly coffers. For the 14th century, the operation was an amazing military success, then and for many centuries to come.

Captured Knights were subjected to an inquisition, where confessions were to be extracted any means possible, including torture. Those knights who maintained their innocence often found themselves on the rack, which neatly invented memories of unspeakable horrors. Suddenly, the defenders of the faith found themselves admitting to heinous crimes and rituals only to avoid horrible pain and torture, all of which fed the tribunal for their upcoming trial. Knights claimed to have enjoined in rituals and religious work only in body, and never in spirit.

Since most of the Western Templars were more monks then knights, working with money and agriculture, many had never seen a live Moslem let alone rushed headlong into battle with one. They were not battle hardened warriors who had experienced pain at the hands of the enemy, they were farmers and handlers of money.

The effect of the inquisition was quick and decisive terror. Out of 138 knights captured, a full 134 confessed to terrible crimes. They admitted to everything from spitting on the Virgin Mary, to worshiping a crystal head of the demon Baphomet. 120 were burned at the stake. Pope Clement V, faced with the sheer number of confessions, issued a papal bull to suppress the order, and sever it permanently from the Church.

Outside of France, the neighboring monarchs were not as enthusiastic about joining in the attack and persecution of the Templars. They had seen the flimsy evidence of heretical activity. Those few foreign monarchs who actively made arrests made no overtures toward an Inquisition, and soon let those they captured go.

At first, Jacques de Molay, the Grand Master of the Knights Templar and a staunch upholder of knightly ethics, admitted to the crimes set forth before him in front of multiple tribunals over several years, some confessions extracted through torture. He admitted that his Order committed horrible rituals and demonic acts to save his own life. Through his words, many of the other Templars were damned and set to burn at the stake. But at the last moment, on March 19th, 1314, as sentencing of his own imprisonment was read before Notre Dame, de Molay stood and heroically defended his order, denouncing Philip and his groundless Inquisition:

"I think it only right" he began, "That at so solemn a moment I should speak up for the truth. Before heaven and earth, and with all of you here as my witness, I admit that I am guilty of the grossest iniquity. But the iniquity is that I have lied in admitting the disgusting charges laid against the Order. I declare that the Order is innocent. Its purity and saintliness are beyond question. I have indeed confessed that the Order is guilty. But I have done so only to save myself from terrible tortures Life is offered to me, but at the price of infamy. At such a price, life is not worth having."

As he said his proclamation, the sentence was quickly changed to death. Jacques de Molay was burned at the stake with several of his highest supporters. With the death of the Grand Master, and no other man to take his place, the lands destroyed, the reputation besmirched, knights dead, and the money taken by the King, the Order of the Templars, as a powerful force and an organization, was no more.

Through all the cajoling and torture and pain, Philip IV lost in the end to the puppet Pope. The lands would not be his, and he was not to control the former Templars holdings across Europe as he had imagined. Clement turned and gave all the Templar lands to the Order of the Hospitallers.

Less then a year after Jacques de Molay had been burned at the stake, both Philip IV and Clement V died. Some claim that de Molay, as he died, levied a curse upon both of their heads for their crimes. Others say it was simply justice.

Saladin, Soldier of Fire

Corporeal Forces -- 2 Strength -- 5 Agility -- 3
Ethereal Forces -- 2 Intelligence -- 5 Precision -- 3
Celestial Forces -- 2 Will -- 4 Perception -- 4
Status: 4
Charisma: +1

Skills: Fighting/3, Tactics/4, Dodge/2, Large Weapon (Sword)/3, Knowledge (Religion)/2

Saladin was born in 1138 as Salah-ad-Din, Yusuf-bin-Ayub, or "Righteousness of the Faith, Joseph son of Job". He was a Sunni Moslem of Kurdish origin. In his youth, he as a student of the Koran, Arabic and poetry, but as he grew older he became consumed with Jihad against the infidel Franks who had invaded and installed themselves in Palestine.

Saladin was a very clever strategist, and in 1164-1169, he was sent on many campaigns against the crusaders. He suffered heavy defeat at Al-Ramlah at the hands of the Templars in 1177. He was forced to retreat to Egypt without supplies, water, or food for the horses. He learned his lesson well and put his knowledge to good use at the Battle of the Horns at Hattin.

Saladin was instrumental in Frankish defeat in the East. In July 1187, the Christians suffered their decimating defeat at Hattin, and on October 2, he entered the Holy City. This tipped off the Third Crusade.

Several other campaigns established Saladin as the most influential man in the East. Saladin died in 1193, leaving behind no clear successor. The Moslems quarreled over his empire for seven years until his brother, Saphadin, took control.

Philip IV, Soldier of Greed

Corporeal Forces -- 1 Strength -- 2 Agility -- 2
Ethereal Forces -- 3 Intelligence -- 7 Precision -- 5
Celestial Forces -- 2 Will -- 5 Perception -- 3
Status: 6
Skills: Emote/3, Fast-talk/3, Lying/3, Savior-Faire/3

Philip "Le Bel" or the Fair was born in 1268 AD, and ruled France from 1285-1314. He was called the "Fair" in reference to his good looks: tall and handsome with long blond hair and blue eyes. His personality was in conflict with his pleasing looks -- a cold hard man who harbored desires to see France as the head of the empire. In order to carry out his wishes, he would need great financial resources and a weak and subservient Pope. He and his corrupt advisors worked feverishly to accomplish these aims.

Philip's persecution of the Templars was not his first attempt to destroy a group of people just to line his coffers. He first attacked the Jews and the Italian Bankers, the Lombards. He expelled the Jews from France after acquiring their money and their properties, annexing them onto his own.

Philip went so far as to purposefully devalue the coinage of his own country. He recalled all the coinage, melted it down for his own private usage, and issued replacement currency of lesser value. At one point Philip devalued the French currency to such a point he enraged the populace. He was forced to take refuge in a Templar monastery from his own people. It is possibly here, while hiding from a potential riot in a Parisian Templar Temple, that he became aware of the Knight's wealth and desired to add it to his own.

Philip died in 1314.

Nogaret, Balseraph of Factions, Captain of the Broken Promise

Corporeal Forces -- 2 Strength -- 4 Agility -- 4
Ethereal Forces -- 4 Intelligence -- 9 Precision -- 7
Celestial Forces -- 5 Will -- 11 Perception -- 9
Vessel: Humans/2 (+2 Charisma)
Role: William de Nogaret/6 at Status/5
Skills: Fast-Talk/1, Savior-Faire/3, Dodge/2, Area Knowledge (France)/3

Songs: Entropy (Celestial/3), Charm (Corporeal/3, Celestial/4)
Attunements: Balseraph of Factions, Knight of Deception, Captain of the Broken Promise

Nogariel took on the role of a Medieval Lawyer in the late 1200s, in an attempt to create as much strife as possible among the French populace. To have the greatest effect, he chose a deep cover role, which included being born into a rich family. The first true mark of his effectiveness was when his human role parents were burned at the stake as Albigensian heretics.

Nogariel worked through the bureaucracy. After conspiring to get Philip the Fair's Head Chancellor burned at the stake for heresy through contrived evidence, he rose to be the French King's closest advisor. He reveled in the corrupt King's greed, and worked gleefully to fulfill his aims. He advised destroying the Italians and the Jews, both biasing the French people against supposed "ethnic outsiders" and filling the King's coffers - which fueled Philip's attempts to make France the most powerful nation in Europe.

Nogariel's true mark on history was in the matter of the Templars. He destroyed one Pope, and subverted another in an effort to have control of the power of the Papal seat. He helped to conceive the sweeping arrests of the Templars, coordinate the testimony garnered through torture, and the trials to prove that the Knights had conspired of every crime from homosexuality and heresy to black magic and worshiping Baphomet.

After the death of Philip the Fair in 1314, Nogariel lost his position in France, and with his one great victory, disappeared from history.

Adventure Seed: Treasures of the Templars

Archangel Laurence has commanded a group of angels to retrieve a lost relic of the Knights Templar. It is a plain old chest long hidden away in an old Temple, sealed away from the rest of the world for the last 700 years. He's rather adamant about the retrieval of this chest, and impresses upon the group its importance. On Earth, the Temple has been turned into a modern tourist attraction. Sneaking around in the roped off areas can prove to be a challenge, as the local guards aren't too enthusiastic about guests wandering around. If the angels get through, sure enough, they will find a hidden cavity in the floor in a back room, as told in the debriefing. Except the cavity is open, and the chest is gone. From the small collection of cigarette butts, it looks like it's been opened recently. The perpetrators may still be in the building. Where did it go, and what was in the chest?

Murphy's Rules

by John Kovalic

Far too expensive for auto-duelling, the Pulverizer is one of the most heavily armed cars on the highway. Bruno has suggested adding the "Division 300" so that he can compete, but so far there have been no takers. So instead, Bruno must stick to racking up roadkills, which is a lot more challenging than fighting the girlymen who drive in the arena, anyway.

The car is really designed for "Black Ops" missions, and as such all weapons are concealed, though the turret makes it clear that this is an autoduelling vehicle. Pulverizer has quite heavy armor (more than half the car's three-ton weight), but its huge hydrogen-guzzling 335-horsepower (250-kW) fuel cell engine enables it to roar down the highway at 155 mph and keep that up for hours. Of course, it gets less than 5 miles/gallen, but Bruno has a fuel tank the size of Synthia's bath tub, so who cares?

The Pulverizer can carry Bruno and one passenger, who had better be a slim and shapely female, since Bruno weighs more than the 200 lbs. standard allowed for an occupant. Both have ejection seats (driver controlled), which, since no other car can defeat Bruno, are only useful for removing boring dates. The car also has night vision sensors, a radar/laser detector, revolving license plate and both targeting and personal computers.

The car's "big zap" is a turret mounting a flashy 1,500-kilojoule laser that can burn a fist-sized hole through a 7.5" steel plate. A co-axial 7.62mm gatling gun capable of firing 100 bullets per second is just the thing for exterminating pedestrians and other vermin. Of course, Bruno is not sure about that laser - what if da battery runs out, or dere is smoke or fog? So, he "persuaded" Uncle Al to shoe-horn a pair of trusty linked 35mm recoilless rifles under the hood. In the unlikely event that anything is still alive after this double-dose of explosive death, the Pulverizer can launch a salvo of three front-firiing 40mm rockets which can clear the debris off the road. That assumes the enemy is in front. Bruno hates tailgaters: to discourage them, the Pulverizer deploys another trio of rear-facing rockets, and can spew forth a flaming oil jet.

Now, time to go for a quiet Sunday drive...

Subassemblies: Standard Wheels (4). Turret (full-rotation).

Propulsion: TL8 All-Wheel Drivetrain (HP38, 250KW, 405 lbs., 8.1 cf, $8,100).

Instruments and Electronics: Radio (medium range, cellphone, 2 lbs., 0.04cf, $400, neg. power, HP2). Scrambler ($500). Low Light TV (5x magnification, 2.5 lbs., 0.05 cf, $625, HP 2). Passive IR (5 mile range, 20 lbs., 0.4 cf, $5,000, HP 6). Sound System (10 lbs, 0.2 cf, $200, HP 4). HUDWAC ($500). Radar/Laser Detector (0.75 lbs., 0.015 cf, $75, HP 1). Mini-computer (dumb, 40 lbs., 0.8 cf, $3,000, Complexity 2, HP 9). Small genius computer (dedicated to Targeting, 1 lb., 0.02 cf, $4,000, Complexity 3, HP 1). Computer terminal (40 lbs., 2 cf, $1,000, HP 15). Software: Computer Navigation ($500, Complexity 2), Targeting (+4 to Gunner skill, $8,000, Complexity 3).

Ammo: 1,000 X 7.62mm (28 lbs., 0.18 cf, $110). 20 rounds 35mm HEAT (26 lbs., 0.26 cf, $240). Six 40mm light rockets (12 lbs., 0.24 cf, $540). Weapon Accessories: Cyberslaves for Laser (in turret, 83 lbs., 4.15 cf, $4,150), Recoilless rifles (138 lbs., 6.9 cf, $6,900), Gatling Gun (in turret, 20 lbs., 1 cf, $1,000), Rocket tubes (12 lbs., 0.6 cf, $600). Back rockets are linked ($50), front rockets are linked ($50), recoilless rifles are linked ($50).

Miscellaneous Equipment: Compact fire suppression system (50 lbs., 1 cf, $500, HP 9). Mutable license plate (1 lb., 0.3 cf, $500, HP 5).

Controls: Computerized ($1,000).

Crew Stations: "Driver" controls all functions from normal crew station (30 lbs., 30 cf, $100).
Occupancy: Short. Passengers: One.
Acommodations: One normal seat (30 lbs, 30 cf, $100).
Environmental Systems: Environmental control (10 lbs., 0.2 cf, $100, 0.5 kW).
Safety Equipment: Safety belts. Two Ejection Seats (200 lbs., 10 cf, $100,000).

Power System: TL8 252-kW Fuel Cell (1,285 lbs., 25.7 cf, $6,425, uses 32.76 GPH hydrogen, HP 90). 131.04 gallon self-sealing fuel tank (131.04 lbs., 19.656 cf, $1,310.4 HP 75). 131.04 gallons hydrogen fuel (76 lbs., $13.10, Fire 10). High Capacity Storage Battery for laser (480,000 kWS, 240 lbs., 4.8 cf, $960, good for 20 seconds fire at RoF 8, i.e. 160 shots, HP 27).

Access, Cargo and Empty Space: 33.8 cf access space, 1cf cargo space, 0.399 cf empty space. Turret rotation space 2.06cf.
Volume: Turret 10.3 cf, Body 188 cf, wheels 18.8 cf. Areas: Turret 30, Body 200, Wheels 50. Total Area: 280.
Structure: Medium Frame, very expensive materials (560 lbs., $70,000).
Hit Points: Body 300, turret 45, wheels 38 each.
Special Structural Options: Improved suspension ($5,000), improved brakes ($500), all-wheel steering ($2,500), smartwheels ($4,000).

Armor: All armor is expensive laminate-ablative. Front body PD 4, DR 300 (500 lbs., $2,000). Turret and body right, left, back PD 4, DR 200 (1,300 lbs., $5,200). Top and underside PD 4, DR 120 (400 lbs., $1,600). Wheels PD 4, DR 100 (250 lbs., $1,000).

Details: Clear ablative armor windows, headlights.
Other: Radial fireproof tires (#800). Statistics: Empty weight 6,034.25 lbs. Usual payload 420 lbs. Ammo and Fuel: 197.04 lbs. Loaded weight 6,651.29 lbs (3.32 tons). Volume 217.1 cf. Size modifier +3. Price $279,098. HT 12.

Ground Performance: Speed 155 mph/s. gAccel 10 mph/s. gDecel 20 mph/s. gMR 1.75. gSR 5. High GP, 1/4 off-road speed.

Pyramid Interview: Basement Games

Basement Games released their first game, ***Forge: Out of Chaos*** less than six months ago. What's it like starting a game company in these uncertain times? Basement honcho Mark Kibbe fills us in:

When did you get the idea for Basement Games?

We got the idea back in 1993. We had been altering gaming rules and designed our own gaming system that everyone enjoyed. Over the years we continued to modify things as we went along and received constant feedback from gaming groups and players. Then, in 1996ish we decided to take our first incarnation (a product called ***GruntBuggler***!) to market. Well, we did not have any experience and thought we could learn to run a business in one week (not a really well thought out venture). Needless to say, things did not go well. People liked the game, said good things about the mechanics and concepts, but the distributors and store owners were discouraged by the inferior artwork, poor marketing strategy, etc. etc. etc. So, then in 1997 we decided that we would make another go. So, we went to work learning about the industry and how things work. It was an uphill climb, but we met some very helpful people who made things a little easier. We altered the rules, worked closely with play testers, employed some professional artists and moved forward. I quit my day job in December of 1997 and made a major push. It has been a major undertaking, but is something we are very proud of.

It's an awfully crowded industry. What does Basement Games bring to the table that will make it stand out?

Basement Games brings a level of grass-roots creativity. It is our desire to create quality products and support the individual gamer. Our prices are very reasonable, we offer a lot of free gaming support, and we are always eager to hear comments and suggestions. We are the "typical" gaming group. Full of ideas, concepts, and creativity. We just took it one step further and brought it to the market.

What have you got out so far? How's it doing?

We released ***Forge: Out of Chaos*** in August of 1998 and followed it up with an adventure module in November of 1998. Both products are doing well. Right now we are forging alliances with gaming groups across the world to help with the push. We also contact retail locations and send promotional materials to help them sell the game.

What are your plans for 1999 and beyond?

In 1999 we have scheduled the release of two additional modules and a referee screen. In addition, we are working hard at stocking our web site with free, downloadable mini-modules that the public can use to maintain their campaigns between printed releases. We are also instituting a Gaming Club. A yearly membership fee of $5 will earn the member access to on-line, PDF format, source material outlining the medieval world of Juravia. From governments and militaries, to currencies, judicial policies, NPCs, and adventure material. It is going to be an exciting year for Basement Games and the players of ***Forge: Out of Chaos.***

Tell us about the people involved in Basement Games: experience, background, etc.

There are four major players in the company: Mark Kibbe, Blair Hughes, Mike Kibbe, and Loraine Sirovy. Each of us have been gaming for over 15 years. Although we all infuse Basement Games with input and creativity, I am the major force behind the drive. Writing is a passion that I hope translates well into the written word. I have studied at college, worked with some professional writers, and honed my skills working on various projects. I also have a business background and have been working with people in the industry hand-in-hand.

Where do you think the roleplaying hobby is going? And what is Basement Games doing to be part of that?

I feel that the roleplaying hobby is suffering some setbacks. In our mind it appears that companies have moved more toward the money-making side of the industry. You can see this in the flood of source books, collectible card games, and gaming aids. We want to support the gamer without picking their pockets. Our low overhead allows us to maintain low prices and our web site information allows gamers to continue playing our products between releases. We feel that with these conditions, we will be able to survive in an otherwise volatile industry.

It seems like a tough time to start a gaming company. Why now?

As I said above, we feel that the gamer is not being supplied with enough free material to keep him or her interested. We constantly hear about companies that release a product and then never support it. We hear about quality games that fall by the wayside because the company released something entirely new. To us, that is evidence of an industry that wants to make large sums of money on a quick release, and then quickly move on to another quick release.

Because of our viewpoint, it seems like a good time to enter the picture. Our business plan allows us to maintain a steady flow of information, advertisements, and releases, while we ride the turbulent waters of the gaming industry. Will we survive the purge? I feel confident that we will. Working hand in hand with retailers and distributors, I am confident that Basement Games will reach gamers in every part of the world. And our strategy of free, on-line material, will only help us succeed.

Have you had much contact with other companies in the industry? Have they helped you? Hurt you? Ignored you?

We have dealt with several people in the industry. Some were extremely helpful, others seemed aloof or self-serving. Regardless of our encounters, I feel as though we have maintained a level of professionalism and earned some respect as a new gaming company. Our doors are always open and we are willing to pass on the knowledge we have gained over the last, hectic year.

What's the one thing you want Basement Games to be known for?

Creativity. Whether its a fantasy role-playing game or a computer based project (that we are working toward in the years to come), Basement Games will always be creative. Keeping the gamer interested and entertained is the most important thing in this industry. Watch us and we will amaze you.

by Lloyd Brown III

Art by Dan Smith

Intelligent weapons are listed as possible random treasure results in the ***Advanced Dungeons & Dragons Dungeon Master Guide.*** To allow such a valuable addition to the campaign to be whimsically discovered is a waste of a potential font of roleplaying opportunities and further adventures. Intelligent weapons have a personality and history; they're more like non-player characters than other magic items.

Instead of rolling to determine if a weapon, usually a sword, is intelligent, first decide the weapon's role and how it you intend for it to interact with the party. If it is meant to lead the party to a treasure or NPC, the weapon's role is minimal. A paladin's holy sword is a far more prominent item, and will affect the party greatly. You need to think about the weapon's capabilities, how much it enhances or detracts from the party's combat ability, and other factors.

Questions that arise in game play might surprise you, forcing a snap decision that does not adequately reflect your intentions for this unique item. Many of these questions are addressed below, so that when the situation comes up, you are prepared to describe the event to the players with smoothness and confidence.

The tables in the ***DM Guide*** can be useful when you need details for a quickly-generated intelligent weapon, filling in the details of name, ownership, and history later. In many cases, this information is often dictated by the situation. But when you have a chance, thereís so much more you can do.

Because of their special status as plot drivers or potential allies for the characters, intelligent weapons should be treated as NPCs, rather than as magical items. In this analogy, the weapon's type can be considered its race (axe, hammer, sword), since this determines its size and shape. The weapon's magical properties (Vorpal, Flame Tongue, Luck Blade) can be compared to a character class, since these descriptions determine the abilities of magic, faith, or skill. Other characteristics are similar to a character's traits as well.

Purpose

When you create an NPC to interact with the adventurers, you first determine his purpose. Will he oppose or aid the characters? Is he a plot catalyst in some way, or does he merely help establish the setting? Will he begin play as an enemy of the PCs? What happens if the situation changes and he becomes an ally? Ask the same questions you would ask yourself about an NPC and use your answers to help you develop the weapon.

The weapon's role in the campaign is different from the weapon's purpose for existence, if it has one. The "special purpose" mentioned in the ***DMG*** section on Intelligent Swords is different and is addressed later.

Background

An NPC's background is vital, as it establishes the character's motivation, emotions, drive, resources and other factors

that are more important to the adventure than any game mechanics. Non-player characters and weapons have different births, but their history is equally important.

Decide exactly how the weapon became intelligent. It might have been intentionally made that way. This easy option gives an instant "primary purpose" for the weapon. The paladin's priesthood enchanted it to "slay dragons," for example. Few weapons are intentionally made intelligent, both because of the difficulty of the task and the dangerous possibility that the weapon might not be under the control of the creator.

In order to keep PCs from instantly heading to the forge to create an intelligent weapon, remind them of the price of failure. The chance of successfully creating an intelligent weapon is only 10% of the normal chance of creating that weapon. If this check fails, the research is wasted and the character must start over. Attempting to make an intelligent weapon is far more expensive because the quality standards involved in the task are far more demanding (no less than twice as expensive). Also, the weapon's characteristics are not entirely under the character's control. The ability to communicate, for example, might be far lower than expected, or the Intelligence might be higher, giving the character a weapon he cannot control, since Intelligence affects the weapon's Personality Score.

Other methods of birth for intelligent weapons include divine interference. A god might have created an intelligent weapon for a number of reasons. It might be a reward (or a curse) for a specific follower. It might have been meant for an avatar's use. It might be a companion for a priest on a lonely quest. Divine influence gives a weapon an instant "special purpose", usually one directly related to one of the god's major spheres of influence. A god rarely interferes so pointedly for a minor sphere of interest.

Some weapons become intelligent through continued associated with a powerful mortal, usually by long duration and/or intense emotional trauma. A dagger used to accidentally slay a friend, for example, might gain a personality of its own. An axe used by a dwarven warrior in decade after decade of resistance to encroaching goblin tribes might gain awareness after 50 years of continued fighting. Naturally, this method gives rise to specific purposes as well. The weapon's abilities arise directly from the purpose to which the weapon is applied most often.

Some weapons become self-aware. The special property of a magical weapon to "grow" an intelligence is a complete mystery. From these weapons come some of the lower-intelligence weapons; conversely, they often have strong Personality Scores. Supposedly, they have the high Personality first, through which they somehow gain the rest of the abilities.

The last category of weapon intelligence sources is a hodgepodge -- those that are unique or so rarely encountered that they do not deserve their own section. Humans or monsters polymorphed into weapons who retained their intelligence, products of wild magic surges, special crystals who form a community intelligence under certain conditions, and other anomalies of your own creation can be included here.

The weapon's background naturally includes details on the character who currently holds it. Develop this person alongside the weapon, including notes on how the two get along, how each sees their relationship as it applies to their goals, and how they interact with others.

Other notes might include history, famous owners, physical description (runes, jewels, damage, sheath, etc.), and past deeds. These details might not be discovered until last by the player characters, but they might give hints to the weapon's abilities. Leaving gaps now, however, allows you to fill in as you make later decisions, so don't decide every minute of the weapon's history from its creation to the time the PCs encounter it.

Race

Swords are not the only intelligent weapons. Some weapons are especially suited to a particular race. Axes and hammers, for example are commonly used by dwarves and bows are often used by elves. Swords, however, because of their common use and great diversity are by far the most common intelligent weapons. Some cultures also accord swords in particular special status, becoming the symbol of knighthood or warriors in general.

Class

Our intelligent weapon's class is similar to the magical properties of Giant Slaying, Dragon Slaying, etc. These abilities are clearly defined in the ***DMG*** and elsewhere. They form the basis from which this article works and are not the purpose of this article.

The weapon's "class", however, should be determined right away, so that its other abilities can be taken into consideration. These properties shape other decisions made later. Most importantly, you have to take game balance into consideration. Specific rules affect some choices (swords of sharpness, for example, are always chaotic in alignment).

Statistics

The major statistic associated with intelligent weapons is (naturally) Intelligence. A weapon's Intelligence score is determined by 4d4+3, giving a low of 7 and a high of 19. As you can see, some "intelligent" weapons are not very intelligent! In order to keep these weapons from being easily dominated by characters, they should have strong senses or other abilities to give them a bonus to their ego. On the other hand, their other abilities might be weak, making them easily dominated, but not as useful to the characters. Again, your intended purpose for the weapon is the overriding criterion.

The intelligent weapon resists damage as other magical items, by using the Item Saving Throws table on page 39 of the ***DMG.*** Magical items always resist certain attack forms according to the nature of their magic, so weapons should receive a bonus to saving throws vs. blows. Weapons that have a special ability might receive saving throws related to that ability. A Frost Brand, for example, might have a +3 or more bonus to saving throws against magical cold. Magical weapons always gain a saving throw bonus equal to their plus, as described in that section.

Senses & Abilities

Hearing

Hearing, none. The weapon is deaf. If subjected to magical means to make it speak, such as the priest spell stone tell, it can hear questions directed at it only. If the weapon is able to speak on its own, its answers might be much more detailed than allowed by the spell description.

Hearing, touch only. The weapon can only hear conversation or sounds made by someone or something physically touching it. Hearing is not the same as speech; a sword can hear only the owner, but speak out loud. In some cases, the owner is seen whispering to himself, while the weapon bellows half of the conversation to everyone nearby.

Hearing, as human. The weapon has the same chance to hear noises as a standard non-thief human, dwarf, or half-elf character (15%). Alternatives include elf or halfling hearing (20%) or gnome hearing (25%). The weapon hears normal conversation, the sounds of combat, or the cries of animals as a normal person.

Hearing, sympathetic. The weapon's hears through the owner's ears whenever it is carried. Its level of perception varies according to who is holding it. If the holder is deaf, or deafened magically, the sword is likewise stricken until the holder is healed. If you use this option, the sword gains the benefits of any magic used to enhance the holder's hearing as well.

Hearing, superior. The weapon can hear noises that a normal human cannot hear. The acuity of this hearing is quite diverse and can range from 30% to 95% chance to detect noise. Use of this ability is the same as the thief ability Detect Noise.

Clairaudience. The weapon has hearing as one of the above and can use clairaudience. The use of this power ranges from once weekly to three times a day. Most commonly, the weapon uses clairaudience only once each day. As with

other magical items, this ability should be treated as cast at 12th level.

Vision

Sight, none. The weapon cannot see at all. Events must be described carefully to the weapon for it to know what is happening. If the weapon is also deaf, some other means of communication must be established.

Sight, 10' only. The weapon can see short distances. The weapon can see items out to ten feet. Anything further appears gray and indistinguishable. Within this limited distance, the weapon can see as well as a human, including noticing details and spotting hidden or surreptitious movement. For this category and the next, decide on where the weapon's exact point of view is. Maybe the weapon needs to be pointed at something in order for it to see. Such actions might be taken as hostile by those unfamiliar with the weapon's nature. The point of view might also be a particular gem in the handle.

Sight, human. The weapon sees as well as a human with normal eyesight. This option is the most common for intelligent weapons. The weapon is susceptible to illusions.

Sight, sympathetic. As with hearing, natural, temporary, or magical disabilities or enhancements affect the weapon as well.

Sight, superior. Consult the sections on Vision and Light in the ***Player's Handbook*** and ***DMG.*** The weapon doubles distances in each category. The weapon also has double DM-assigned chance to notice concealed objects and halves a thief's chance to hide in shadows.

Sight, infravision. The weapon has normal human vision and infravision to 60'. Some weapons have the superior (120') infravision possessed by dark elves and some other creatures.

Clairvoyance. This ability is similar to clairaudience, above.

Wizard eye. In addition to normal human vision, the weapon can use wizard eye once per day.

X-ray vision. X-ray vision is added to the weapon's normal sight. This ability functions as the ring, including lowering the user's Constitution if used too long or too often.

Tactile Sense

None. The sword cannot feel any touch at all.

Damage only. The sword can tell if it is damaged and feels pain accordingly. Normal use in combat does not hurt the weapon, but banging against a creature it cannot harm might hurt it. Hitting very hard creatures like iron golems would probably cause damage except for the strongest weapons. Attack forms like fireballs and lightning bolts hurt the weapon, although attacks that don't normally affect metal or wood (like poison) would not cause pain.

Heat/cold sensitive. The sword feels heat or cold like a human. Extremes of climate might not damage the weapon, but it feels the effects as if it were a human and won't appreciate being subjected to it if the holder himself is protected. The user can stick the weapon in a pool to see if the temperature is suitable for humans and otherwise use it as a thermometer, but the weapon might not appreciate it.

Sympathetic. The weapon feels anything the user feels. This sympathy means that the weapon might think that damage sustained is too great to continue a battle and advise a retreat. On the other hand it might disagree with a retreat when the character is relatively healthy and withdraws from battle. If it can speak, the sword might howl with pain when the user is hurt, possibly giving its presence away or drawing unwanted attention.

Other Senses

Smell. The weapon has a sense of smell. An acute sense of smell might allow the weapon to track like a dog or other animal.

Taste. When touching an item, the weapon can taste it, possibly detecting poison or harmful substances.

Psionic. The weapon has an unusual clairsentient psionic ability. As with other psionic abilities mentioned here, you can assign PSPs and MTHAC0s or simply determine how many rounds the ability can be used. You can use any of the clairsentient sciences or devotions. Generally, the weapon has only one special ability, but the weapon's nature might demand that these senses be the weapon's primary focus, in which case the weapon should have few other abilities.

Magic. The weapon might use a divination power such as detect magic, detect good/evil, know alignment, or most low-level divinations. As with psionics, above, the weapon should not have extensive special senses unless detection is the weapon's purpose.

Other. You may also decide to assign any special detections such as the ability to penetrate disguise, detect extra-dimensional origin in creatures, determine the loyalty of a character, determine the object or power of worship of a priest, or know a creature's level/Hit Dice. Many of these abilities are similar to the Weapon Primary Abilities found on table 115 of the ***DMG.***

Communication

None. The weapon cannot communicate without a magical means. Often, these weapons are not even counted as intelligent, although they can have a very high Intelligence.

Semi-empathy. Semi-empathy is felt only by the holder, and comes across as a flat, static sound or feeling during times of great concern to the weapon. Thus, a sword that can find secret doors might vibrate when it detects a hidden passage, but it might not be able to communicate why it is vibrating to its holder. Trying to discover the reasons behind the vibrating can be a frustrating game of charades -- without feedback -- for the player and character.

Empathy, touch. The weapon can communicate general feelings with the character holding it. It might signal that it is afraid, tired, eager, proud, or angry. This communication has the advantage of being private between the holder and the weapon.

Empathy, ranged. The weapon can communicate it's feelings to a group or area. Typically, the weapon's empathy projects in a radius, usually 10' or 15'. This empathy has no magical force to affect the emotions of others, but if the weapon is extremely powerful and radiates anger, it could influence the reactions of characters who can feel the anger. Naturally, other emotions can also affect those who receive them through empathy.

Speech. Speech is relatively common among magical weapons. Those able to speak can understand and reply in one or more languages. Most often, they speak the native language of their creator, possibly giving characters a clue to the weapon's origin. Subsequent languages usually relate to the weapon's purpose, enemies, or allies. A knife made for a dwarf, for example, might speak dwarven, gnomish, and orcish. An elven short sword, on the other hand, might speak elven, dryad, copper dragon, and pixie. Sometimes, the maker's purpose is completely unfathomable and the weapon speaks apparently random languages.

Tongues. The weapon has the ability to use tongues from 1 to 3 times daily. Sometimes, these weapons are intentionally created to serve as translators. They might also speak several languages and have the ability to learn more.

Mindlink. If you use psionics in your game, the weapon can use mindlink to communicate directly with an individual. Assign the weapon a PSP pool and MTHAC0 to determine duration of use or simply establish a number of rounds that the ability can be used during a single day. If you do not use psionics, the wizard spell Rary's telepathic bond from the ***Greyhawk Adventures*** hardback book is essentially the same effect. You can refer to that spell for details on this power. This power can be an addition to speech, allowing for private conversation between the weapon and an

individual, or it can be the weapon's sole method of communication. If the latter, you might wish to allow the weapon more extensive use of the ability (an hour a day or more) for greater utility.

Exotic. The weapon can send dreams or visions to the owner. It might be able to force the owner to speak for it. It might be able to cause runes to appear within a short range (30'), cast magic mouth on other items, or have some other special ability. Use your imagination, but try to ensure that the ability is not one that can be exploited by players. You might intend for the ability to create illusionary hands, for example, to allow for pantomime, but clever players can find many ways to abuse the power.

Proficiencies

Proficiencies are related to languages in that they are primarily based on Intelligence, but they are also the accumulation of knowledge by experience. A high-level character has more proficiencies than a low-level character of the same Intelligence. Similarly, an older weapon can have more knowledge in certain areas than another weapon of the same Intelligence. Not all weapons can learn proficiencies. This ability is a special talent, usually held by weapons that became intelligent spontaneously.

A weapon made for a certain purpose, of course, must have skills to assist in that area. A sword that has no combat bonuses for example might be that way because it was meant to serve as the symbol of office for a healer. The healer's sword might be proficient in healing and herbalism.

The weapon's ability to utilize proficiencies, however, is modified by the lack of a body to exercise certain proficiencies. It might also be restricted by his senses, as detailed above. Essentially, intelligent weapons can use most proficiencies based on Intelligence or Wisdom. They can also utilize some Charisma-based proficiencies, like singing (if they can speak) and etiquette.

Alignment

Like any character, intelligent weapons have an alignment. In addition to the known alignments, a distinction should be made between Neutral and Absolute or True Neutral (TN). Used here, the neutral character does not care about alignment. His special purpose or personality dictates all actions. Unintelligent animals are neutral. An absolute neutral actively tries to promote the balance between good and evil, law and chaos.

Personality And Ego

A weapon's ego determines how the weapon feels about its own strength. A high ego indicates a confident weapon, sure of its own abilities. A weapon with a low ego is not very confident, advocating caution and asking its owner for extra precautions to keep it safe. Ego can also be seen as a weapon's Charisma score, affecting the weapon's dealings with characters and monsters other than its holder. For great suggestions on dealing with high-Charisma characters, see "He's Got Personality," in *Dragon #243*. The article also includes Charisma-based proficiencies that the weapon might have.

The weapon's Personality decides how well it can force its wishes on its holder. The weapon's owner can force the weapon to use abilities that it knows about if the owner has a higher Personality score than the weapon. Likewise, a weapon with a higher personality can use its powers frivolously or refuse to use them at all.

The weapon's Personality Score is equal to the total of its ego and Intelligence, as described in the ***DMG.*** Using this system, ego scores have greater variation. Before you allow the party to interact with the weapon, check the characters' Personality scores (Intelligence + Charisma + Level) and make sure they compare with the weapon's score for the result you wish. If you want to make sure that only the strongest party member can use the weapon, you can customize the weapon's abilities and characteristics so that its Personality score fits where needed.

Personality Conflict

Inevitably, a personality conflict results between a character and an intelligent weapon he carries. Perhaps this conflict allows the party to come into contact with the weapon in the first place; the previous owner succumbs to the weapon's superior Personality at a crucial moment, as the weapon fails him to allow itself to fall into other hands. You might use this to create an NPC who is capable of defeating the party in combat, and then reducing the NPCs powers when the party in on the brink of destruction as his weapon takes its revenge for an earlier insult by abandoning him in his time of need.

A conflict primarily occurs when the weapon and its owner disagree on questions of alignment, although if the weapon has a special purpose, a conflict arises whenever the owner has an opportunity to pursue the special purpose and refuses. Conflicts might also occur over more minor matters in the case of an evil or naturally belligerent weapon.

In the event of a conflict, a weapon with a superior Personality has several options to exercise to force its owner into cooperation. It chooses from among these options based on the level of disagreement with the owner, its temperament, and its alignment. Most weapons attempt to teach the owner a non-fatal lesson first, although some are notoriously short-tempered and use the strongest means of persuasion available to them to enforce their will on their owners.

First, the weapon can refuse to apply some of its magical bonuses. A spear+3 might function as a +2 or +1 until the owner decides to "see the light". If the owner still disagrees with the weapon's wishes, the weapon can actually reverse its normal bonuses, causing the owner to strike with a -3 (in the case of the spear example) to all attack and damage rolls (although damage is always a minimum of 1 point).

The weapon might refuse to use certain properties, as well. If a luck blade (a strong-willed protector of the nobility), for example, were held by a flighty thief, it would almost certainly refuse to grant a wish to make the thief climb better so that he could break into a baron's manor. The weapon might still be tricked into using its powers, but it can't be forced unless the character has a higher Personality score.

Another example of withholding of properties is an inherently-lawful vorpal sword used to fight the local constabulary while the flighty thief is in the midst of a lengthy crime spree. The weapon would most certainly refuse to use its decapitation ability, probably using other methods of expressing his disagreement with the thief's activity as well.

While weapons can't normally move themselves, they can sometimes slip out of their owner's hands, unless disarming is normally impossible due to the psionic graft weapon ability, or a magical gauntlet that disallows disarms, or other magic. The weapon can slip out of the character's grip during combat, while crossing a river, or in a panicked flight from enemies.

Outside of combat, the weapon might speak at inopportune times, possibly bringing the character far more trouble than a mere -1 attack modifier. Suppose the character is negotiating with surly stone giants for permission to pass through a guarded mountain pass and a voice comes from his side that says "What! You're only going to pay 400 gold pieces? You have thousands in your backpack! Give the poor giants a little more than that."

If all else fails, intelligent weapons can attempt to force their will on characters with a lower Personality score. Some weapons intentionally allow their owners to be damaged in combat so that the owner's Personality score is reduced, making it easier to dominate him. As a last resort, an intelligent weapon can affect its owner with a dire charm from the ***Forgotten Realms Adventures*** hardback book. This spell is a charm that affects the target with a killing rage, making him attack friend or foe alike for 1d4+12 rounds. This power can be used at will, but only if the owner's Personality score is lower than the weapon's.

Filling in the Gaps

Like an NPC, the weapon should have an individual name. It might be named after its creator, or its enchanter, or the first person to use it. Loric the Bard and his songs, for example, might be forgotten, but Loric the sword guards

the hearth of Morgan the Smith. More often, the weapon has its own name, given when it is created. Some weapons are known by a title or nickname, rather than a formal name: Dragonbane or Elfslayer are generic examples. The famous Beater and Biter, better known as Glamdring and Orcrist from the *Lord of the Rings,* are examples of both names and titles.

If the weapon can speak, you need to decide what the weapon's voice is like. Its pitch, sex, volume, rate of speech, and other details can be used to customize the weapon. Referring to the weapon's general traits can help. Use words like "gruff" or "dulcet" to describe the weapon's speech to the players. A female mezzo soprano who speaks quickly but with a lisp is vastly different from a laconic male baritone with an "R-less" dialect (a "fight-uh" rather than a "fighter").

For a weapon's personality traits, use the NPC General Traits table on page 114 of the ***DMG.*** Decide or roll as needed, making changes where necessary based on the weapon's role and properties. A weapon that cannot speak, for example, can hardly be "garrulous."

Random Attributes & Addition to Ego

For quickly developing weapons that you didn't expect the party to acquire, or for rushed planning, you can use the following tables to randomly determine some of a weapon's characteristics. If you are creating a custom weapon, you just need to note the effect of each characteristic on the weapon's ego. You can use these adjustments to make a weapon that fits the role you have in mind. You might want a weapon that is subservient to the NPC who currently has it but which can dominate any PCs in case they take it from him. Or you might have the opposite in mind.

Race

Weapon Type (d100)
1-10 Battle axe
11-15 Bow, long
16-25 Dagger/knife
26-80 Sword
81-95 Spear
96-00 Warhammer

Class

Use the Magical Weapons tables on page 140 of the ***DMG.***

Senses & Abilities

Hearing (d20); Ego Modifier
1 Hearing, none; -1
2-7 Hearing, touch only; 0
9-15 Hearing, as human; +1
16-17 Hearing, sympathetic; +1.5

18-19 Hearing, superior; +1.5
20 Clairaudience; +2

Vision (d20); Ego Modifier
1-3 Sight, none; -1
4-5 Sight, 10' only; 0
6-11 Sight, human;+1
12-13 Sight, sympathetic; +1.5
14-15 Sight, superior; +1.5
16-17 Sight, infravision; +1.5
18 Clairvoyance; +2
19 Wizard eye; +2
20 X-ray vision; +2

Tactile sense (d20); Ego Modifier
1-5 None; 0
6-15 Damage only; 0
16-19 Heat/cold sensitive; +.5
20 Sympathetic; +.5

Other senses (% chance of each occurring); Ego Modifier
15% Smell; +.5 (+1 if able to track)
5% Taste; +.5 (+1 if able to detect poison)
10% Psionic; +1 for a devotion, +2 for a science (per daily use of 12 rounds or less)
20% Magic; +1 for each daily use of a L3 or lower spell, +1.5 for each daily use of a L4-6 spell
10% Other; +.5 to +2 each

Communication (d20); Ego Modifier
1 None; -1.5
2 Semi-empathy; -1
3-5 Empathy, touch; 0
6-8 Empathy, ranged; +.5
9-17 Speech; +1, plus 1 per each additional language
18 Tongues; +1 (in addition to ego for speech)
19 Mindlink; +2 (plus possibly speech)
20 Exotic; Varies

Proficiencies

Weapons gain additional proficiency slots according to their Intelligence score. You can also allow them extra proficiency slots based on their history or creation. A weapon gains a +.1 to ego for each proficiency slot. If it can learn new proficiencies, add +2.5 in addition to existing proficiencies.

As an alternative, you can allow for a random number of proficiencies to reflect a very old weapon of medium intelligence or a weapon of limited experience that has a high intelligence. The weapon might also have knowledge of specific proficiencies for a reason related to its purpose; the healer's sword in the above section on proficiencies is an example.

For random proficiencies, choose 1d4 from the Intelligence table, 1d3 from the Wisdom table and 1 from the Charisma table. Note that only the ***Player's Handbook*** was used for creating these tables. Many more non-weapon proficiencies are described in the various ***Complete Handbooks, Players Option: Skills & Powers,*** and *Dragon Magazine.*

As a final note on proficiencies, certain skills are useless without the ability to see, hear, or communicate. A weapon might know how to plow a field, the best time of the year, how to protect the field from ankhegs, etc, but if it cannot

tell its owner, the ability is largely wasted. Reroll any proficiency which you cannot make work within the weapon's already-determined abilities.

Intelligence (d20)
1 Agriculture
2 Ancient History
3 Animal Lore
4 Appraising
5 Astrology
6 Brewing
7 Cooking
8 Engineering
9 Heraldry
10 Herbalism
11 Languages, Ancient
12 Languages, Modern
13 Leatherworking
14 Navigation
15 Reading/writing
16 Reading lips
17 Spellcraft
18 Survival
19 Weaving
20 Reroll twice, ignoring additional rolls of 20

Wisdom (d10)
1 Animal Handling
2 Animal Training
3 Direction Sense
4 Fishing
5 Healing
6 Hunting
7 Religion
8 Tracking
9 Weather Sense
10 Reroll twice, ignoring additional rolls of 10

Charisma (1d4)
1 Etiquette
2 Gaming
3 Local History
4 Singing

Alignment

Alignment has no effect on a sword's ego. It certainly affects the weapon's personality, however, both how the weapon looks at situations, and how it forces its wishes on its owner. A lawful good weapon, for example, would certainly seek to persuade its owner of a particular course of action before it allowed him to be killed in combat by adversely affecting attack and damage rolls.

Alignment (d10)
1 LG
2 LN
3 LE

4 NG
5 TN
6 N
7 NE
8 CG
9 CN
10 CE

Sample Intelligent Weapon Design

Jay has a great foe planned for the PCs to meet. He is Poxolotl, an evil priest who is collecting tribeless humanoids--outcasts, last survivors, lost, or renegades -- into a tribe of his own. While persuasive and willful, the priest is not very cunning and needs a little advice. Old Pox (as the orcs call him) plans to announce himself to the world by destroying a dam whose lake supports a large fishing city.

Jay plans to use ideas from "101 Dirty Orc Tricks" in *Dragon #242,* but Poxolotl and his band still won't challenge the middle-level party. Also, Poxolotl is a little out of date with the local lingo, having been entombed under a feign death effect for the last 900 years.

The priest needs an advisor, a translator, and bodyguard. Instead of developing three separate NPCs out of the makeshift tribe, Jay decides that an intelligent weapon can fill all three roles.

Jay determines that, of the most common intelligent weapons, none fits his concept of the priest as well as a dagger. To make it cosmetically different and add spice to the campaign, Jay describes it as bone, but assigns no combat penalties to the weapon. He calls it the "Tooth of Mar", but he doesn't yet know who or what "Mar" might be.

As a combat aid, Jay decides the dagger should be a dagger of venom, and allows Poxolotl knowledge of herbalism. Poxolotl makes his own poison, a nasty brew that paralyzes its victim. Again, Jay makes a little change for color. The idea of a screw-off cap with a poison reservoir sounds too scientific for the ancient priest, so he decides the bone dagger "drinks" the fluid from the tip. The effect is the same, but the appearance is different.

Since the weapon is intended as an advisor, it must have some communication ability, preferably speech or mindlink. Jay doesn't like using psionics, but he has read the description of mindlink and tentatively decides that the dagger can speak, but can also mindlink with its owner. He notes the addition to ego and continues.

As a translator, the dagger must be able to speak with the humanoids, so some languages are necessary. It should speak orcish, one of the most common humanoid languages, and it should be able to speak goblin and Jay reluctantly decides on ogre, as well. His campaign doesn't have many, but Old Pox might need them to help bash in the dam. He also decides that the weapon doesn't speak the priest's out-of-date language, but communicates with him only via mindlink. This idiosyncrasy also means that the priest doesn't necessarily know what is being said to the humanoids, which Jay thinks could lead to some interesting complications later.

Also because of the dagger's role as translator, the Tooth must be able to hear. Since no pressing reason exists for superior hearing, the Tooth can hear as well as a human. The dagger has no great need of sight, either, but Jay decides to grant the dagger limited sight (10'), and keeps this information secret even from Poxolotl. Maybe the priest does something the dagger doesn't like in his view, leading to conflict later. Jay jots that idea down for future use and continues.

In order to speak these extra languages, Jay decides to grant the Tooth a relatively high Intelligence. He remembers the dagger is supposed to advise Old Pox, as well. He assigns the weapon a 17 Intelligence and decides that the Tooth, not the priest, invented the idea of destroying the dam. Maybe Jay can tie this plan in with some secret agenda of the dagger.

Thinking about this last plan further, Jay decides to take a moment to develop some of the Tooth's background. Maybe

the lake created by the dam has covered a site important to the dagger. Maybe the site is the resting place of a previous owner, whom the weapon found shared his goals. Maybe even Mar lies hidden under the lake -- whoever or whatever Mar is.

Having already decided that the weapon speaks most of the humanoid languages, Jay reasons that a humanoid might have made it. Since the weapon is more or less human-sized, an orcish shaman could be a reasonable assumption. Orcs in Jay's campaign don't currently become powerful shamans, however, but he sees no reason why a shaman in the far past -- before the lake was created -- couldn't have been more skilled than most contemporary shamans.

Jay likes his current train of thought and marks down the shaman history and reason for the Tooth wanting the dam destroyed. He writes down details about the weapon's appearance, adding orcish runes, a rude iron handle, and other details. Knowing the weapon was made and possibly used by orcs, he decides that the weapon speaks in a rough male voice and probably curses frequently, loudly, and colorfully (the weapon isn't going to be useful to the party in social situations, if they keep it!). He adds that when the weapon poisons a target, it taunts the character mercilessly, giving him horrible details about his impending agony and death.

Choosing an alignment is an easy decision. Since orcs are lawful evil, an alignment close to that is likely. Jay decides that since the dagger speaks to different tribes of humanoids, a neutral outlook would make it more useful to its owner. Jay establishes the Tooth's alignment as Neutral Evil.

Jay finally decides that Mar was an orcish hero from another tribe who took the dagger from the shaman who made it when their tribes fought. Mar grew so popular that some of his followers swore to have him raised after his death. The Tooth is not eager to see Mar raised. On the contrary, it wants his body utterly destroyed to prevent his revival. Perhaps Jay can leave some clues to this history for the players to find, giving them another adventure after they deal with Old Pox.

by Thomas Devine

Art by Dan Smith

Most Timepiece/Stopwatch campaigns center around the efforts of Timepiece agents to put history back the way it was. This is because a great outcome like Timepiece's world of democracy, social justice, prosperity, and a healthy environment is very unlikely.

The reason that Stopwatch has not long since won is that survival, without justice, is even less likely.

Like Timepiece, Stopwatch does not want to scramble history. They only want to make things less just and free. That is why I present ten ways to make history a little duller, a lot sadder, and more corrupt.

Keep Italy out of WWII

This would not hurt Hitler. It would not win him the war either, but it will help him. Having Italy as a friendly neutral, instead of an unstable ally, would have freed up resources for other fronts. The Germans could have still used Italian ports, but the allies could not have bombed them. Italy, as a neutral, could have been a major pipeline for whatever trade goods the Nazis needed.

After the allied victory, Mussolini, like Franco, could present himself as an anti-communist and an ally of NATO. The Fascists could have ruled Italy into the '90s.

An Italo-Spanish right-wing alliance to corrupt the Catholic hierarchy could have brutally warped the Catholic Church.

Challenge: The problem for Timepiece agents would be twofold. First, find out who influenced Mussolini to use his brain -- not a common thing for him. Then get Mussolini to do something really stupid -- join the war -- after he had figured out the risks.

Note: Mussolini's motives were composed mainly of vanity, malice, power lust, and caution. Mussolini's mind always mixed intelligence with stupidity. The players will never be able to depend on Benito to be either dumb enough to fall for their best tricks, or smart enough to see through even the most transparent flattery. This drove his opponents to despair. Have it do the same to the players.

All Social and Thief/Spy skills will be useful. Language skills in Italian, French, and German are also necessary.

Along with period history and culture, a good knowledge of ancient Rome and its literature will help the players pass as contemporary Italians. Fascist party members would be interested in Roman glories.

Similar Mission: This is really a reverse but the damage would be similar. Get Ireland into WWII. As a friendly, neutral Ireland was helpful to the allied cause; But if Ireland had joined an alliance with Britain, and sent men overseas to defend Britain, riots would have broken out all over.

Ireland had been independent for less than 20 years and was still wounded over the twin humiliations of having to accept the lost of Ulster(including majority Catholic areas that had been promised to them) and having to accept dominion status instead of full independence and the right to proclaim the Republic. A long bitter history of British dominance was too much to get past. Neither Roosevelt or Churchill ever understood that. Both of them developed a deep contempt for DeValera and his wise restraint.

If Stopwatch could get DeValera to join the allies, the resulting riots would require British troops to put down. This would lead to full fledged civil war the second the British stepped on Irish soil.

Churchill would never have let go of Ireland once he had it. The Irish, who always have to labor under unfair reputations, would have been branded pro-Nazi. Everything Irish would get linked with the Nazis and the Holocaust. Irish nationalism, which would not die, would be handed over to the fascist right. Stopwatch would love the eternal army of occupation that would be required to enforce British rule.

Resources: The ideas for both of these interventions came from *The Rise and Fall of Great Powers* by Paul Kennedy. For more background, try *Mussolini's Empire* by Edwin P. Hoyt, which gives great background on Mussolini. *The Italian Story* by Geoffrey Tresse, *Garibaldi and the Making of Italy* by G.M.Trevelyan and *The Making of Italy 1815-1870* by Edger Holt should give you a better view of the Italian scene.

Stop Rock and Roll by Stopping BeBop

Most of you have never heard of BeBop, a Jazz style, but it has changed your lives. BeBop became the dominant style of Jazz in the 1950s. This helped an obscure Rhythm and Blues style, called Rock and Roll, become first a dance craze and then the dominant music style worldwide.

Because both '50s pop ballads and BeBop are useless as dance music, everywhere teens danced had to play Rock. If Jazz had stayed dance music, Rock would not have been a necessity. Club owners never would have let the early rockers in the door if they had had a choice.

The main cultural effect of Rock was its revving up the generation gap. The fact that parents just did not understand how good rock was taught teenagers that their parents did not understand their world. Changing conditions were already doing that, but the fact that kids suddenly had a sealed-off culture of their own speeded things up and deepened the shock.

All of this made the idealism of the '60s seem far more important than mom and dad's objections. Once you throw out one tradition, others are easy. Many things, mainly good and some bad, became possible. This whole tendency toward experiment and exploration is hated by Stopwatch. They would certainly try to prevent the vast shift in tastes that helped make the '60s.

Challenge: A cultural movement like BeBop comes from many sources. Stopwatch would probably need to kill, maim, or otherwise thwart the lives of several dozen musicians. Very few of these people would be all that obvious. It will take careful research on Timepiece's part to find out what was done.

Since most of the people Stopwatch is attacking lived in the pre-WWII African-American community, records of their lives will be scanty. Those in power preferred to have fewer records of African- Americans. This is because it is easier to cheat people who have little access to legal records. Voting rights are especially vulnerable to courthouse fires even today.

Social and Thief/Spy skills would, again, be crucial. Streetwise would be the most needed skill. Musical skills would aid the players in fitting into the crowd. Music appreciation will be an important detective skill in this case.

Similar Mission: The artists that had the greatest influence on human life were the Victorian novelists. Authors like Dickens, Eliot, Tolstoy, Twain, Crane, Hugo, Balzac and Zola showed their nations to themselves. Ancient barriers to understanding others in your own society were dissolved. The turmoil of the 19th century was spelled out to the masses by these authors. Stopwatch would want to stop the empowerment this promoted.

Resources: The Music of Black Americans: A History by Eileen Southern and *America's Black Musical Heritage* by Tilford Brooks, will both provide background. The second book has a small section called BeBop pioneers. *Afro-American History: Sources for Research* edited by Robert L. Clarke, should help you find whatever background you need.

Get Edward the VIII to dump Mrs. Simpson

Edward VIII was a useless airhead. Britain has had many stupid and cowardly kings but WWII was a particularly bad time to have a second rate playboy for a king. Edward VIII would have left Britain for the Bahamas at the first suggestion that he not risk his own life. The Nazis would have loved telling the British about Edward VIII's luxurious ease during their suffering.

The damage to British morale and moral standing during the war years would have been only a start. Edward was a racist, and a tactless one. That would have cost Britain much.

Edward would have sided with the Tories against independence for India. A long war of independence would have been likely. The Chinese Communists would have been involved by the '50s. India would never have become the world's largest democracy.

Back in Britain, Edward's racism would have humiliated racial minorities, and encouraged bigotry. Either Britain would have been humiliated in the eyes of the world or racism would have remained acceptable.

Challenge: Edward VIII was a weak-willed airhead, but he was a sentimental, spoiled-brat-grown-large airhead, with bodyguards. Manipulating him would be draining. You could not trust him to follow any course of action unless you watched him.

Stopwatch, mindful of how fickle and weak he was, probably would have set up a Femme Fatale, with a good background, to win the king over and marry him. She could then run Edward for Stopwatch and raise the next king to serve as well.

The Timepiece players would have to get a weak and fickle prince to dump a beautiful aristocrat for a frumpy divorcee.

Social skills, particularly Savoir-Faire at a high level would be needed. Thief/Spy skills will also be needed. Combat skills will have lots of use; the British upper class was surprisingly violent and cruel in this period. Also, the prince's bodyguards would be the first ones Stopwatch would try to control.

Similar Mission: Most of the modern monarchies are more influenced by their kings than you would think. A corrupt or lazy monarch can seriously weaken a nation.

Stopwatch might want to get rid of good kings. King Mongkut of Thailand, the king in *The King and I*, preserved Thai independence. Stopwatch would prefer Thailand colonized. Less risk of democracy that way. Juan Carlos of Spain, the best king of this century, stopped the fascists from returning to power in Spain. Stopwatch wants him to die in the cradle, or at the hands of a "communist" so that the fascists have a martyr.

William IV of the United Kingdom is a weak King that Stopwatch would try to remove. He supported and signed the Reform Bill of 1832. He was the only member of his family that would have signed it! Without the 1832 reforms,

Britain would have gone toward a more efficient form of oligarchy or a violent revolution with reaction. Stopwatch would benefit either way. If both William IV and his niece Victoria were killed, then Ernest Augustus, the infamous Duke of Cumberland, would have gained the crown. His son, George V of Hanover, was just as callous and reactionary as his father. Between them, England would have had 60 years of corrupt rule and an alliance with Austria that would have meant several wars with Prussia. The 20th-century's Anglo-German wars would have started 50 years early.

Resources: The Britannica calls *The Windsor Story* , by Joseph Bryan III and Charles Murphy, excellent, but unflattering. It is probably the most useful book on the subject. Novels by Agatha Christe, P.G. Wodehouse, Dorothy L. Sayers and Margory Alingham will provide both background and situations. Many of the characters can and should be lifted whole out of these books and thrown at the player characters. It is important to remember that the English then, and to some extent now, view all Americans with a mixture of contempt and pity seasoned with ignorance and supposed knowledge. If any of the characters are American, lay it on thick.

Aid the Communists in Greece

In the late '40s, Russian backed communists nearly won control of Greece. Had they succeeded, the Dardenelles would have been effectively closed for years. Turkey's economic development would have suffered as much as Greece's, and Turkish democracy would have withered away. The Border between Greece and Turkey would have been even more of a trouble spot than it was.

Challenge: If most time missions are like ***GURPS Espionage***, this one is more like ***GURPS Special Ops***. Both the Timepiece and Stopwatch agents will be involved in guerrilla warfare. Both sides in the Greek civil war used bandits and organized crime groups as allies. The levels of corruption, deceit, and violence are still shocking. Combat and armory skills will be needed. If there is any realism the players will have to repair their own guns and make their own bombs. Streetwise, Wilderness Survival, Area Knowledge [Greece and Balkans], and Language [Demotic Greek], [Turkish], [Russian], [Bulgarian], and [German], to read the directions on the stolen Nazi weapons. Social, Thief/Spy, and Cultural skills for Greece, will also be useful.

Note: If the time agents have been involved in stopping the 1953 coup in Iran, becoming known trouble makers in the late '40s will aid Stopwatch and both the western and eastern intelligence agencies to be ready for them. Making enemies in your present that will know you in your past, which happens to be their future, is an old science fiction plotline. It can still snag people. Have cruel fun!

Similar Mission: This combination of a violent action/adventure plotline, with a rich cultural background perfect for roleplaying, as opposed to *roll*-playing, can be found in several European wars. The guerrilla wars in Turkey and Yugoslavia could also be manipulated by Stopwatch. Killing Tito would be the Stopwatch goal in Yugoslavia. Both would be similar to the Greek crisis.

The war against Napoleon in Spain, which gave the word "guerrilla" to the language, would offer the same mix but with a little bit of swashbuckling added. Both ***GURPS Swashbuckler*** and ***GURPS Scarlet Pimpernel*** will be useful. Stopwatch would not be aiding Napoleon. They will be using the war as a means of killing off the grandparents of future radicals and liberals. Aiding the reaction by weakening the leaders of liberal parties will be another priority.

For a much grimmer setting, try the Thirty Years War. Stopwatch will be trying to aid the Catholics. Kill Gustavus Adolphus early on and a Catholic reactionary hegemony of Europe is likely. Of course keeping the King alive beyond the battle of Lutzen, could have spread the conflict further afield but it is less likely. Witch hunters, plague, and famine would be added to the guerrilla campaign. The casual violence of the conflict ceased only for moments of horror and slaughter in the name of faith. Time travelers will need a fast-talk specialization in theology if they do not like being

burned alive.

The Spanish Civil War of the late '30s has similarities to the Greek idea, both in time period and enemies, but it was a more idealistic struggle on the Loyalist side. Franco's crew were as brutal as the Nazis, and proud of their crimes.

Resources: Edward S. Forster's *A Short History of Modern Greece 1821-1956*, would be useful for the broad background. *Vasidika, a Village in Modern Greece* by Ernestine Friedl, should provide details for the scene.

Stop Aswan High Dam

Aswan high dam is why Egypt needs peace. They need it for other reasons too. But if even one missile scores a good hit on the dam, no more Egypt.

The valley of the Nile's narrow floodwaters would be held in the valley all the way to the delta. The delta is very flat everything there will still be washed away. The Nile valley holds 95% of Egypt's people. It is the site of more than 95% of Egypt's industry. An even higher percentage of their arable land is in the Nile valley. They can never risk the dam. That is why the dam forces them to make peace.

Stopping the dam would be a gain for Stopwatch because the Middle East wars would not stop till water shortages, which are coming fast, crush those nations by thirst. Only the peace process can give the Middle East a chance to deal with population overload and water shortages.

Challenge: Only president Nasser could have stopped the dam. How Stopwatch will get him to give up what he saw as the symbol and substance of a renewed nationhood, I will not guess. However, once he had decided that the dam was a threat to Egyptian sovereignty, it would be dead.

Stopwatch might prefer to try to stir up Islamic conservatives. Stopwatch could tell the truth about what the dam would do to Egypt. Telling the Muslim Brotherhoods about the reduced sovereignty and ecological degradation, would get them to fight. Telling them, that it is a western affectation that will force peace with Israel will get them to fight for decades.

All social and Thief/Spy skills are useful. Language skills in Egyptian Arabic, Coptic, and possibly Russian if you run into any technical advisors, will be useful. Islamic Theology, Political Science, with a specialty in Arab nationalism, Civil Engineering, Ecology, and cultural skills related to Egypt will help. Martial Arts skills are advised; quick quiet violence will reduce the need for further violence, but the characters will need to be able to defend themselves.

Similar Mission: No other major nation is, or ever was, as vulnerable as Egypt. But while we are on the theme of dams, if Stopwatch gets desperate, they might blow the dam up. Israel would get the blame. The Arabs would call it a new Holocaust. It would be as brutal a crime as the Holocaust and would kill more than ten times as many people. The Middle East wars would heat up and last a generation at the least. If the slaughter did not produce at least ten times as much shock and outrage in the West as the Holocaust, the Arabs would accuse the west of bigotry, hypocrisy, and complicity. Also it would promote a huge worldwide increase in anti-Semitism.

Resources: Nasser's New Egypt by Keith Wheelock, covers life in Egypt at the time the players would be there. Other books with details on the period and its politics are *Egypt* by Tom Little and Miles Copeland's *The Game of Nations*.

Get Japan to Put More Effort in the Invasion of Alaska

FDR had a hard time pushing his beat-Germany-first policy, but the nation was swayed and we attacked the stronger nation first. If the opposition had been stronger or more frenzied, we might have concentrated on Japan first. The outcome of the war would shift.

Getting the Imperial Japanese government to put enough effort into invading Alaska to do more than capture two islands would have panicked the nation. Cooler heads would not have prevailed. FDR would have had to leave

England without enough resources to invade North Africa and protect the Suez canal.

A beat-Japan-first strategy would have likely led to, 1) an invasion of Japan, 2) a less than unconditional surrender of Germany, 3) covering up the Holocaust, and 4) greater expansion of Soviet influence in the post-war world.

Because of Japan's militarist obsessions, an invasion would have been the only way, other than the A-bombs, to get Japan to surrender. Anything less than surrender would have meant another war in three to five years, because of Japan's militaristic worldview, and everyone in the governments of both nations knew it. But invasion of Japan would have been a bloodbath for both sides. The A-bombs did not begin to match the destruction. A democratic post-war Japan, or even a fully independent one, would be unlikely. If the bombs were not ready, then both Japan and the U.S. would have lost millions.

Any extra time for the German army might have given them a chance to capture the Suez canal. Certainly they would have entrenched in North Africa. All the French colonies would have been firmly under their control. The Afrikaner nationalists were pro-Nazi, and only the speed of Allied victory in North Africa keep them from rebellion. Any chance for revolt would have been taken, and the Germans would have made use of it. These events would have greatly prolonged the war and involved Britain in a series of colonial wars right after WWII. The prolonging of the war would have made Germany's unconditional surrender unlikely. At some point both the Axis powers and the Allies would have been exhausted and drained enough to talk terms. The Nazi "knife in the back" myth of German defeat would get a new life because the army would have forced someone else to order the peace.

With less than unconditional surrender there would have been no Nuremberg trials and the death camps would never have been exposed to the eyes of the world. Everything about those camps has been denied by right-wingers even with physical evidence before their eyes. If the evidence is destroyed and the victims silenced, no one would have believed what happened. As it is there are more memorials to the Axis war dead than to the Holocaust victims.

If the A-bomb had been used on Germany, the world's anti-Semites would have claimed that the bombings were equally immoral. The de-Nazification of Germany would still not have been achieved because of the floods of self-pity. Prolonging the European war would aid the communists. Stalin would have pushed for hegemony in Europe as a counterbalance to a un-de-Nazified Germany. The U.S., which would have neither the energy nor resolve after the Japanese invasion for more struggle, might not even have started the Marshall Program. At least Austria, Greece, Turkey, Italy, and possibly France, would have been taken over by the Soviets.

Challenge: If Stopwatch gets the Imperial government to see invading Alaska as a cheap way to scare Australia and Canada into neutrality, and maybe get America to ask for a truce, then the players will have a dirty fight to win. The whole thing will be more like a ***GURPS Illuminati*** campaign than anything else. Conspirators, double bluffs, assassins, fanatics -- and that is just the secretarial pool! Establishing who is trying to get Japan into a self-destructive war and who is merely a militant imperialist will be loads of fun.

If you ever find out who is who, then trying to influence the government's policies will be risky. Even those not arrested by the government might die at the hands of the young officers that made assassination of those who they saw as less loyal than themselves, a fashion in prewar Japan. Any voice of peace or moderation, or even caution, will be labeled disloyal, which could become a death sentence.

Timepiece agents would need to pass for Japanese natives, TL8 plastic surgery will handle it. They will also need patrons to sponsor them in bureaucratic circles. The most likely role, for the player characters, will be as Ninja type agents for deep cover agents. Social, Thief/Spy, and Martial Arts type Combat skills will help. The ability to speak Japanese fluently enough to pass in different social classes at need will be what keeps the agents alive. Check all the language modifiers in ***GURPS Japan***. Cultural skills and Savoir-Faire will help players fit in and go unnoticed.

Similar Mission: Two possibilities come to mind. Stopwatch could work to delay the entry of Japan into the war, which would mean delaying U.S. entry. That would cause most of the same pains in Europe, for the reasons stated. Or Stopwatch could get the U.S. to do a full scale invasion of Vietnam. The Vietnamese plan would have ruined the lives of most of the peoples of Southeast Asia. The U.S., which fought for a policy of stopping communist expansion, would have never gotten the Viet Cong, who fought for national existence, to surrender. America would have ruined

her reputation in the world community by invading a small nation. The inevitable retreat would have made us laughing stocks. The right-wing reaction in the States to the retreat would have crippled the country for generations.

Resources: The only book I know of on the Japanese invasion of Alaska is *The Thousand Mile War* by Brian Garfield. A former head of the U.S. geological survey for Alaska, Alfred Huse Brooks, wrote a book about the Alaskan wilderness in the early years of this century, *Blazing Alaska's Trails*.

Get the Major Hollywood Studios to Back TV in the Late '40s

Because the studios declared war on TV in the late '40s, many new people got a chance to get into the national media. Television programs were made in New York on shoestring budgets; writing, drama, and human interaction, were all they had to depend on. Most of it was still dull, but people took chances, and some of them paid off.

If the movie studios had gone into TV production in the '40s they would have taken over. They had more of every kind of resource and experience. Jackie Gleason, Sid Caesar, Mel Brooks, Neil Simon, Imogene Coca and Carol Burnett all probably would never have made it in the studio system which would have controlled TV.

The competition from TV forced the major studios to experiment with social content, new technologies, color film, and the products of independent film makers. Film Noir would have had far less of an influence. Science fiction, youth issues, and rock and roll would have all been less likely to get into films.

Because the Hollywood studios of the '50s had a long history of contempt for science fiction and horror, shows like *Twilight Zone, Outer Limits* and *Star Trek* would never have been produced. *The Prisoner* and *Doctor Who* would never have been imported either. These shows have had lasting cultural effects which tend to favor Timepiece.

Whoopi Goldberg summed up the effect of *Star Trek* on her when she spoke of Lt. Uhura. "She was a *black woman* and people *listened* to her!" No less a person than Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. recognized the image of a African-American professional woman as radical for that time. The old moguls with their hunger for respectability and country club membership would have seen it, too. And killed it quick.

Challenge: Once the Stopwatch agents are entrenched, it would be an enormous job to thwart them. Show business is a very incestuous business. It was worse in the old Hollywood days. The player characters will need to find their way among legions of phonies before they could find the real phonies. The GM can and should use every show biz cliche in the book. It is really a cross between ***GURPS Illuminati*** and ***Trivial Pursuit.***

The people to influence for control would have to be the moguls. Each of these men were crafty, egotistical, cruel, and shrewd. Manipulating these guys is not impossible, just close to it.

Similar Mission: Messing around with media gives the GM a chance to throw the celebrities of yesteryear in the players' faces. The fun of singing with Elvis, nightclubbing with Fred and Ginger, and machine gunning the Brady Bunch can all be part of your campaign. Canceling, warping or perverting the existence of shows like *All in the Family, M.A.S.H., Roseanne, Good Times, Sixty Minutes,* and *Gunsmoke* could have interesting effects. It is obvious that Stopwatch has controlled standards and practices (the censors) from day one.

Resources: Robert Altman's film *The Player* will cover the basics of the Hollywood business offices. Just remember it is only a film'; the real executives seem much more vapid and are much more vicious. Stewart L. Long's book *The Development of the Television Network Oligopoly* should provide some dates and ideas. The TNT documentary *MGM: When the Lion Roars* also has some information amid the glitter. Most books on the moguls and the studios are gossipy and don't have any details about the real business offices.

Get Truman to Let MacArthur Attack China

This would have lead to a major prolonged war in the '50s. Nuclear weapons would have been used. In spite of the anti-communists' propaganda, Russia did not have as many bombs or delivery systems as the U.S. and they might not

have even gotten a bomb dropped on U.S. soil. The fallout would have made it over anyway. There would have been a repeat of WWII's destruction less than a decade after its end. Germany, France, Britain, Japan, China, and the U.S.S.R. would have taken the main shock -- again.

A world war at the height of the anti-communist hysteria of the early ['50s would have permanently damaged U.S. civil liberties. Neither the economy or the environment would have recovered for a long time.

Challenge: Because of the Cold War, strangers talking peace would have been at least suspect. The national press corps was filled with people who saw Reds under every bed. The real menace of communism was hidden behind our projected nightmares. It would be like a ***GURPS Illuminati*** silly campaign in deadly earnest.

The major players in the period would have been hard to manipulate. MacArthur always seemed to corner the market on arrogance. Truman was more thoughtful than his "Give-em-Hell-Harry" image would suggest. But good or bad, he would stick to an idea. He was the hero who forced the Democratic party to commit to civil rights, and he was the fool who got the CIA through Congress with extremely limited oversight. McCarthy was a blustering bully, but he could also be very charming; he thought only of himself. Even more selfish was Roy Cohn. He was also mindlessly vindictive and given to blackmail.

Thief/Spy skills would be needed for this intervention. All Social skills and a wide knowledge of recent history will also help. Most of the major modern languages will be useful, too. Letting most people know you're able to speak other tongues would have made you seem weird in the States, but it would get you a positive reaction in other countries.

Similar Mission: Patton wanted to start a war with Russia right at the end of WWII. His death prevented him from trying. It was not that he cared about the Communists, it was just that he wanted to have another war. He knew that the Atom bomb meant the end of his kind of warfare. If Stopwatch could keep him alive long enough to start a war when Truman would have lacked the clout to stop him, WWIII would begin. The politics of the war would have prevented the Marshall plan, the democratization of Japan, the Nuremberg trials, and India's independence. The post war economy would have been bleak and Europe would not have revived for decades.

Resources: The Korea Knot: A military-political history by Carl Berger, should give you background. ***GURPS Atomic Horror*** also covers the period. Charles A. Willoughby and John R. Chamberlain's *MacArthur 1941-1951* should have information on the Truman/MacArthur conflict; search out several sources.

Warn Syria About the June 5th Air Raids During the 1967 War

Israel took a huge gamble during the 1967 war. They had their whole air force attack one target at a time. Without leaving any significant reserve to defend Israel. On June 5th, 1967, almost all of Israel's air force was attacking Egypt. If Syria had known how vulnerable Israel was, they could have wiped out Israel while Israel wiped out the Egyptian air force. This would have left Assad the undisputed master of the Middle East.

Challenge: This is an espionage mission. Thief/Spy, Social, and Language skills, are vital. The player characters must remember not to take away Israel's advantage of surprise. Most of the effort would have to be put into Syria, keeping the Syrians from believing or acting on Stopwatch information.

Similar Mission: Telling secrets can change things. Tell North Korea about Inchon, tell the Nazis about June 6th, tell the U.S. about the Tet offensive, tell everybody Paul is dead, no wait, we did that one. Spilling the beans to the right person at the right time can destroy a lot of hard work and lives. And it's fun, too!

Resources: I got the idea from *Transformation of War* by Martin van Creveld. It is a book all the serious thinkers at the Pentagon are reading to understand how war has changed. All serious pacifists are reading it too. The best-period book on the Israeli army is *The Israeli Army* by E.N.Luttwak and D.Horowitz. John F. Devlin's *Syria: Modern State in an Ancient Land* and Nikolaos van Dam's *The Struggle for Power in Syria rev. ed* should cover the Syrian side.

Disrupt the Supreme Court During the Brown vs. the Board of Education Hearings

This was the single most important case to go before the high court in U.S. history and everyone in the courtroom knew it! It was also unusual in that all of the justices agreed that the decision had to be unanimous. All of the judges believed that the South might try to secede from the union again. Riots and mass slaughter of African-Americans were believed to be likely as well. If anything had happened to scare the judges, they would have just waffled till they felt the nation could bring itself to do justice in the case.

Challenge: Anything dramatic could have fouled things up. The players would need to worry about attackers from any and all sides. Stopwatch might find an emotionally disturbed black man, and slip him a gun. A shooting spree in the court chamber, particularly if Earl Warren or Thurgood Marshall gets killed, and the NAACP goes back to square one. A white man with a gun and a rebel flag would have been seen as proof that the South would explode.

Players could use the Alertness, Danger Sense, Empathy, Intuitive, and Luck Advantages for this intervention. Thief/Spy, Social, Social Science, and very quiet Combat skills are vital. Fast-Talk, Diplomacy, Acting, Detect Lies and Occultism (Race Theories) will all be vital.

Similar Mission: Derailing civil rights movements would appeal to Stopwatch. As authoritarians, they wouldn't see leaders like Dr. King, Nelson Mandela, Ghandi, Mother Jones, De Valera, Mrs. Pankhurst and Susan B. Anthony as expressing an focusing the popular will, but as creating their movements and imposing them on others. They would believe that murdering or corrupting such people would prevent the movements they championed. Timepiece would know better, but would still have to guard all these champions.

Resources: The movie *Simple Justice* is a great introduction to the tensions surrounding the case. *A History of the Supreme Court* by Bernard Schwartz and *Free at Last?* by Fred Powledge, will provide background dates and many story hooks, if you dig for them.

by J. Hunter Johnson

INWO: One With Everything is a good way to introduce players to ***INWO*** without making them think about deck construction (yet). But its all-the-cards, all-the-time format can also be a drawback, if you keep drawing cards with very specific targets (like The First Thing We Do, Let's Kill All the Lawyers) or very specific requirements (like Angst) -- something that you don't normally have to worry about in a constructed-deck game (unless you're just really bad at making decks). This variant combines the newbie-friendliness of One With Everything and the harmony of a constructed deck. The Abuses section of the One With Everything rules alludes to this type of variant, but my intentions are good . . .

The idea is simple -- get a set of Group cards with a common theme, and take out the Plot cards that are less likely to be useful with those Groups. In this case, the Groups deck focuses on Nations, making this the New World War as the secret organizations fight for international political power. This will usually be a cold war, but it can get hotter as NWO: World War Three comes and goes.

The Groups Deck

The Nations cards make up the heart of this deck. Groups that have something to do with Nations (or just fit the international theme) provide support. The Groups deck is made up of:

Al Amarja*
Australia*
The Big Prawn*
Bill Clinton
Boy Sprouts
Brazil
C.I.A.
Canada
Center for Disease Control
China
Earthquake Projector
England
Federal Reserve
Fidel Castro
Finland
France
Germany
Helmut Kohl**
Hidden City
The Holy Grail
International Cocaine Smugglers
International Communist Conspiracy
International Weather Organization
Israel
Italy

Japan
Killer Satellite*
Loch Ness Monster
The Mafia
Manuel Noriega
Margaret Thatcher
MI-5
Midas Mill
Multinational Oil Companies
NATO
Offshore Banks
Orbital Mind Control Lasers
Power Satellite*
Red Cross
Rogue Boomer
Russia
Saddam Hussein
Spy Satellite*
Switzerland
United Nations
USA**
Vatican City
Vladimir Zhirinovsky*
W.I.T.C.H.
Weather Satellite

* From the ***Assassins!*** expansion (leave them out if you don't have them -- or substitute some other cards, like Nuclear Power Companies or Robot Sea Monsters).

** From ***Neue Weltordnung*** (if you don't have those cards, you can find out what they do in the article "***INWO*** Spricht Deutsch" from *Pyramid* #16 and use proxies, or just leave them out).

The Plots Deck

The Plots Deck should start with one of every Plots card you can find, at least from the base set and the ***Assassins!*** expansion. Treat NWO: Peace in Our Time as a Yellow NWO card for this game, to provide some counterbalance to NWO: World War Three.

If you have ***INWO SubGenius,*** you might consider adding a few cards from there as well, although most of them only work well with the ***SubGenius*** groups (some good ones are Miraculous Manifestation, Rant!, The 13th Apostle, Time Control, and Official, Divine, All-Inclusive Excuse).

Then you remove the following cards, since they don't have enough "targets" in the Groups Deck to be useful:

Air Magic
Albino Alligators
And STAY Dead!
Angst
The Auditor from Hell
Backfire*
Backmasquerade*
Bait and Switch*
Bank Merger
Bar Codes*

The Big Score
Bimbo at Eleven
Bite the Wax Tadpole*
Blood, Toil, Tears and Sweat
Car Bomb
Cease Fire*
Censorship
Charismatic Leader
Cold Fusion
Computer Security
Computer Virus
Counterspell
Cover-Up
Crackdown on Crime*
Crusade*
Currency Speculation
Death to All Fanatics*
Defection*
Dolphins*
Don't Rock the Boat*
Don't Touch That Dial*
Earth Magic
Eat the Rich!
Exorcism*
Exposed!
Family Values*
The First Thing We Do, Let's Kill All the Lawyers
Floating Point Error*
Foiled!
Frankenfood*
Freaking the Mundanes
Full Moon
Gang War
Go Fish*
GOAL: Blinded By Science*
GOAL: Criminal Overlords
GOAL: Earth First*
GOAL: Hail Eris!
GOAL: The Corporate Masters
Grave Robbers*
Harmonica Virgins
Hex
Infobahn
The Internet Worm
Jake Day
Jihad
Junk Bonds*
Let the Sunshine In*
Market Manipulation
Mass Murder
Media Connections
Metric System*
Miracle Diet Plan
Mob Influence

Monopoly
Never Surrender
Nevermore!*
NWO: Antitrust Legislation*
NWO: Bigger Business
NWO: Energy Crisis
NWO: Military-Industrial Complex
NWO: Tax Reform
NWO: The Magic Goes Away*
NWO: Visualize Whirled Peas*
NWO: Watermelons*
An Offer You Can't Refuse
Partition*
Pave the Earth!*
Pizza for the Secret Meeting*
Plague of Demons
Poison
Power Corrupts
Privatization
Pulitzer Prize
Regi$tered Trademark*
Resistance Is Useless!
Rewriting History
Save the Whales
Scandal
The Stars Are Right
Stock Split
Sufficiently Advanced Technology*
Supernova*
Sweeping Reforms
Take the Money and Run*
Tax Breaks
Teflon Coating*
Unlucky 13
Vile Secretions*
The Weird Turn Pro
Whispering Campaign
Witch Hunt*
Withering Curse

Finally, you can use some of those blank cards to serve as duplicates of the NWO: World War Three card, so that you have one in the deck for each player. Or two per player if you're feeling particularly anti-social. Some of the other blank cards can become:

War-Crimes Trials

But he started it!

Only playable when NWO: World War Three is in play. Discard NWO: World War Three. The player who played that card must remove all action tokens from his Nations and expose the Plot cards in his hand.

Isolationism

The target Illuminati cannot take over Nation groups.
An Illuminati action is required to play this Zap.
Play on a rival Illuminati at any time except during a privileged attack. A Zap stays on its victim until it is removed. Spending an Illuminati action, at any time, will remove all Zaps from any one player.

Summit

No Nation group, no matter who owns it, may use its Action token(s) until the end of the present turn, except to defend itself against an attack. Alternatively, if this card is played immediately after a Nation action, that action is canceled. **This card requires an Illuminati or Nation action.**

Foreign Aid

Don't spend it all in one place.

Place an Action token on any one Nation group, or on two or more Nations whose current Power adds up to 5 or less. This card may not benefit a group that already has any tokens, or a group which is suffering from any effect that prevents it from getting Action tokens. This card may be played at any time. It requires an action from your Illuminati.

Nuclear Capability

We've had Top Men working around the clock . . .

This card may be played at any time, and counts as the action for the group it affects. The increased Power takes effect immediately. The Power for one Nation group is increased to 6. Link this card to your chosen Nation.
No player may have more than one Nuclear Capability in play.

More Grist for the Mill

That's it -- you're set for a lively game of global thermonuclear war, just like in WarGames. Or you can try it the sophisticated way and win through diplomatic means. Note also that the various Illuminati are not created equal here -- the Adepts, for instance, are not going to find a whole lot of use for their special powers. So make sure everyone knows (or can look through) the decks before selecting their faction.

This is just one example of a themed One With (Not Quite) Everything deck. You could also have Illuminati: New World Paparazzi (Media and Personalities), Illuminati: New-World Politics (U.S. Democrats and Republicans), or Illuminati: Technomancer Order (Science and Magic). If you're into cooperative gaming, throw in just the Peaceful Groups and let everyone play Shangri-La . . . Just so long as you can keep dragging new players into the grip of the conspiracy, They'll be happy.

By Mike Stackpole

[*Editor's Note:* This column originally appeared in the February 1999 issue of *Comics Retailer* magazine, Issue #83.]

It's January, and I try to do columns that are predictive in nature. I'm going out on a limb this time, making a big prediction and one that won't come true until the middle of the year 2000 or so. That prediction is that I'll buy TSR in the year 2000, paying for it what it's worth (a million and change -- what Wizards of the Coast should have paid for it) and turn the company around to rebuild it into what it should be. The first thing I'll do is stop the stupid mistakes TSR keeps making. By way of example:

TSR actually tightened the discount on its backlist. Let's follow this logic: Backlist items sell more slowly than frontlist, so let's give distributors smaller discounts on the slow-moving stuff. Is that what the business schools are teaching these days? Let's realize something, kids: If a product isn't on the shelf, it ain't going to sell. By giving the same or a bigger discount on backlist stuff than you provide on frontlist stuff, you encourage having more product in the stores, thereby making liquid the capital you have tied up in inventory. Since frontlist sales drive backlist sales, tightening the backlist supply makes no sense whatsoever, since it won't be in the stores to satisfy demand. **Rule #1:** Let's not let the short-term bottom line blind us to making sensible decisions about how to move product.

TSR has intimated that it may be moving toward a flat-fee payment for novels by first-time authors. That pretty much guarantees it'll only get first-timers working in its line, eroding quality and sales. I can remember a time when every TSR novel hit the *New York Times* bestseller list. TSR's book sales have collapsed to the point at which in any given month a ***BattleTech*** or ***Shadowrun*** novel can eclipse them on chain bestseller lists. I know first-hand the numbers that ***BattleTech*** novels sell, indicating a 600% reduction in TSR novel sales over the last decade. **Rule #2:** If you want quality, you pay for quality. Book lines don't succeed by beggaring authors and working with first novelists. Cherry-pick the best novelists out there, get some seriously kick-butt books going, and return to the glory days.

How did I pick the year 2000 as when I'd snag TSR? Well, that's when I figure it'll be at its lowest point, approximately three months after the release of the *Third Edition* of ***Advanced Dungeons & Dragons.*** I predict that product will tank big-time and I'm willing to point out my reasons for that scenario now, a good 18 months out, so TSR can correct the problems and prevent the disaster. And I'm willing to do this even if it will cost me the chance to buy TSR.

The biggest problem I see with the coming product is the direction from which TSR is coming at it. I think the folks working on the project may not be designing a game suited to today's market. I think they may be using this opportunity to turn ***AD&D3*** into what they think ***AD&D*** should have been. Game designers (and gamers) are all notorious for this: thinking we know better than the original designer of the game. Working from a basis of nostalgia that contains not a little contempt for the changes made when the second edition came out, I think TSR may be working on a game that would have been state of the art in 1982. I worry it will be rules-heavy, written in an impenetrable style, unintelligible to a beginning player and idiosyncratic enough to annoy players outside the design team. I fear it will come out in a series of five books, each of which will run $35. Sales will spike with the first one, then spiral down in flames. (And, in an attempt to recover from this disaster, TSR could offer a Classic Coke-New Coke dichotomy in subsequent products, but those things couldn't roll out until 2001, which will be far too late.)

The second problem is that TSR's missed what has been successful in the past. Since 1985, with ***Dragonlance,*** and certainly 1989 with ***Vampire*** and ***Shadowrun,*** the lesson in the industry is that worlds sell, not game systems. ***Deadlands*** is the latest example of this: The game system is inelegant, but the world is so exciting and vital that folks

buy the products. To be able to move ***AD&D3*** and make it a big hit, TSR needs to design a new game world that will be fresh and exciting and pull a lot of readers in. The difficulty there is, as I have pointed out endlessly, TSR/Wizards of the Coast's track record leads one to worry that it couldn't develop an intellectual property if a gun were held to designers' heads. TSR staffers look at things like ***BattleTech*** and ***Shadowrun*** -- which they contemptuously consider dead lines -- and wonder why they continue to sell. Here's the secret, boys: They continue to sell because the lines reinvent themselves over and over again. Take ***BattleTech,*** for example. Since 1987 I've been working to shape the history of that universe. We had the Fourth Succession War (two years), the Clan Invasion (three years), The Chaos March War (two years). and the Twilight of the Clans (two years) -- and that's leading into the new era. FASA has been doing event-based releases for more than a decade that keeps ***BattleTech*** fresh and trucking right along. Things are shaped to appeal to the market, to our changing audience.

Of course, TSR has the resources to go out and hire folks to create a kick-butt fantasy world in which to set ***AD&D3.*** They've got the lead time for great novels set there. They can make it exciting and launch the game as a line that invites new players into roleplaying games, allowing them to graduate to ***AD&D2,*** which eventually will be supplanted, as reprints of older products carry stats for both games. ***AD&D2*** is gradually retired, and the transition will be a seamless one that won't spawn a backlash.

The third problem I see with ***AD&D3*** is that it's really too little, too late. TSR has good reasons for delaying the release, but these are problems that could be taken care of by other means. The second Wizards of the Coast bought TSR, the ***Magic*** roleplaying game should have been on the drawing boards and should have been out by January 1998, if not sooner. (They could even have been working on it during the acquisition phase. The staff working on ***AD&D3*** was already at Wizards of the Coast, anyway.) There really was a need for a product that would have proved that TSR under new ownership wasn't just going to be the same-old same-old, but that time has passed. A ***Magic*** roleplaying game would have also broadened the ***Magic*** property, but my remarks about handling an intellectual property still apply here.

In addition to that, the staff that isn't working on ***AD&D3*** is left to work on products they know won't be getting a big push and likely will be superseded when ***AD&D3*** comes out. The designers at TSR in that position could well be better people than I am, but I know I'd lose a bit of my competitive fire and drive to crank out my best work when my projects were destined to be forgotten or given short shrift as far as promotion was concerned.

The fourth big problem I see is related to the first, but I'll reiterate it so it can't be missed: Designers at TSR (and Wizards of the Coast, for that matter) have transcended their audience. It doesn't matter if they still game -- in fact, that exacerbates the problem. What they are is old gamers who are getting older. They know what they like and they tweak things to mesh with what they like. There doesn't seem to be any inducement in the corporate culture to get folks to think outside the box or, at least, to look at what today's audiences want and then provide it. (Flat or failing sales in ***Magic*** releases point out how the market is shrinking; flat and shrinking Wizards of the Coast income numbers, despite pulling in Five Rings and TSR, show a failure to expand its lines with products that appeal to customers walking away from ***Magic.***)

When I buy TSR, I'll make a number of changes. The first thing is to make the book, magazine, and game divisions all start pulling in the same direction. Stories about game-product managers having to beg novel slots from the book folks are just plain stupid. Books began as promotional tools for games and, though their sales might exceed those of game products, if things are not coordinated, then the added benefit for game sales evaporates. And *Dragon* needs to maintain its support role, publishing previews, short stories by novel authors, and keeping folks informed about all the exciting stuff coming up. Coordination of these efforts is vital and I'd see to it that it would be done. I would go back to cherry-picking the material that gets shipped to the book trade. Bookstores only ever used to be feeders to the game trade: Introductory items, as well as novels, would go into the stores. Things that players would graduate to would be found in speciality stores, and I'd return to that program. What went into the book trade would only be items that would be winners for the stores, and that would feed new folks into gaming. Anyone already in the subculture would have to be serviced in game stores, where the staff is knowledgeable about games and can provide gaming experiences that bookstores never will.

I would establish rapid-response design teams and give them the goal of putting together sharp, event-based release

projects. These projects would be stand-alone items using an existing game system, streamlined to let anyone pick up the material and start playing immediately. The venues for these events might be existing worlds or new worlds, giving us a chance to introduce new folks to existing worlds -- or trying out a concept to see if we want to expand it later. While most of the design staff would continue to service strong lines, we'd have some hot, kicky new projects to sate the tastes of jaded players and designers alike.

I'd adjust the balance between marketing and creativity, because, whenever one predominates, the lines suffer. Marketing can't tell creators what they should produce, because marketing bases future projections on past performance. As far as marketers are concerned, more of the same is the way to go. Innovation runs the risk of alienating the audience, but it never does it as well as boredom, in my opinion. Marketers should concentrate on identifying our audience and seeking means to acquaint that audience with our games. Creators need to be reminded who their audience is. They need to be reminded that every product is going to be someone's first product, and, if we lose that person then, we've lost him forever. While some products will be so idiosyncratic no beginner could understand them without other reference, gateway products can't be that way. Once the creators understood there were parameters within which their work had to function, they'd be let alone to go wild, with praise and bonuses to follow performance.

What do I think my chances of success would be, were I at TSR's helm? I think they'd be stunning. A little direction, a big dose of reality, some streamlining and coordination, and I think TSR could scream. The excuses of "That's the way we've always done it," or "Gamers will like it because I'm a gamer and I like it," just won't fly any more. We'd be doing projects that will lead the industry in innovation, cost, and fun -- putting all the weight of TSR's reputation and history behind them.

What do I think are the chances that I'll be able to snap TSR up for a song 18 months from now? Frighteningly closer than even I'd care to imagine. After only 16 months, TSR's first director under Wizards of the Coast has been moved aside, despite having designed and brought into being the heavily touted ***Alternity.*** Any changes made by the new director will be hard-pressed to bear fruit by the time ***AD&D3*** is due out, so I see another shift then, which destroys any continuity of leadership in time for the new rollout. Whoever is dropped into the driver's seat at that point will be put in charge of a vehicle careening out of control, and surviving the coming crash is not guaranteed.

Wizards of the Coast bought TSR for a staggering sum of money -- one which TSR never really has a chance of earning back except in the extreme long term. (OK, some serious licensing deals could earn it back, but we're 18 months out from purchase, and the only licensing deals I've seen out of Wizards of the Coast/TSR have involved their becoming licensees, not licensors.) At some point Wizards of the Coast is going to look to rid itself of a division that isn't profitable, and that's when some sharp cookie will snap it up.

Does this mean I think TSR is going to collapse and bring down the market? On our level, within our end of the hobby, that's not really a concern. What I do think is that TSR isn't going to be in a position to expand the market the way it could, which hurts us all. With the right strategies in place, with a cold dose of reality and an internal restructuring that provides direction and motivation, TSR could be in a growth spiral. I just hope someone steps up and does the job before circumstances makes more dire predictions come true.

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Psychological Gaming on the Star Wars CCG Battlefield

by Francis K. Lalumiere

Psychology has always been used in confrontations: there's nothing new under that particular sun. From a simple business transaction to a full-fledged war, psychological manipulation proved to be a subtle but powerful ally. Taking this secret weapon into the strategic environment of the ***Star Wars Customizable Card Game*** was an natural step. Strategy and psychology go hand in hand, and many great wars have really been fought not on bloodstained plains, but behind closed eyelids, across the imaginary battlefields of a strained mind. And when the clash of weapons takes place on the familiar surface of a tabletop, what we usually call "psychological warfare" subtly morphs into "psychological gaming".

There are many advantages in using psychology as a war machine. It is a weapon that costs nothing, that can be carried anywhere with no effort whatsoever, that is so versatile it can be wielded in just about any kind of situation, and that loses nothing to the enemy knowing it is about to be used against him -- because you can always turn to counter-psychology. Sneaky is the name of the game indeed. But nothing is perfect, and there is a handful of disadvantages here, which pretty much boil down to the fact that you have several details to consider all at once, while keeping in mind the game itself. Our goal is thus to make psychological gaming a second nature, so you can *consciously* concentrate on the physical game elements (in our case, the cards), and let your mental reflexes handle the rest. But letting your subconscious take psychological control is more easily said than done, and so we'll examine in detail the different aspects of psychological gaming as it exists in the ***SWCCG*** environment.

Relax, take a deep breath, and look closely at the pendulum . . .

The Cards

Cards are the obvious vehicle for psychological gaming, since they are, in fact, the only game elements that physically exist. Now the most popular scheme has always been the bluff: Con your opponent into thinking that you've got a specific card in hand, when in fact you don't. This tactic is actually so well known that very few people would call it "psychological gaming." It is the basis of any card game, collectible or not. You try to outguess your opponent as to what he can truly do with his resources. But however common bluffing may be, it still belongs in our big bag o' psychological tools.

Still, there is much more to this art than to pretend you're holding a threatening card. Making your opponent believe you're *not* holding a certain card is a start, and it's often surprisingly effective because most people expect it the other way around. Most of the time, this is achieved through the use of subtle body language signs, as we'll see in a moment. But some effects can be conveyed through innocent comments or questions, like the (in)famous "How many cards do you have in your hand?" when you're not holding a *Monnok* at all, or when you don't even have one copy of

it in your deck!

Also pay a great deal of attention to your overall attitude, which can yield interesting results. The traditional "poker face" is usually what we see around the card table, and with good reason. No use in letting your opponent know you just drew the bolt that your war machine was missing. Or is there? Timed carefully, this trap -- letting your adversary believe you drew just what you were waiting for -- might have your opponent focus his attention where he should not, and allow the breakthrough you needed to go unopposed. Reversed -- this is when you act as if you just drew slag -- it might just help the dreaded seed of overconfidence grow its roots all over your opponent's strategy. But be careful not to betray yourself in the process; I've seen it done more than once.

The way you handle your hand also affects the gameplay of your opponent, whether he realizes it or not. Almost in every case, the effect is not conscious, but remains nonetheless very important. You're not as geared up yet as you wish you'd be? Keep your cards spread out in a large fan, and even if your adversary isn't looking directly at your hand, he's constantly reminded that you have more than a few resources at your disposal. You could probably deploy *en masse*, and are most certainly prepared for whatever threat he could throw your way. You hand is way too large for your taste? Keep the cards in your hand together in a neat stack, and unless your opponent looks directly at your hand, or asks you, he won't be really aware of just what your possibilities are (or could be). Moreover, this *Grimtaash* you've been fearing since the beginning of the game might stay unplayed for a little while longer. Now this is very different from hiding some or all of your cards, or keeping your hand under the table, which would be rightfully considered cheating. Instead, you always keep your hand above the tabletop, in plain view, but you manipulate it to your liking and send subtle messages to your opponent. Note that no method is better than the other: it all depends on the situation you're in and the effect you seek. If you've only got a few cards left and would like to delay an impending invasion, holding your four or five cards in a wide fan might slow your opponent's enthusiasm just long enough for you to catch up. Likewise, if your hand *looks* large enough, perhaps your opponent won't think of using the special ability of his *M'iiyoom Onith* this turn. Sounds way too far-fetched? Try it for yourself.

The different piles (Used, Lost, Force and Reserve Deck) and their contents also have an interesting and sometimes powerful psychological impact on gameplay. We've all looked in awe at some incredibly fat Force Pile with the "fear of deployment" clinging to our very soul, because we weren't sure what to expect (and with *that* much Force, anything can happen . . .). But people usually leave a large number of cards in their Force Pile when they already have what they were looking for, and expect to deploy it all on their next turn. Since everyone is aware of this, you'll turn it around and use the tool in another way, by leaving quite a few cards in your Force Pile even when you haven't really drawn what you needed. I usually do this when I know I'll be able to manage with what I have, but I don't want my opponent to act just yet. If I draw everything, he'll be a lot less suspicious and may start implementing his own strategy. Bad thing. Besides, I'll have more Force to work with if something *does* happen -- even the best hand in the world can't help you if you don't have the resources to back it up. On the other hand, leaving no cards at all, or very few, in your Force Pile can lead your opponent to think that you're relatively helpless during his own turn, and if you've got a surprise or two packed in your hand, he might get more than he bargained for. Combining the "dried-up Force Pile" scheme with the subtly bored-to-death look of the guy who just drew ten copies of *Juri Juice* is especially vicious. In such a situation, Interrupts that play without a cost are terrific. And cards that can deploy for free, like *Black 4* (with a pilot!!) are a complete nightmare. For your opponent, of course.

Needless to say, this system is dynamic: all of these methods depend on what is in your hand, what is in play, and what your goal is at any given time. But these tactics are very flexible and can be adapted to any situation with a minimum of work -- and a maximum of fun.

Body Language

Body language is without a doubt the core of any psychological battle (even if you use words, your body has to

convincingly back up what you say). The best instrument at your disposal remains your face. The classic "poker face" is always the most popular option, and it should be your "default" mode. But should the need arise for a psychological thrust, bid the eternal poker face farewell and let emotions cross your features. Which emotions? The ones that suit you, of course. Say *Grand Moff Tarkin* is alone at some site and you'd like to play with real effectiveness the *Moment Of Triumph* you've got in your hand. You need your opponent to attack, and to achieve this you'll make him believe *Tarkin* is really cornered -- and that *you* are cornered, too. Look desperate or resolute, whichever attitude would be yours if you were really done for, and wait for the outcome. Chances are your adversary will divide his forces, to try to be effective in more than just one place, and hit your lone *Tarkin* with what he thinks is enough. Gotcha. And now that we can play Interrupts during a battle, such ambushes can prove to be even more destructive. A lone *Han Solo* at a site (and a desperate-looking player on the same side of the table) might look like a tempting target; until *Solo Han* gets out of the bag, *Life Debt* hits the table, *Chewbacca* deploys for free . . . you get the idea.

The way a player is seated also provides very useful information. Someone who feels defeated and doesn't think there's any way to get back into the game will usually lay slumped on his chair. However, a player who's got everything he needs to go on and who thinks victory may still be within his grasp will look sharp and be, most of the time, on the very edge of his seat. So in the middle of a game, even if you don't want to say anything or have any kind of look on your face, staying slouched on your chair, with not even one muscle tensed, will give your opponent the impression that this is going to be an easy win. Once again, he might relax his focus just enough for you to suddenly jump out of your lethargy and slip into the breach.

Nervous twitches might also be a good tool when you want to create the illusion that you're trapped. But don't overdo it -- it might turn out to be simply annoying. You want to look natural, and convey the believable illusion of something that's true, "from a certain point of view." So keep in mind you've got to be yourself. A yourself who's acting a bit, yes, but who remains yourself nonetheless.

The Environment

Psychological gaming is only effective in an enclosed environment. This doesn't mean that you have to be playing in your own living room with all doors and windows shut to use it: The playing area can be *psychologically* as well as physically enclosed. Tournaments are a good example of psychologically enclosed settings -- the players are usually surrounded by silence, and there is just about nothing there that could possibly distract two opponents engaged in a serious game of ***SWCCG.*** This is where you'll want to bring out the psychological artillery, because your opponent is in a very receptive situation. He'll probably hear every sigh to escape your lungs, notice each of your gestures out of the corner of his eye, and be able to "smell" your panic or your confidence.

So a relaxed game in a noisy card shop might not be the best opportunity for psychological gaming practice, although you might want to give it a try there as well. You'll quickly realize that you can't use your tactics in the exact same way, but that's okay. "Adaptation" is Esperanto for psychological gaming.

Defending against Psychological Gaming, and Counter-Psychology

It is often said that the best form of defense is the attack, and so your psychological target may very well decide to try your own weapons against you for a change. What to do then? The usual way out involves diving right in and meeting your opponent on equal footing. If kept up long enough by both players, this leads to a meta-game, a psychological gaming match atop the actual game of ***SWCCG.*** While this sort of thing can be very interesting and exciting (and potentially neuron-burning), it seldom happens, for psychological gaming in practice consists of short bursts of psychological maneuvering separated by long periods of strategic contemplation. So most of the time you'll want to attain a level of concentration -- and awareness -- sufficiently high to sustain a very short psychological attack, and then drop back to "surveillance" mode until the time comes to parry a new blow, or deliver one of your own. So keep your eyes peeled for any impending "mind attack" and learn the tricks yourself. In addition to having them at your

disposal for use at the most opportune moment, you'll be able to recognize a psychological maneuver when it's coming.

Then there is the matter of counter-psychology, which comes into play when your opponent knows, or suspects, you're using psychological gaming. No problem. The idea here is to try and use this particular information against him. For example, you could act in a way that would let your adversary see that you know he's aware of your Jedi mind trick attempt, and lead him to believe that as a result you've abandoned your plan altogether. Then, while he's waiting for another trap to be sprung on him, you drop the very same web he had discovered. I know that this may sound like a lot of "theoretical considerations" yelled by a drunken armchair general sprawled in the back of a smoky pub, and that it all seems impossible to apply in real-life situations, but believe me: you'd be surprised to see how often you unconsciously play these little mind games each time your ***SWCCG*** cards (or any cards, for that matter) find their way to a tabletop.

Learning the Psychological Game

While the best way to learn the actual game is to watch other people play, the best way to start learning psychological gaming remains to observe yourself. Study your actions and your thoughts during a couple of games, and try to see what purpose some of your most innocent moves and words might have been hiding. Again, you'll be surprised at the presence of so many little automatic psychological thrusts and parries. And once you've identified a few recurring patterns in your own gameplay, try to find them again in others. In itself, this activity is a *lot* of fun. All that remains to do is to adapt those tactics to your own style, so that your actions look natural and automatic.

Psychological Gaming and Ethics

Whenever psychological gaming is discussed, one question always pops up: is it ethically acceptable to make use of such tactics? When it is handled properly and in the spirit of strategy gaming, certainly. What I mean is that there is a big difference between using certain psychological "wedges" to push your opponent out of his equilibrium, and giving way to actions which show a total lack of sportsmanship. Trying to distract your opponent each time his control phase swings around so as to make him forget to Force Drain is under the headline *Cheating* in my book. Staying still and keeping from running through your hand on the lookout for "what to throw out" -- so you don't unwittingly remind your opponent that he should be Force Draining you -- is perfectly okay, and is an excellent example of psychology at work in strategy gaming. It all depends on how it's done. Psychological gaming never forces the opponent into a corner; rather, it lays a trap and awaits patiently for the adversary to stumble into it.

Furthermore, psychology is usually the basis of any strategy game: bluffing and counter-bluffing, feinting and then flanking. To ban psychological gaming is to destroy much of gaming itself. Which brings us to the next concern: isn't psychological gaming unfair to new players? Actually, not at all. Psychological effects only work on players who have a thorough knowledge of the game. Imagine that player A fears player B might play an *Elis Helrot* during his turn, and squeeze the fat out of player A's small band of characters alone at a site. To try to prevent this, player A decides to leave 2 Force in his Force Pile, in order to suggest to player B that he's holding a *Quite A Mercenary.* Now although player A's strategy is a good one, it won't work unless player B is familiar with the card *Quite A Mercenary.* If he's a ***SWCCG*** veteran, he might just fall into the trap and wait one more turn before playing his itching *Elis Helrot*; but if he's a newcomer, still unfamiliar with the huge variety of cards, the whole scheme won't mean a thing to him, and he'll simply proceed with his plan. So in fact, new players (and absent-minded ones, I might add) are simply immune to psychological gaming. The true nature of the beast lies only in the eye of an experienced beholder. And for those who maintain that "such psychological trickery" detracts from the spirit of ***Star Wars,*** I'll remind you that it was used more than once throughout the trilogy, the most famous instance probably being at the end of *Return of the Jedi*, when Darth Vader seeks a way to get Luke back into the lightsaber duel: "If you will not turn to the Dark Side, perhaps *she* will . . ."

One must always remember, though, that this is only a game, and that psychological gaming merely adds one more

element to an already highly enjoyable universe. But if you do decide to use this interesting tool, do so with care and respect. Wielded properly, it'll bring you lots of fun and maybe a few additional victories. In the words of the Bard himself, "Bait the hook well: this fish will bite."

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by Alexander Shearer

Art by Dan Smith

It couldn't be what he thought it was.

Greg leaned against the pseudo-classical facade of the clothing store, taking slow, deep breaths to try and relax. He closed his eyes, counted to ten in Altaic, then opened them and turned to look around the corner again. His breath left as a ragged hiss.

There he was, paying for a newspaper at the magazine shop.

"Doppelgänger" is an extended adventure, designed to be slipped into a normal campaign instead of played by itself. It can be woven in as quickly or slowly as desired, though it will have an increasingly great impact on the campaign as a whole as it draws to a close. As with other adventures, you'll spoil things for yourself as a player if you read through any of the following material ahead of time (and that would be a shame). GMs are encouraged to read everything a few times before trying to run "Doppelgänger," to ensure a smooth game.

The Protagonists

This adventure can be used for a wide range of character types, from secretive magicians to Black Ops. While it sometimes refers to the PCs as "heroes," they don't really have to be heroic, just worth the attention of Francis Bauding and the RRG. Especially good targets include superheroes, government agents, people with political influence and anyone else with exceptional abilities. For more perfectly Illuminated campaigns, anyone is a good target -- the Illuminati guard their motives closely.

Assembly Instructions

"Doppelgänger" is presented below in a series of chapters. Rather than explicit single events, each one describes a step in the progression of this interwoven adventure. Some of them, especially the early ones, are easily handled as simple comments or hints dropped in the course of your normal adventures. The later ones will probably call for full adventures of their own, especially chapters III and IV. Each one discusses how to include it in your normal game and what it is meant to do for the plot. Everything will start to come together as you read through the chapter; there's also an explanation of what's really going on included at the end.

The Chapters

I. Déjà Vu

In one or more regular adventures, the PCs have the odd experience of seeing people who look surprisingly like themselves and people they know. This is just an early teaser, so it shouldn't be more than a couple of quick incidents, tossed in amidst other confusion and hubbub. Make sure they don't stand out too much -- it's best if the players simply think you're messing with their minds by tossing in idle chatter.

II. En Passant

In the second teaser, the heroes should still have very little clue about what's in store for them. Unlike the previous, probably forgotten incidents, this one involves other people seeing double. These are minor occurrences, usually nothing more than a friend mentioning that he saw one or more of the PCs the other day, but didn't say hello because they "looked busy anyway." They will also occasionally find themselves losing a bit of time here and there, though this should be done infrequently, so they aren't too suspicious.

Some of these sightings are actually the PCs, during those times when Bauding switches them into Null mode. The rest of them are due to the RRG's clones. Neither Bauding nor the RRG have used their respective clones to commit any terribly noticeable (or criminal) acts at this point.

III. Gremlins, Criminals and Killers

This is the first major confrontation, including something that looks much like a finale. The strange sightings and lost time of En Passant have worsened. The heroes have now been seen committing crimes! This isn't a simple case of misidentification, or someone wearing a mask -- the physical evidence points to them. By now, reasonably astute players should probably connect their occasional lost time with these crimes. If they keep each other under observation, everything will seem fine . . . until they realize that everyone lost the same amount of time, and another crime has occurred. If some outside help can be found, nothing more will happen as long observation continues.

As long as he can get away with it, Bauding will use the heroes to commit crimes for him in Null mode. He is careful not to give away his goals; rather than having them directly steal needed chemical and biological supplies, Bauding has selected an apparently random assortment of lucrative targets, everything from jewelry stores to rare parrots. He then fences the stolen items for money, which he can filter through dummy agencies to purchase the necessary lab supplies. Since they are effectively Bauding's "first draft," he's being none too careful with the PCs and fully expects the authorities to apprehend them. He's not their only problem, either . . .

On top of all these strange crime difficulties, someone has started tampering with everyone's personal lives. Bank accounts are being cleared and closed, with the bank management insisting that everything was properly signed for. One or more apartments were searched, apparently with a key. The manager insists he gave the backup key to the PC personally. The players are likely to attribute this to more lost time problems, though it's difficult to see why they'd search their own homes.

Actually, these problems arise from the efforts of the RRG clones. They have explicit orders to shut Bauding's clones down as quietly as they can. At first, they will try to cut off their funding. This will inconvenience Bauding, but won't stop his flashy crimes and the risk they pose to RRG. From money, the hostile doubles will proceed to plan B, alienating friends, forcing unemployment and generally acting like jerks in the heroes' stead. If this doesn't stop Bauding, as it probably won't, they'll try to eliminate the PCs. If the heroes are captured by the authorities because of their crimes, RRG will be forced to kill them.

The conclusion of this chapter, whatever form it takes, should leave the players convinced that they know what happened. Effective detective work or simple capture by the authorities will force a confrontation with some bloody-minded RRG clones. Assuming they don't succeed in offing Bauding's version, these clones will provide ample evidence of evil afoot. It's obvious from casual inspection that they are clones (see Cloning, below). From that information, anyone should be able to figure out that someone made these clones to commit crimes. That's totally wrong, of course, but it should satisfy them. Bauding, keeping his distance, will make it away from this mess intact.

IV. Deja Vu All Over Again

Let a fair bit of time pass between chapters III and IV. Bauding is laying low for a while, and the real heroes won't escape from RRG immediately after their clones are destroyed.

After a suitable fog of time, things become strange again. Once more, friends will mention having said "Hi" and receiving no response, or seeing a PC who was supposed to be elsewhere at the time (and was). However, some close friends will start calling in confusion and distress, wondering what these weird, desperate messages on their answering machines asking for money and help are supposed to mean. If anyone thinks to check, he'll find that the voice on the machine does sound authentic. When the first new incident of lost time occurs, the players should have expected it for a while.

Bauding is back at it again, but RRG isn't. RRG had their own difficulties and had to pull up stakes and relocate. In the confusion, the real heroes were accidentally lost. It didn't take them too long to figure out roughly what happened. Now, they're trying to reconnect with friends, convince them of what happened and track down whomever is controlling the clones. Of course, given the clone incident, friends are unlikely to believe their exceptional story. Driven by this escape, Bauding has decided to go use his clones to commit a few final crimes. He's almost ready to set up his mass-production cloning system -- a few more heists will pay for the final touches.

V. Changeling

It is up to the GM to roleplay the true heroes in a reasonable manner. There are quite a few approaches to dealing with the cloned replacements, ranging from outright attack to simply walking up and trying to explain the truth. Pick the one that is most likely based on the characters and the play style of the group. The closer it is to what they would have done, the creepier the result.

The conclusion of "Doppelgänger" depends heavily upon the PCs. They're unlikely to believe their doubles outright -- no one likes to think they're not really who they think they are. If things go peacefully, more extensive medical testing will show with near-certainty that the current PCs are clones (see below). Even if things get rough, the cloned heroes are likely to attempt to show, by force, that their opponents are clones. Once the truth comes out, it's up to everyone to figure out what to do. Realizing that they are only copies of the genuine articles is a heavy weight for the clones to bear. On top of that, they probably realize by now that they are somehow being used to commit crimes. Can they go on and live, knowing that their memories belong to someone else, someone who is effectively a twin?

However these major issues are resolved, the twin concerns of Bauding and the RRG remain as loose ends. The RRG has managed to disappear fairly effectively. Depending on their detective abilities, the heroes may be able to track down Bauding. Even if Bauding is not captured, the Null transmitters in the clones must be dealt with. A radio jammer will prevent remote control; given more time, the devices can be removed via special powers or a competent neurosurgeon.

The final item of this adventure is up to the players. Do they continue to play the clones, or return to the real thing? It might be fun to play both for a while, as they resolve their differences.

What's Really Going On?

The Replication Research Group is an ethically-challenged batch of scientists and businessmen devoted to furthering their power by cloning. While their interests cover everything from replacing public figures to mass-production of cloned armies, they had never managed to do more than replicate the body, until Francis Bauding came along. Bauding, a genius in the biological and cognitive sciences, developed an implanted system allowing the complete downloading of human memories and thought patterns into a newly-produced clone. As an interesting side effect, one could still download thoughts via remote after the initial procedure, effectively taking control of the body and leaving no memories afterward. Bauding dubbed this the "Null" mode. Everyone was happy, at least until he tried to replicate the RRG executive staff.

When the RRG staff got wind of Bauding's plan, they decided to eliminate him. He managed to escape with the aid of the best-developed set of clones at the agency -- those of the PCs. Grown from samples taken earlier, these clones were about to go into action, to replace the recently-kidnapped heroes. Bauding trashed RRG, stole the comatose heroes and escaped to start his own lab. RRG immediately began rebuilding. Their first project was the forced-growth of clones to deal with their stolen doubles.

Chapters I-III cover the period when Bauding's clones have replaced the PCs and the RRG clones are trying to stop them. Francis is using his clones in Null mode to commit money-making crimes. At the same time, the RRG doubles attempt first to stop, then to kill Bauding's clones. At the end of chapter III, the RRG clones are most likely caught and revealed for what they are. Of course, even if they *do* manage to kill the heroes, they haven't killed the real heroes. Should that happen, you can simply roleplay the escape of the real heroes from Bauding and continue from there.

Chapters IV-V happen after the real PCs escape and Bauding rushes to complete his mass-cloning device. The authentic heroes try to reestablish themselves and eventually confront their clones, one way or another. Once everything comes out into the open, Bauding will stop using the clones for his crimes, to avoid capture.

On Cloning

The clones grown at RRG are very effective duplicates, within certain limitations. After an initial period of forced growth to full adult size, they are then intentionally treated with special chemical and mechanical methods to give them an appropriately "weathered" appearance. This is a careful procedure that takes almost as long as the initial growth. The clones Bauding made off with were pretty much fully-treated and hence look like the genuine article. The RRG clones were made quickly, skipping the entire aging process. As a result, a physical exam will reveal some obvious flaws. None of them have tans, freckles, wrinkles of any kind, scars or any other telltales produced by experience over time.

Bauding's clones, having the full treatment, look fully as old as they're pretending to be. They aren't exact duplicates. While they do have tans, freckles and wrinkles, they will not match exactly. Major marks, such as obvious scars, were added to avoid a simple blowing of the clones' covers. Once the adventure draws to a close, however, more careful methods will be needed to identify the originals. If anyone is *really* familiar with one or more PCs, they might be able to help. A full medical workup will produce definitive proof. The clones, though physically aged, have not experienced much physiological aging. Their livers are fairly undamaged, they have healthy blood which still retains hemoglobin characteristic of infants, their cells are generally healthier. A competent clinician can determine the true from the copy

in a week or two of testing.

All the clones in this adventure have Bauding's memory implant. Francis only has the override codes for "his" clones -- he can't set the RRG ones to Null mode. In Null mode, thoughts from a controller (e.g. Bauding) are transmitted via radio to command the clones via the implants. No memories are formed during Null time -- a psychic will find the conscious brain is effectively turned off for the duration. The RRG implants also contain one ability added after Bauding's violent escape -- self destruction. They can be remote-burned, an unpleasant procedure that doesn't do much for the clone's skull. RRG will do this if their clones are captured (dead or alive) unless jamming or other defenses prevent it.

Francis Bauding

Francis Bauding is a bit of a genius dilettante. Though intensely interested in the workings of the human body, especially the mind, he was unable to handle the rigorous study required by his graduate school. Dropping out after only a year, he attempted to develop his own research projects, using saved funds and money gleaned from tedious daytime jobs. At $10 an hour, work proceeded very slowly. Francis managed only a few articles describing new techniques he'd developed, rather than the big discoveries he hoped for.

One of RRG's cloning researchers saw in a technique paper the promise of a solution for their cloning problems. Bauding was contacted through a front organization, given some funding and then left on his own for a while. As RRG hoped, Bauding was able to make impressive advances with even limited funding. Soon after this initial test period, Francis was taken directly into the core RRG lab group. He was extremely excited by the cloning project and the extreme wealth of his benefactors. No one at RRG suspected the manner in which these two ideas would converge in his mind . . .

by the Wizards of the Coast Staff

The *Sixth Edition* of ***Magic: The Gathering*** will be released on April 26, 1999. The Basic Game will sell for $9.99, Tournament Packs will also sell for $9.99, and Booster Packs are priced at $2.99. The game is designed to be the next step for starter-level ***Magic*** enthusiasts who are ready to progress to an advanced level of game play. Designed by ***Magic*** lead game designer Bill Rose, the *Classic* card set contains more than 350 white-bordered cards, some of which are from out-of-print ***Alliances, Mirage, Visions,*** and ***Weatherlight*** expansions. Introducing new and modified rules, the *Classic* game enables novice ***Magic*** enthusiasts to better understand the game's core rules while minimizing rules disputes for advanced and expert-level players.

The *Classic* cards are available in 80-card games (two 40-card decks), 75-card tournament packs and 15-card booster packs. The game includes a basic rulebook, and the tournament packs contain a quick-reference sheet for **<*Magic*,/b> fans who participate in tournament play. The *Classic* game will be available through all of Wizards of the Coast's traditional outlets -- most hobby, game, book, music and toy stores.**

New for Collectors: Premium Cards

Wizards of the Coast Inc. announced that it is enhancing *Magic* with the addition of new, collectable premium cards.

The result of an overwhelming demand by collectors, the premium cards are expected to balance the basic attributes of the *Magic* game by emphasizing collectability along with strategic game play and aesthetic appeal. The unique, foil-enhanced laminate cards have been especially developed for avid card collectors and will first appear in the February 15 release of the *Magic: The Gathering -- Urza's Legacy* expansion.

Wizards of the Coast President and CEO Peter Adkison said, "*Magic* is enjoyed on a multitude of varying levels by a wide variety of game enthusiasts that includes collectors. We believe the premium cards not only enhance the overall appeal of *Magic*, but will also satisfy the avid interests of collectors, and social and competitive players."

The new premium cards are played in the same manner as the regular cards and do not alter game play in any way. Each card in the set has a premium, foil-finished version, identical in every other way. The premium cards will be randomly distributed in 15-card booster packs. Collectors can expect to find one premium card in every 100 cards, with one premium card appearing in approximately every six booster packs. There will be significantly fewer full sets of premium cards than there were of the rare cards found in the *Beta* version of *Magic*.

New Rules for Sixth Edition

After careful deliberation and extensive playtesting, the *Magic: The Gathering* Research and Development team determined that the implementation of the *Classic (Sixth Edition)* rule modifications will serve as a critical stepping stone for the growth and sustenance of the *Magic* player community. While preserving the in-depth strategy imperative to *Magic*, unified rules will both enable new players to better understand the game's core rules and minimize rules disputes for advanced- and expert-level players.

Magic creator Richard Garfield said, "The adopted rules parallel my original concept for _Magic_, which entailed a clear and comprehensible set of rules with the strategic play depth introduced through the cards. I played an integral part in the reevaluation process for the _Classic_ rules, and I am confident that the elimination of extraneous and complicated rules will help establish the game as a classic like chess or Go."

In response to the elevated interest and speculation surrounding these changes, _Magic: The Gathering_ lead designer Bill Rose will address and explain each rule modification in a letter posted to the Wizards of the Coast website. Rose will also periodically respond online to rules questions from players. Players and enthusiasts can post inquiries for response or visit www.wizards.com/Magic for updated information.

The following is a full description of the major modifications in the _Magic: The Gathering -- Classic (Sixth Edition)_ rules. The _Classic_ card set will be released in April 1999, and these changes will become effective in tournament play on June 1, 1999.

The Stack

Forget batches and series -- whenever you play a spell or ability, it goes on the stack. You can then play another spell or ability or pass. If you pass, your opponent gets priority to play spells and abilities. When you both pass in succession, the spell or ability on top of the stack resolves. Then the player whose turn it is (the active player) gets priority again. _You don't have to wait for everything on the stack to resolve before playing another spell._

Example: I play Hammer of Bogardan on your Fallen Angel. You respond by playing The Hive's ability to create a Wasp token. After The Hive's ability resolves and your Wasp comes into play, you sacrifice it to your Fallen Angel. The Angel, now 5/4, takes 3 damage from the Hammer and survives.

Abilities that add mana to your pool don't go on the stack. (These are now called "mana abilities.") You simply get the mana immediately. _Spells_ that produce mana, however, such as Dark Ritual, go on the stack like other spells. Mana abilities can be played only when you have priority or are asked to pay mana. Mana sources no longer exist.

Countering Spells

Classic rules do away with interrupts. All interrupts are now instants, which means you can counter a spell any time before it resolves. (Abilities that trigger on a spell being "successfully cast" now trigger on a spell being "played.")

Example: I play Terror on a creature you control. You respond by playing Inspiration, which lets you draw two cards. One of the cards you draw is Counterspell. You can now play it to counter my Terror.

Damage Prevention and Regeneration

Classic eliminates the damage-prevention step. Damage is no longer dealt ("assigned") and then successfully dealt -- it's simply dealt. Damage prevention, regeneration, and other spells and abilities that generate replacement effects are now played just like other instants.

When such a spell or ability resolves, its effect creates a kind of "shield." Damage-prevention effects create shields that prevent the next damage the target would take. Regeneration's effect creates a shield that replaces a permanent's next destruction with regeneration. These shields last until used up or until the next cleanup step, whichever comes first.

If an effect prevents a specific amount of damage, it creates a shield that hangs around until that amount of damage is prevented.

Example: I tap my Prodigal Sorcerer to deal 1 damage to your Tundra Wolves. You respond by playing Healing Salve on the Wolves. The Salve resolves first, setting up a shield that can prevent 3 damage. When the Sorcerer's ability resolves, the shield prevents the 1 damage and waits around for the rest of the turn to prevent up to 2 more.

If two different effects could each prevent the same damage, the "shielded" player or controller of the "shielded" creature chooses which effect gets applied.

All damage-prevention spells and abilities are now targeted. This means, for example, that you can't play Healing Salve on a creature with protection from white.

Triggered Abilities

In the *Classic* set, any ability that begins with "when," "whenever," or "at" (as in "At the beginning of your upkeep") is a triggered ability.

When a triggered ability's condition is met, the ability automatically goes on the stack. Its controller chooses all targets for it, and when it resolves, makes all other choices for it. If two or more triggered abilities go on the stack at the same time, those controlled by the active player go first. If one player controls two or more, that player chooses their order. Triggered abilities can no longer resolve while another spell or ability is resolving.

Phase abilities have all been changed to triggered abilities that trigger when the specified phase or step begins.

Under *Fifth Edition* rules, you couldn't play a permanent's abilities until you dealt with its phase costs and "comes-into-play" costs. This rule no longer exists. Abilities that read, "do A or do B" should now be read as "You may do A. If you don't, do B."

Phases and Steps

Each turn now has five phases: beginning, main, combat, second main, and end.

The beginning phase has three steps: untap, upkeep, and draw. No spells or abilities can be played during the untap step, and abilities that trigger during untap wait until the beginning of the upkeep step to go on the stack. If an effect instructs you to do something at the beginning of the turn, you do it at the beginning of upkeep.

Upkeep abilities ("During your upkeep, do A") are now triggered abilities: "At the beginning of your upkeep, do A." Likewise, abilities that read "During your upkeep, do A or do B" should now be read as "At the beginning of your upkeep, you may do A. If you don't, do B."

There are now two main phases in every turn. They're separated by combat, which is now its own phase. You may still play only one land per turn. Phase abilities played at the beginning of or during your main phase are now triggered abilities that trigger at the beginning of your first main phase.

The end phase has two steps: end of turn and cleanup. The end-of-turn step works just like the upkeep step. When it begins, all triggered abilities that start with "At end of turn" go on the stack. When the cleanup step begins, the active player discards down to the maximum hand size (usually seven cards). Then all damage on creatures is removed and effects that last "until end of turn" end. If any abilities trigger during the cleanup step, they go on the stack, and then the active player gets priority to play spells and abilities. If no abilities trigger, no one gets priority. If any spells or abilities resolve during cleanup, the whole step is repeated. Otherwise, the turn ends.

Combat

Combat is now its own phase with five steps: beginning of combat, declare attackers, declare blockers, combat

damage, and end of combat. Spells and abilities may be played during each of these steps, but only after the step's mandatory parts have been completed. For example, you can play a spell during declare attackers only after attackers have been declared.

The declare attackers and declare blockers steps are unchanged, but dealing combat damage works differently. The active player announces how he or she wants attacking creatures' combat damage to be dealt, then the defending player does the same for blocking creatures. *Tapped blockers now deal combat damage just like untapped ones.* Because there's no damage-prevention step in Classic, the combat damage isn't dealt immediately -- instead, it goes on the stack. Players may then play spells and abilities as usual. Nothing that happens to the attacking and blocking creatures can affect damage that's on the stack waiting to be dealt. When the stack reaches the combat damage, it's dealt according to the earlier damage announcements, even if one or more of the creatures in combat are no longer in play.

Example: I block your Fire Elemental (5/4) with my Air Elemental (4/4). The creatures' combat damage goes to the stack. Afterward, I play Unsummon on my Air Elemental. The Unsummon resolves, returning the Air Elemental to my hand, and then the combat damage is dealt. The Air Elemental deals 4 damage to the Fire Elemental--even though it's no longer in play.

The end-of-combat step works like the upkeep and end-of-turn steps. When the step begins, all abilities that trigger on the end of combat go on the stack.

Miscellaneous

You now lose the game as soon as you reach 0 life, not at the end of the phase.

Artifacts' continuous abilities now work the same way as other permanents' abilities. They no longer "shut off" while the artifact is tapped.

Under *Classic* rules, you choose modes and targets for a spell or ability (and pay costs) when you play it, but you make all other choices when the spell or ability resolves, not when it's played. You can identify modal spells and abilities by the "Choose one --" phrase.

Joe G. Kushner

Baldur's Gate spans five disks and gives the player many different opportunities to gain experience points and items. Here are some tips that can help save a player much grief and -- more importantly -- time.

1. Save when you have just finished a fight, or have explored a large area without a fight. While the game does save automatically for you in between load points, it is important to save after each fight. In some battles, half of your party may be slaughtered, but by reloading it and attempting a different attack, you may win without a single loss. In addition, some of the encounters are random, so you may go a long time without meeting anyone, only to be wiped out by surprise. Save when you have searched a large area of land so that you don't have to explore it all again. This is true for traps as well. If a member of your party has set off a trap, reload and have the thief find and disarm those traps and then save again.

2. Save when your go up a level. In ***Baldur's Gate,*** your next level does not automatically apply. You have to go to another screen and hit the level up key. If you save before you do this, you can get maximum hit points.

3. Save before you try to write spells. When a mage or specialist mage gets a scroll of a spell he does not know, he can right click on it to attempt to learn it. By saving before each spell, the player can make sure to learn every spell that he comes across.

4. Q for quicksave. While this is listed in the book, many people just jump right into the game. For all of these important save times, hit the Q button. You may not save when there are monsters about, even if you can't see them, so be sure to be on the alert if it tells you that it's impossible to save due to monsters being about.

5. Explore everything. While this should be mandatory for all players, some may decide that they only want to follow the game itself. This isn't the best of options. There are numerous sub quests and small lairs that about within the five disks, and only by exploring every area can you be sure to have conquered them all. Use M for Map to see any areas in darkness that you have not found yet.

6. Use the space bar to control combat. In ***Baldur's Gate,*** combat is fast and furious. If you don't use the space bar, you'll not be able to get off enough spells, drink enough potions or attack the right foe. Use the space bar to pause after every spell or every effect from potions has gone into play. This will maximize your ability to win a fight.

7. Animate Dead and Stinking Cloud. This is a devastating combination. The skeletons that the priest spell *Animate Dead* creates are immune to the spell effects of *Stinking Cloud.* This makes these two spells some of the best to have when preparing for an important combat. The crucial thing to remember is to keep your *living* characters out of range of the *Stinking Cloud.*

8. Web and missile fire. Another powerful combination. When at least half the party is able to use some type of distance attack, use the *Web* spell to immobilize your opponents and then use them for target practice. They can't cast spells or attack while trapped by the *Web.* Like *Stinking Cloud,* it's important to keep your group from spell's effects.

9. Take notes. While the game does come with a self-writing notebook called "Journal," it doesn't keep the notes from one chapter to the next. If you manage to move on to another chapter without completing all of the mini quests that make up ***Baldur's Gate,*** you won't have your Journal to look back upon.

10. Quick formation. By right-clicking on the quick formation icon, you can gain access to different types of formations. This allows you to customize your party's movement to its maximum efficiency for areas like dungeons that only allow one or two abreast.

11. Don't be stingy. Potions, scrolls, and spells are only good when used. Don't hoard them. When party members are down to half their hit points, they should be healed. Use protection scrolls whenever possible to insure a quick victory over foes.

12. Keep the party in formation. Due to encumbrance and other factors, some party members will move faster than others. If the player keeps on clicking ahead of the group, it will throw the group out of formation. This makes it easy for foes that aren't visible yet to inflict massive amounts of damage on those few who are ahead while suffering little damage in retaliation.

13. Use the backstab. Thieves can backstab in combat without a limit on the number of times they can do it. When fighting a powerful opponent, have the thief go to the rear and make a backstab attack. When the opponent turns around, have the thief move away until the opponent turns back around to fight the new attackers. If you have two thieves, have one on either side for a continuous backstab attack.

14. 89,000 maximum experience. There is an experience point cap in the game which prevents the characters from going over seventh level. When a character outside of the main one reaches the maximum amount of experience, the player should see if he can find another character to get up in levels. This gives the player a wider range of options when attempting to put a group together. This last option should be used with caution, however, as some characters will refuse to rejoin a party once they are removed from it.

15. Stack those items. Items like potions, scrolls, and arrows can be stacked one upon another to save room in inventory. If the item has a number by it, such as a gem stone, then whenever you find another of that type, stack them. This makes your characters able to hold more, and allows you to sell faster as well. Beware of stacking too much with potions, however; certain ones like Healing should be spread out through the whole group to insure a higher survival rate.

16. Massive missile attack. Whenever possible, make sure that everyone has a missile weapon that they can use. Priests use slings, warriors bows or crossbows, thieves short bows and mages darts. There are three slots for missile weapons. Try and keep a mix of different types of missile weapons. When fighting a powerful foe, right-click on the missile weapon and all those in missile slots will come up. This prevents you from using those magical arrows on wolves when they could be used on ogres.

Baldur's Gate allows the player a lot of options, and knowing what those options are and when to use them allows even a person who knows nothing about the ***Forgotten Realms*** or ***AD&D*** in general to make a name for himself.

by Kevin Walsh

Class Name: Bowie

Type: Fleet Combat Scout

TL: 12
Tonnage: 600
Cost: 215.963 MCR
Mass: 1746.85 tons
DR: 862
Hit Points: 52,200
Crew: 8 crew, 10 troops

Engineering

Jump: 3
Maneuver: 2.5

Offensive Systems

2 Fusion Guns in popup dual turret
2 Triple Missile Turrets, 1 is a popup
2 Triple Laser Turrets, 1 is a popup

Defensive Systems

Triple Sandcaster Turret
Nuclear Damper [20 Mile Radius]
Area sensor Jammer [rating 16]
Blip Enhancer
Basic Stealth
Radical EM Masking

Small Craft

G Carrier
4 Grav Bikes

50 space space dock

Other Features

Hardened Command Bridge
Survey Bridge with Extensive Survey Array
Machine Shop
Electronics Shop
Sick Bay
18 Staterooms
20 Low Berths
2 5-Space Missile Magazines

Notes

Covert Operations Scout, built on a liner hull. Primarily used for data collection and monitoring in possibly hostile areas. Discreetly armed with a basic collection of weapons in standard turrets, and 3 popup turrets for combat use including a dual fusion gun turret for point defense. These ships have also been used for anti-piracy sweeps and as q-ships in the Trimaris rift.

Two ships of this class were used as part of Operation "Rowan Shield" which sent the ships along with elements of the 39th Spaceborne regiment, and the 4566th Fighter Wing into the Trimaris Rift, in the Hawkwind subsector. There they scouted several independent planets and a couple of gas giants for signs of piracy activity.

After the *Grey Ghost* was attacked by corsairs in the DVX-151 system, she jumped outsystem and headed back for Confederation territory, Whereupon Strikeron 11 and AssaultRon 51 were sent to put an end to the menace once and for all. Later the *Grey Ghost* had a run-in with a Vargr raider while prowling the border region, and was able to take the raider as a war prize.

Design Notes

If running on EMCON, and with the extra turrets retracted, these ships can pass for a standard liner to casual scans. They're not well-armored for a stand-up fight, but have enough agility to run like hell, and they can take care of themselves fairly well in a fight with smaller ships. These ships are often used for planetary surveying in outlying regions or for crew training.

Missile Turrets: Two Triple Missile Turrets, also capable of launching sensor drones. Drone control is handled from the bridge or the survey lab. One of the turrets is a popup mount. The Turrets are mounted fore and aft, Below the bridge and drive deck. Each turret is fed by a five-space magazine, and 12 drones are carried in each magazine.

Fusion Gun Turret: One dual FG turret in a popup mount, mounted roughly center of the ship, giving it an exceptional field of fire. It is primarily used for point defense purposes.

Laser Turrets: Two Triple Laser Turrets, mounted aft on the stub wings, one is a popup. Two false laser turrets are situated forward above and below the bridge.

Command Bridge: Located in the dish shaped bow of the ship, contains two extra workstations, one is for the extra sensor array. The other is for scientific operations and control of the drones. There are a total of six workstations in a horseshoe arrangement around the edge of the bridge, with a large holo chart table in the center pit.

Survey Bridge: Located in the lower aft hull, two standard workstations and another, albeit smaller, holotable. It is connected directly to the Survey Lab, which contains a separate sensor workstation and a commo station for communicating with landing parties and the drones.

Spacedock: Split into two separate sections, one normally contains a G Carrier and four Grav Bikes. The other has fittings for two 10-ton fighters, or can be used for assorted cargo. The spacedocks are located in the aft section of the hull between the maneuver drives.

Electronics Suite: Aside from the standard sensor array, the ships in this class are fitted with an extensive electronic warfare package, including a powerful Area Jammer, a Blip Enhancer, and decoy dispensers. They are also fitted for RPV control, and for planetary surveying.

Crew Quarters: Eight single staterooms for the crew. Ten double staterooms will hold two squads of Marines, although only one is usually carried.

Conference Room: Located adjacent to the survey bridge and used as an office by the ship's marine officer, it's also used for mission briefings and for recreational activities as time allows.

Machine and Electronics Shops: Located in the center of the hull, just forward of the docking bays. These are equipped with standard tools for working on the ship and small craft. There's also a set of armory tools for working on the marines' equipment.

Missile Magazines: Heavily armored and located below the launchers, each magazine contains 390 misses, and 10 sensor drones. The magazines are designed to blow out and vent explosions away from the ship to minimize explosion damage.

Class Name: Centurion

Type: Fleet Battle Rider

TL: 12
Tonnage: 3,000 streamlined
Cost: 754.108 MCR
Mass: 21,802 tons
DR: 6,349
Hit Points: 141,750
Crew: 125 crew and 500 troops

Engineering

Jump: 0
Maneuver: 4.6

Offensive Systems

Missile Bay
7 Triple Laser Turrets
2 Dual Fusion Guns

Defensive Systems

Meson Screen [DR 5053]
Nuclear Damper [20 mile Radius]
Triple Sandcaster
Rating 16 EMS Jammer
Blip Enhancer

100 decoys
Radical Stealth
Radical EM Cloaking

Small Craft

300-Space Spacedock for vehicles

Other Features

Hardened Command Bridge
Basic Emergency Bridge
4 Sick Bays
65 Staterooms
31 Bunkrooms for Troops
100 Low Berths
5 Drop Capsule Launchers
Machine Shop
Electronics Shop
257 Spaces Cargo

These ships are capable of delivering an entire battalion of troops to a planetary surface, and provide fire support for them if needed. These ships are often carried aboard larger assault transports, or on Assault Tenders, and usually operate in squadrons of 3-6 ships.

Design Notes

The design is based on a cylinder hull with disc-shaped wings and a maneuvering foil aft, and smaller maneuvering fins at the centerline.

Missile Bay: Located in a setback position in the belly of the ship, roughly centered. The magazine is fitted with blowout panels to vent an explosion below the ship in case of a catastrophic hit.

Laser Turrets: Two of the triple laser mounts are fixed in the outer leading edges of the stub wings. Two more turrets are mounted dorsally and ventrally amidships, although the ventral turret is mounted behind and below the missile bay. The other three are mounted port and starboard aft, and above the drive module.

Fusion Gun Turrets: Mounted aft on the center of the airfoil, this turret is remotely-controlled from the bridge.

Command Bridge: Situated in the heavily-armed nose, stations are arranged in an I formation, with the captain's chair above and centered.

Vehicle Bay: The cavernous Vehicle Bay has large doors opening to port and starboard, and stretches the entire width of the ship. Two large cargo lifts are also available for loading and unloading. These ships are equipped with full machine and electronics shops, allowing major maintenance and repairs to be conducted on any carried vehicles. The ship's cargo bay is also attached to the Vehicle Bay, although heavily compartmentalized for safety.

Troops' Quarters: The ship's 500 troops are separated into 31 bunkrooms, which helps keep order, and prevents catastrophic hits from taking out all the troops at once. Each bunkroom has separate fresher facilities and a small galley.

Maneuver Drive: Two 50,000-ton Thrust Heplar drives power these ships to a hefty 4.6 G's of maneuvering power. These drives are license-built locally, from a design by Carpenter Engineering. The bays are very roomy, for easy maintenance.

Drop Capsule Launchers: Five Drop Capsule Launchers are contained in a room just off the vehicle bay, along with storage for 150 capsules. This is enough to hot-drop an entire reinforced Jump Infantry Company.

Sensor Array: These ships are equipped with an enhanced sensor array, which includes provisions for RPV Control. These are used mostly for forward observer roles, and for tactical support. Twelve sensor drones are usually carried.

Emergency Bridge: Located aft below the drive bays, this serves a secondary purpose of handling communications with troops and vehicles on the ground, and handling fire control data from drones or forward observers.

Special Notes

Here are the stats for the Carpenter Arms CPX-351 "Brown Bess" Railgun:

Heavy Autoloading Very Long Barreled Gauss Gun [TL-12]
ROF: 25
Damage: 6D*343 [Solid Shot]
1/2D Range: 4,725 yards
Maximum Range: 12,830 yards
Power Required: 187,500 kw per turn
Weight: 48 tons
Volume: .30 tons
Cost Per Shot: 10
Weight Per Shot: 1.5
Acc: 19
SS: 30

Class Name: Titan

Type: Fleet Bulk Cargo Carrier

TL: 12
Tonnage: 30,000 tons unstreamlined
Cost: 4,266.092 MCR
Mass: 111,319.7 tons
DR: 102
Hit Points: 552,000
Crew: 37 and up to 40 passengers

Engineering

Jump: 3
Maneuver: 1

Offensive Systems

Nine turrets are fitted but no weapons

Defensive Systems

One Triple Sandcaster

Small Craft

Four Shuttles in Space Dock

Other Features

Basic Bridge
Cargo Office [Basic Bridge without Sensors]
Sick Bay
20 Low Berths
21 Crew Staterooms
20 Passenger Staterooms
17,420.5 spaces of cargo

This is a massive bulk carrier, built for and used by large megacorps for various tasks. Terran Fleet Command leases eight of these ships for tanker/supply duties in times of need. While poorly armed and armored, it was never designed for operation in combat zones; any used for tanker/supply duty will always have an escort, and the passenger staterooms will carry a platoon of marines. These ships are mostly found as ore carriers or for hauling large prefabricated equipment from one system to another.

Other Notes

The design is based on a long cylinder hull, with a bulb-shaped bridge at the nose and a large square box aft for the drives. The cargo bays are in the huge cylinders that wrap around the center of the hull.

Design Notes

Crew: These ships carry a bare minimum of human crew, supplemented by 24 robotic cargo handlers for loading/unloading duties.

Cargo Hold: separated into eight separate bays, all compartmentalized heavily to protect all the cargos. Five of the bays hold 3,000 spaces each and the last three hold 700 spaces each. There is also a ninth cargo bay, but it is used for storage aboard ship only. Each cargo bay has an elevator large enough to accommodate a 100-ton shuttle. Large remote cranes are also mounted in the ceilings of each cargo bay, two are mounted on tracks that rotate 360 degrees and run the length of each bay. Each crane can lift 30 tons.

Shuttle Bay: Four standard 100-ton shuttles are carried in a spacedock, which is below and forward of the #2 cargo hold.

Cargo Handlers: Each ship is equipped with 24 Voelkers XM-8 Robotic cargo handlers. These are very simple robots with auxiliary drone capability, that are normally controlled from the cargo office, or by a human with a remote box. These robots are tracked, and are capable of towing a 25-ton contragrav-equipped trailer.

Cargo Modules: Retractable attachment points and tie-downs in the floors of each bay allow for the use of standard 1-, 2-, 5-, 10-, 25-, and 50-ton cargo containers. Larger containers can be secured with multiple tie-downs or movable bulkheads. If a cargo requires special handling, individual modules are set up with the necessary requirements, or in the case of a large cargo, the bays can be configured environmentally for special needs.

Special Robots: Each ship carries 6 Voelkers CFR-552 Fire Fighting/Rescue Robots. These are designed for damage control tasks, and for search and salvage duties. These humanoid robots are capable of more autonomous actions, and have good sensor and communications capability.

Cargo Office: This office is in the center of the #1 cargo deck. It has five workstations for the cargo staff, and for

remote control of the cargo bots. During loading and unloading operations, the ship's internal Internal Security is run from this office. The cargo office Is designed as a basic bridge but with no sensor capability.

Tanker Capabilities: Each of the cargo bays can be equipped with collapsible bladder tanks for fuel or other gases, liquids, or hazardous bulk solids. Fittings are provided for transfer pumps to get the materiel from the tanks to the waiting ships. If the ships are pulling tanker duty, they will need extra refining capacity, as they don't have enough capacity to refine any extra tankage.

by Philip Sternberg and the B.I.G.C.

I started playing ***Magic: The Gathering*** a few months before the release of ***Ice Age*** (Winter 1994-95), which, in retrospect, was a turning point for the game. ***Ice Age*** was the first expansion set that could function as a stand-alone game, and it was followed by two sub-expansion sets (***Alliances*** and ***Homelands***). Since then, every expansion set has followed this pattern (***Mirage, Weatherlight, Visions,*** etc.), which laid the groundwork for making Type II tournaments the standard of play for many tournaments. (Type II tournaments only allow the use of in-print cards.) At first, I loved the idea behind Type II tournaments -- the $75-$250 game-turning, or "edge," cards were banned, so the winner would be the smartest player, not the richest.

Unfortunately, my take was too optimistic. The past few expansions have each made a few decks superior for Type II competition, which has led to nearly homogeneous tournaments. Take a census at your local store and find out how many people use Suicide Black decks, or how many used Tolarian Academy decks while they were still legal. The Internet has made matters only worse, since web sites post the winning decks as soon as they start wining local tournaments. Wizards of the Coast (WotC) also sells the winning decks preconstructed -- with gold borders and a printed signature to render them non-tournament legal, of course -- but supply is the only force stopping a player with a healthy bankroll from purchasing the black-bordered equivalents. Type II tournaments have thus become a contest of money as much as a contest of skill. It is wonderful that resources exist to teach new players the fundamentals of deck construction and game play. But the web sites and the preconstructed decks do not teach these skills -- they simply demonstrate an application of them.

Richard Garfield, designer of ***M:TG,*** has said that he thinks of ***Magic*** as a fantasy game in which everyone with a deck is a player and he is the referee. With each expansion set he introduces new creatures and abilities to keep the players on their toes as the game progresses. Unfortunately, many players read the text of every card in a new set before it becomes available, and know its strengths and weaknesses. This makes ***M:TG*** the only fantasy game in the world in which the players are free to look at the referee's notes to increase their chances of success.

Another change that has taken place over the past few years is the pace of the game. Before fourth edition was released, I had a white/blue deck which could beat more than three quarters of the decks I played against. I put the deck back together recently, and could not consistently beat any of my friends' decks. My deck was fast by old standards -- I could win within eight or nine turns. The standard has been steadily rising, and is currently at five or six turns. Each game is therefore a question of which deck does the best in the first thirteen cards. As a result, combo decks are becoming more risky, since the combination is less likely to appear in those first cards. This has led to an overall simplification of deck construction strategy, which further contributes to the homogeneity of the game.

So, what is to be done? Is ***M:TG*** to be ruled forever by the top decks of the season and the players who can afford them? It is up to those who run small tournaments (mostly retailers) to bring back the spirit of the game by making it less predictable. The easiest way to do so is to make up new rules.

Possible Tournament Variants

Alphabet Soup. Every letter of the alphabet must appear in the title of at least one card in every deck. Go get your

Zephyr Falcons and Suq'ata Lancers!

Power of One. Every card (with the possible exception of basic land) is restricted to one per deck.

Required Cards. Certain cards must be included in every deck. These should either be colorless or be allowed to be cast with colorless mana for the duration of the tournament. This can be particularly interesting with cards which add a random element to the game (Mana Clash, for instance) or which change the nature of play (Teferi's Puzzle Box.) "Proxying," writing the name of the required card on a land or common, is a simple way to make this possible for rare or valuable cards.

Single Power Card. Every deck may contain one card that would otherwise be illegal, provided that it was at some time a real card from WotC. This card may be proxied.

Points for Style. Every deck must have a theme, preferably outside of the realm of ***M:TG.*** "Lions and Tigers and Bears, Oh my!," "Professional Sports Teams," and "For the Birds" are a few possibilities. Prizes go to the most original deck, best use of otherwise useless cards, etc., in addition to the winner of the tournament.

Random Deck Assignment. Every player brings a deck, then is randomly assigned a different deck each round. Prizes go both to the player with the best record and the owner of the deck with the best record. This emphasizes ease of play in deck construction and understanding of the fundamentals of timing in play.

Further Reading

http://www.thedojo.com -- A web site containing a forum for discussion of strategy and other topics in the ***M:TG*** community.

http://www.nground.com -- Neutral Ground, a nationwide (U.S.) game store with an active presence on the web with news and discussion about ***M:TG.***

by Chris Pramas

[*Editor's Note:* An abridged version of this article originally ran in *Arcane* magazine, Issue #20. Later, this article also appeared in the excellent fanzine, *Alarums & Excursions.*]

I went to my first GenCon in 1989. I had always remembered those ads in the back of all TSR's early products telling me the wonders of the Con of Cons and that year I decided to find out if it all was true. So I flew out, crashed on the floor of some friends who happened to live in Old Milwaukee, and dove head first into the biggest con in the Western Hemisphere. It's kind of funny to look back at that year, when I knew no one and had no idea what to expect. Now, it's a yearly ritual, something I take for granted. Then, it was much more mysterious. As you might have guessed, I've gone every year since then, I had a great time and told all my friends about it. Many of them came the next year and have been with me ever since. Over the years, I've gone from simple player to GM to aspiring freelancer to publisher. Quite a ride, I must say, and in many ways in all began that fateful year I said, "I think I'll go to GenCon."

It should come as no surprise that I've played in a lot games at a lot of cons. A few have been great, outstanding examples of what roleplaying can be that will live forever in my memory. A far larger proportion, however, were exercises in mediocrity or simply downright bad. Over the years I began to notice the mistakes that I saw GM after GM make. When I started running a tournament of my own at GenCon, I tried to implement what I had learned. My game, an ***Ars Magica*** tourney chronicling the continuing adventures of the covenant of Castellum Collis, ran for four years and was, I think, a great success. While I was forced to stop running the game due to my spiraling involvement in the industry as a freelance writer, I did learn a great deal about the fine art of game mastering. What follows are some suggestions, solidly based on my own experiences, for how to run a successful roleplaying game at a convention.

First, a warning. Running a good game takes a great deal of time, effort, and preparation. If you think you can show up with a few ideas jotted down on a napkin and run a satisfying game, you are wrong. If you can't commit to working on your own game, do everyone a favor and don't run one.

The Basics

The first thing you need to do is pick a system for your game. It's really best to go with a game you know very well. Otherwise, you spend precious time looking up rules, or worse, you end being dictated to by the rules lawyers who infest every con. After you've picked your system, decide what kind of game you're going to run. Will it be a single round game or a multi-round tourney? Do you plan to make this a continuing series or is it a one-off? Both of these decisions will affect the way you develop your game so it's good to make them at the outset.

The next thing to do is to sit down and come up with the basic plot line for the game. You needn't hammer out the nitty gritty at this stage, but give some thought to what you're trying to do. Is your game going to be political intrigue, a classic dungeon crawl, something experimental, or all of the above? You should also decide how many players you'd like to have in the game. Commonly, you'll have up to eight, but many cons let you decide. I've found that six is a good number. More than that and the game becomes more like babysitting than game mastering.

The Characters

Many GMs leave character creation up to the players. This is usually a big mistake for a couple of reasons. First,

spending an hour or more of your game time is a big waste of time. People go to cons to play, not to make characters. Second, creating the characters beforehand lets you tailor the plot to suit them. You can write encounters specifically to play up the strengths and weaknesses of particular characters, which really serves to engage the players and to get them to identify with their characters. It also makes things easier on you, since you'll know exactly what each character can and cannot do You don't have to worry about the guy who wants to make a Monk/Paladin/Acrobat if you design the characters. All that being said, there are certain games that are designed for quick character generation that can be successfully run at cons without pre-gens. ***Over the Edge*** and ***Feng Shui*** are both games of this type.

An important thing to remember when designing the characters is that they are not simply a bunch of stats. There's nothing worse than being handed a sheet of paper covered with numbers and then being told to roleplay. You must provide the players with a character's history and roleplaying notes if you expect any kind of meaningful interaction. This is where you'll spend much of your time preparing your games. The first year is usually the worst, since you have to come up with six to ten characters that are interesting and playable. After that, you can tweak and update them in the wake of experience.

Another thing to consider when making characters is whether they'll be fun to play. You should try to give everyone a character who is unique in some way. It's no fun to play a character that is second best at everything. I remember playing a ***Call of Cthulhu*** game in which I played a high school student. I was under the impression that we were all high school students and that that was the angle of the game. Then about an hour in I realize that two of the characters are in fact professors who specialize in magic. So I'm running around with a baseball bat while these guys are slinging Elder Signs and casting spells. Their characters were simply better at everything than all the other characters. This is not fun and I quickly lost interest in the game.

Writing the Game

Now comes the really hard part: writing the game. You can have the best characters in the world, but people are still going to hate your game if the adventure itself is lame. It isn't within the scope of this article to try to answer the age old question "what makes a good adventure," but there are a few things you should try to bear in mind when designing a con run.

First, you should try to design your game so that it engages all of the players and, most importantly, their characters. Games that focus on one or two characters over all the others tend to marginalize the players of the other characters and make them feel unimportant. I once played in a ***Pendragon*** game in which I got to play Mordred. It's not every day that you get to play one of the classic villains of literature, so I jumped at the chance. The adventure was based on an episode in Mallory and dealt with Mordred turning from a good knight to the evil knight we all love to hate. Since the adventure was based on my characters, I had a blast, especially given my love of the Arthurian mythos. All of the other characters in the game, however, were lesser knights who were basically my flunkies. A number of my friends also played in this game and expressed severe dissatisfaction with the small role they had played. After all, it was their game too, and I had gotten to have all the fun.

An excellent way to avoid the aforementioned problem is to try to plan scenes for each of the characters. These are encounters specifically designed for individual characters, yet another bonus of using pre-gens. Even if the story revolves heavily around one or two of the characters, giving each player a moment to shine makes them feel that their character is really involved in what's going on. These scenes are most often dramatic situations, but can just as easily be based around a character's special abilities or knowledge. For instance, one character in my tourney, a magus named Octavius, had the flaw Demon Plagued. A particular demon was striving to corrupt his soul and Octavius was trying to keep this fact from all of his comrades. So each year, somewhere in the game, the demon would show up (usually in disguise) and make trouble for poor Octavius. Other characters in the game had similar scenes.

Another thing to remember is that you're working with a time limit. At GenCon, this is usually four hours. Whatever the limit, you must be sure that your you can finish the game in the allotted time. If you don't finish, you can't just get everyone together the next week. If want to send your players home with a gaming experience they will remember, there really must be a sense of closure. One trick that I've used to great effect is to design an optional encounter. This is a scene you can use towards the end of an adventure that is not crucial to its outcome. If the game is proceeding as

planned, use the encounter as normal. If you find that the game is running late and you're worried about finishing, skip it and get to the climax as soon as possible.

If you're planning on running a multi-round tourney, you also need to consider the structure of each round. Often, GMs get carried away with the grand plan of their three-round tourney. They give little thought to how each individual round plays, but think only of the whole. This is great if you advance to the final, but the truth is that most players won't. You have to make sure that each round of your tourney is fun to play in its own right. The characters should have the opportunity to complete a task that's important in the emerging plot. Thus they'll feel as if they made a difference, accomplishing something even if they don't get to see how the whole story plays out. I actually built this into my tourney by making round one all Grogs and round two Magi and Companions only. The Grogs, common soldiers who protect the much-vaunted magi of the Order of Hermes, always had a crucial task to perform and their triumphs usually set the stage for the game's final round.

Running the Game

All right, now you've designed the game and you've got the characters. If you're lucky, you've even had time to playtest it with your regular gaming group. Now you're at the con with six hungry players sitting before you. You think you're ready for every contingency and the next thing you know your game has been ruined. What went wrong?

Running a game for a group of people who are not only new to you but also strangers to each other can be quite a challenge. The one thing you can't plan for is the type of players you're going to get. A popular reason for running multi-round tournaments is that you can weed out the disruptive elements and insure a quality group for the final. You're not always going to have that luxury, however, and there are all those first rounds to get through. In my experience, you need to be on the lookout for three types of players who can ruin your game.

First, there's the type I like to call the know-it-all. This category includes the dreaded rules lawyers, as well as those who consider themselves to be experts in the background and history of the game. The worst specimens of this type combine both characteristics. Now there's nothing wrong with knowing the rules and background of a game. In most cases, it's a positive boon. However, there will always be those people who feel that they must prove before the world that they know more about the game than the GM. They'll interrupt you to quote rules, start lengthy arguments on your interpretation of a rule or part of the games canon. Anything really to show off how much they know. The best thing to do with these players is to be assertive early. Don't let them interrupt, explain to them calmly but forcefully that its your game and your going to take whatever liberties you want to with the background and rules. This usually solves the problem. If it doesn't, ask them to leave and stop wasting everyone's time.

Second, there's the type I call the needy-children. I don't mean children in a literal sense though. I'm talking about players who need to be the center of attention all the time. They often will talk louder than everyone else and attempt to browbeat the other players into following their lead. They try to have their characters involved in every part of the adventure, even if their character is somewhere else. They try to butt in on other character's scenes and steal them. In

short, they are rude and inconsiderate. As a GM, you need to be aware of how a needy-child can dominate a game. If you sense it happening, make a note of players who have lapsed into silence. Then start specifically asking the silent characters what they want to do and ignore the needy-children. Try to give everyone a chance to act before resolving situations and don't assume everyone is following the lead of the loudest player. Your players will thank you.

Lastly, there are those I simply call idiots. As you can tell, I have no patience for idiots. These are the types of players who show no consideration for all the work you've put into designing an adventure. They have their character pick fights for no reason, insult major NPCs no matter the circumstances, and run off on their own with blatant disregard to the actual plot of the adventure. I often wonder why these people play at all, since they have absolutely no interest in the adventure provided. If you don't get them to behave early on, your game is doomed. It's best to simply ask them to leave the game, since the tight schedule of most cons does not allow time for the years of therapy that these people need.

While it is easy to blame the players for disastrous games, sometimes the fault lies squarely at the GMs feet. Apart from issues of preparation and style, the GM needs to maintain a sense of fairness and equity throughout the game. Try to give everyone a chance to participate, and stay away from the deadly game of favorites. No one likes to be snubbed, and this is double true in RPGs. Above all, do not let one player kill or incapacitate other characters. This usually results in the dead characters' players leaving the game and feeling ripped off. In one ***Stormbringer*** game I played, the GM let one player run wild and this ruined the entire game. The GM loaded the character down with potent magic items and then let his player utterly dominate the game. Then, when a friend and I plotted against this classic needy-child for a lack anything else to do in the adventure, the GM simply told the player what we had done. As we prepared to for a showdown, the GM favorite used a magic item to dominate our wills and take over our characters. Not only were we forced out of the game, we had to give this yahoo our character sheets as well. The sad thing is that this was a demo event sponsored by Chaosium and such actions on the GM's part were hardly going to sell people on an otherwise fine game.

Wrapping Up

One way or the other, with the thrill of victory or the agony of defeat, your game will end. While you may be tempted to rest on you laurels (or knock back a fifth of scotch depending on how the game went), there are a few tasks that still need doing. The most immediate of these is to determine the "winner" of the game. This is not necessary at all cons, but many provide gift certificates for each event and its your job as GM to hand them out. How you do this is entirely up to you and in many ways depends on your temperament. Some people refuse to play the winner/loser game at all, and simply have the players dice off for the prize. I've even seen it done before the game starts to kill the spirit of competition in its crib. Many GMs go with the prize concept to encourage better roleplaying, using it as a kind of carrot and stick device to get better performances out of their players. Prizes are then awarded by either popular vote or GM fiat. There are problems with both methods (popular voting usually rewards the blatant over the subtle, while GM fiat is by its very nature extremely arbitrary). I tried to fall somewhere in the middle myself. I would let the players vote but reserved the final judgment for myself. I usually found that my judgment and that of the players coincided, but sometimes I did overrule the vote if I thought someone was really being overlooked. Again, there's no right way to do this, but it can become an issue (some folks take it mighty seriously) and it's best to plan ahead.

If you're planning on running a sequel to your event the following year, definitely sit down and write out how the adventure played out and what key actions the players took. Believe me, you'll be glad you did nine months later when you're working on the next adventure and you can't remember exactly what happened the year before. I made that mistake once and I never did it again. Repeat players, a sure a testimony that you're doing something right, expect a sense of continuity between years. That is, after all, one of things that brings them back to your table time after time.

Final Thoughts

After reading this article, you may well think all of this is too much bother to run a few games at conventions. I would urge you all, however, to give it try before giving up on the idea. Yes, it's hard work but there are still many things to recommend it. There's nothing quite like the feeling you get after a great session. When you get the right group of

players and they click with your story, it's a beautiful thing. When players take your characters and give a virtuoso performance, or add a whole new level to their personality, it's a joy to watch. On a social level, it's a great way to meet like-minded gamers, as well as industry people, who are usually very happy that you've taken the time to promote their game a convention. I'll never forget the final of the third year of my tournament. The game went extremely well and I was quite pleased. Afterwards, one of the players came up to me and said, "That's the best game I've ever played at GenCon." That's when it's all worthwhile.

by Les Simpson

John Wick has come a long way.

After breaking into the gaming industry by writing an infamous *Shadis* article in defense of diceless roleplaying, the Minnesota native went to work at Alderac Entertainment Group as the story coordinator/compiler for the ***Legend of the Five Rings*** CCG. That quickly led to the design and development of the popular ***L5R*** RPG. Now, along with his wife, Jennifer, and the rest of the AEG crew, he is getting ready to set sail with a new RPG. *Pyramid* caught up with the man himself to discover more about ***7th Sea.***

John, when movie concepts are being pitched around, for better or worse, they're often described in familiar terms, like "*Die Hard* on a bus" or "*Men In Black* in the old west." Is it possible to describe *7th Sea* in that fashion?

Actually, it is. The best way to describe it is "swashbuckling and sorcery." ***7th Sea*** is going to do for 18th century Europe what ***L5R*** did for feudal Japan. We want people to be familiar with the world at first glance and then be amazed how different the details are. We've focused on the best things about each European nation during this time period and have summoned those different images up, giving them different names but keeping the emotions behind them.

There hasn't been a swashbuckling game on the market in quite a while. What led you to try and bring the genre back?

It all stemmed from us thinking about what we were going to do next here at AEG. I was having dinner with my wife one night and she said, "You know, you should do a Restoration Age roleplaying game." I had just spent five years with my thoughts in Japan so I was, like, "Restoration? What's that? That sounds familiar!" And that's where it sprang from: the idea of doing a late-1600s, early-1700s fantasy roleplaying game based on that time period in Europe, on things like *The Three Musketeers* and *The Scarlet Pimpernel.*

On a further note, I believe ***7th Sea*** is something that has been missing from roleplaying for a long time, even though it looks like it is coming back in a big way. Since the time we announced we were doing it, a couple of other people have said, "Hey! It's time to do a pirate game again!" and I'm really glad to see that it's coming back. People who have missed the opportunity to play D'Artagnan or Cyrano de Bergerac or that type of character deserve the chance.

And that means pirates as well, right?

Of course. Whenever I tell people we're designing a swashbuckling game, they say, "Oooh! Pirates!" Pirates are a big part of the setting, and who in the world doesn't want to be a pirate when they grow up?

If the time period is a fantastic version of the Age of Restoration, what have you done with the physical

setting?

Well, the game world is based around the continent of Théah. It's a land surrounded by six seas and, whereas Rokugan, the land from ***L5R,*** looks like China, Théah looks a lot like Europe.

To break that down a little further, in the northwest section, there is the island kingdom of Avalon. South of that is a kingdom called Montaigne. South of that is another kingdom called Castille and, moving a little bit further east, there is the great mud kingdom of Eisen, a land that has been the battleground of a war fought between Castille and Montaigne for three decades . . . one of the first Machiavellian acts in Théah's history. Moving even further east is the great, snowy wasteland of Ussura, a big, backwards nation using 14th century technology. No one dares invade, mainly because of its unforgiving winters and strange, magical bears. Then, to the south of all that, is a large peninsula called Vodacce, not so much a nation as a confederation of princes who can't seem to make up their mind who the king is.

These are the chief players in Théah's politics and, obviously, they each have European counterparts. The counterparts are not twin brothers and sisters, though. They're more like distant cousins. They have their own character and their own themes. It's a very rich and diverse world, just like our own, and I'm very happy with what we've come up with.

You mentioned that Théah is surrounded by six seas. What's the seventh sea the game gets its name from?

The seventh sea is a place of sailor legend where the sky moves backwards, where the sun and moon appear at the same time.

If you sail on it long enough, can you get to Rokugan?

(laughing) No. Rokugan is not in the same world. It's a very, very different world and it is very, very far away.

Designing a roleplaying game is challenging and, I'm sure, creating a setting as rich as Rokugan or Théah must present its own problems. Have there been any obstacles along the way?

One of the greatest challenges of designing Théah has been its Church. Of course, Europe's history and culture owes at least a little bit to the presence of a dominant religion, and we didn't want to cheat Théah of that same influence. It's too easy to present the Church as your stereotypically corrupt, villainous, nasty guys who are using its power for their own means. That's too easy and something of a coward's way out.

When we did Rokugan, we designed the religion to be evocative of Shinto, and we designed the philosophy to be evocative of Buddhism and Zen. You cannot do Japan without those beliefs and, likewise, you can't do Europe without the Church. We thought long and hard about the situation. Finally, we decided to present the Church in a positive light, familiar but different.

In the early days of Europe's Church, there were a lot of factions striving for control of the Message of the Good News. We decided to take that in a slightly different route. What if a different faction had taken control of the Message? What would that produce?

As a result, Théah has a Church that has taken the gnostic approach: you can see the Creator in His works. The mind

of God is all around us in nature, and what He created, He created for a reason and a purpose. If we can come closer to that purpose, we can learn from it. Everything in nature is a lesson.

As a result of that thinking, we have the Vaticine Church. It's all about discovering God in His works. Because of that, the Church has been the spearhead of science, of researching nature and how it functions. All of Théah's most important scientific discoveries have come from the Vaticine; the discovery of gravity, entomology, and others are all results of Church research.

It was a very nice fit to take just a slight twist on that part of history and see how it would come out. In a world where sorcery and magic is real, the Church is the paragon of reason, logic, and, in a very Greek way, compassion and virtue.

How about the game mechanics? Are the rules similar to *L5R*?

People who play the ***L5R*** RPG will feel right at home. We're using the same roll-and-keep engine, but we've modified it.

L5R was designed to be lethal, where one sword wound can kill you. The idea was to convey the reality that a samurai lives only four feet, the length of a katana, from death. Of course, if you're going to be playing a *Three Musketeers*-type game, you can't be living four feet from death. It's a much more heroic and, most importantly, a much more dramatic combat system.

The first design consideration I wanted for the game system was for players to be able to look at their character sheet and say to the game master, "I jump from the balcony, grab the chandelier, swing across the room, pick up the girl, land on the other side, and fight the villain that is trying to shoot me." I wanted people not to have to look in the book and see how they can do that. One of the things I am most pleased about ***7th Sea*** is that we have accomplished that feat. The game mechanics not only allow such acts, but encourage them.

That takes care of the swashbuckling part, but what about the sorcery?

There is definitely magic in the world. It's passed down through noble blood, which makes it a very exclusive club. Some of its forms are very subtle, some not so. The different flavors of magic include glamour in Avalon, from a connection with the Sidhe. In Vodacce, there are Fate Witches who can literally perceive and pull on the strands of fate.

I wanted sorcery that was powerful and yet very rare, something not seen all the time. When you do see it, you know to sweat because it is so dangerous. This tradition is from all the fantasy literature I have read, from Tolkien to Conan to even the old Grimm's Fairy Tales. The one character that you always look out for, the one you are always scared of, is the sorcerer. I can't understand why so many fantasy game worlds feel a need to balance sorcery with everything else. That doesn't make any sense to me. I wanted our sorcery to be powerful, the cannon on the field, so to speak, and we've succeeded. I'm excited to see how people are going to respond.

What kind of adventures do you hope to see players pursue?

Any that they wish. If you want to play a straight, *Three Musketeers,* Alexandre Dumas, high action/adventure game, it's there. You can play as a Montaigne, one of the king's elite guard. Likewise, if you want to play a game of intrigue, you can go down to Vodacce and get involved in all the plots going on there. If you want to play a game of exploration, Théah is rife with the ruins of what appears to be an ancient civilization that was around before men. The ruins are filled with treasures, horrors, and really bizarre thing so, if you are up for a good, old-fashioned dungeon crawl, we're set for that, too.

One of the best parts of ***7th Sea,*** or at least one part that I really enjoy, is the espionage aspect of it. This time period is the birth of modern espionage. We first start getting what we recognize as spies, and one of the first areas we are going to be developing further is our secret societies, inspired, of course, by Adam Weishaupt's Illuminati and all the Rosicrucians that popped up in England and France.

One of the first books we are doing is ***The Knights of the Rose and Cross,*** a gentlemen's society which is a less than secret society, but a secret society in the original sense of the word. Not everyone can join and the rituals and rites of the group are kept hidden. They wear their symbol on their lapels and on their chests, going around doing feats of daring-do because, well, that's what right and proper gentlemen do.

All kinds of games can take place in Théah. It's like a great big gamer gumbo.

When is this gumbo going to be served?

You can expect to see ***7th Sea*** hit the shelves very soon. We're looking at it being out at the end of April or the beginning of May.

Other than *The Knights of the Rose and Cross,* what kind of support do you have planned?

There's going to be everything. We're doing a miniatures game. We're going to be doing comic books. We're going to be doing novels. We would really like to do a collectible card game. All of these things are going to be set up with a system that will affect the world of Théah

What, exactly, do you mean by "affect"?

With ***L5R,*** we wanted to make an interactive world, where card game tournaments would influence the story line. We experimented with that, found out what worked, what didn't. Now, with all that under our belts, we're ready to make what we feel is the first real, truly interactive world. We're going to have the same mechanics setup that we had for the ***L5R*** game in that tournaments will affect the world, but we're going to extend that into a roleplaying game.

We're also going to be e-mailing information. When you sign up for the ***7th Sea*** fan club, you sign up from a nation and a secret society. You'll be getting mail from your particular secret society saying, "This is what is going on in Théah. This is our viewpoint. Here are opportunities for you to change the world."

You can also sign up for the club as a gamemaster, and the gamemaster gets a message saying, "Hey! We've told your players to go out and do this. Keep track of what they do and let us know. We'll keep you updated on how their actions are changing the world."

It's going to be fully interactive in any way we can think of so that the players are part of the world. We don't want them to see this culture from the outside. They are a part of it. I want Théah to be a living, breathing environment. It's not just a game. It's going to be a new world.

It sounds like you guys will be busy.

Well, we really want people to feel like they are telling a story. In my mind, at least, roleplaying games are storytelling devices. They're still games. They still have the dice and they do roll and they still have rules but, in the end, we don't play roleplaying games because we think the ranged attack mechanic is really cool. We play roleplaying games because we tell stories to each other.

There's going to be a lot of things for players and gamemasters to explore and discover with *7th Sea.* In dealing with ancient ruins, secret societies, and intricate politics, would you say that's the overall theme?

Discovery is the chief theme . . . right behind go out and have a good time.

Common INWO Errors

by Glen Barnett

Some errors in play seem to crop up everywhere ***INWO*** is played. Here are a few common ones.

Attacking From Hand: a common one is using the Orbital Mind Control Lasers on a group being attacked from hand -- which are not "in play." However, they do count as "just played," so Immortality Serum, Commitment, and Never Surrender work on them. (Some people play a house rule that they are in play. Try it!)

Attacking With +10s: You must play the +10 card when you spend the token. After the token is gone, you can't later say, "Oh, here's +10 to the attack."

Basic Goal: It seems hardly anyone sets the Basic Goal until play has begun.

Direction of Play: Many people miss that the play goes counter-clockwise (in the opposite direction to just about any other game).

Disasters and Destruction: the roll to Destroy has "succeed by more than X", not "succeed by at least X". e.g. an Earthquake on Hawaii (one step away from its Illuminati, say) is at 16 vs. 1+5: 10 or less to Devastate. It will Destroy "if it succeeds by more than 5" -- that is, on a 4, not a 5.

Disasters and +10s: You can't use a +10 card against an Instant Disaster. You can use a +10 against non-Instant Disasters (both mistakes are fairly common). With non-Instants, other bonuses to Destroy will count as well.

Goal Cards: To use a Goal card, you reveal the Goal card, and once your rivals agree they can't stop you, show the rest of your hand to prove there are no other Goal cards in your hand. If you are stopped, your Goal remains exposed. Presently, nothing can affect a revealed Goal card until after the win is thwarted. Note that if a second Goal ever enters your hand (unless something lets you hold more than one), you must immediately get rid of one.

Illuminati as Groups: Illuminati count as groups (of a special kind); many of the things you can do to "groups" apply to them, such as Thule Group's Special Ability. Many people also forget to count their Illuminati as a controlled group for goals.

Illuminati Special Abilities: Don't forget the all-important Special Abilities of your Illuminati! Cthulhu's plot draw, Shangri-La's +5 for defense, Bavaria's privileged attack, and Bermuda's reorganize are very easily forgotten. Write the ability on the back of your hand. Put a post-it note over your Illuminati with "Reorganize, Stupid" on it. Any of them can slip your mind at the wrong moment. How many of us remember that the Adepts also have a +6 to destroy a Magic group?

Pauses: Often in play you need to pause to allow rivals to interfere. With Go Fish, for example, you should pause before naming the card, so that the affected player can Hoax it before you name Hoax. Similarly, when playing multiple plots -- two +10s for example - you should pause between each. In practice, many people don't put in the pauses, which helps to keep the game moving, but they must then be ready to rewind the action if someone says "Hey, I was going to cancel that", or whatever.

Percentage of Goals: When finding the percentage of goal for the Servants of Cthulhu's Special Goal (the part where destroyed groups reduce the number you need to control by 1), it is common to take the percentage as: [Number Controlled + Number Destroyed] / Basic Goal x 100. In fact this is not what the card says. The correct calculation is: Number Controlled / [Basic Goal - Number Destroyed] x 100. The correct one is always smaller when the percentage is less than 100.

Tokens in Defense: Don't forget that if you spend a token on a group's own defense, the Power counts double (not Resistance). Or to be more precise, it gets a power bonus equal to its permanent power -- as described in the Very Frequently Asked Questions list on Steve Jackson Games' web pages.

by John Tynes

Art by Dan Smith

[*Editor's Note:* This article originally ran in *Valkyrie* magazine in 1996.]

"It's going down tonight, Ringo. Big Trousers Garcia and the boys from Capture Squad Capybara are gonna be there. They've gotta be stopped!"

"We'll be there with bells on, don't worry. But where's it happening?"

"That's the thing. You'll never believe this . . ."

Where is it happening? Is it a public place? A private residence? Are there enough doors and windows for hordes of mooks to come blazing through? Could hordes of mooks even be there in the first place? What cool stuff is available for the big fight scene that is bound to happen as soon as Garcia lights his cigar and says "Teach 'em a lesson, boys!"?

In ***Feng Shui,*** big honking fight scenes are the mayonnaise that binds the double-pastrami-on-rye of your scenario together. How many cool places to stage a big fight scene can you come up with on the fly? In case your creative juices are all squeezed out, here's ten quick suggestions for excellent situations just begging for excessive gunfire and a squad of roaring abominations to shake things up. These locales are all set in the contemporary juncture, but most could easily be converted to the other time periods in the game. Use 'em, abuse 'em, and make up more on your own. When the feng shui hits the fan, you'll be ready to craft the things-blowing-uppest scene your players have seen since . . . well, since the last time they played ***Feng Shui.*** Lock and load, secret warriors!

One: The Island Refuge

The evil Dr. (fill in the blank) has a secret island retreat. A big mansion, a warren of secret tunnels and control rooms, little jeeps to zip through the muddy roads, and a bunch of big, wild predators stalking the jungle -- these are the elements you'll have at hand when the PCs show up and set off the plastique. After all, five hundred mooks in orange jumpsuits can't be wrong!

The PCs will probably arrive in one of two ways: either as guests or as intruders. If they're there as guests, they may be undercover or they may be "guests" brought there at gunpoint. Regardless, Dr. Whatsisname has a lavish dinner for them just before he turns on the death traps and has Hit Squad #13 (collect them all!) line up outside the front door for the big hunt -- with the guests as the prey. If the PCs are there as intruders, they get to do all that cool commando stuff: slipping up to the beach in inflatable rafts, defeating the security system, avoiding the tigers, taking out the sentries, and so on. Of course, they might just nuke it from orbit -- but where's the fun in that?

Cool Stuff

Lee Marvin city! Jump from palm trees, leap out of bushes, stand in the back of a jeep firing away while your buddy drives, or just throw someone into the electric fence.

There's gotta be a big pit of venomous snakes in the jungle fight scene. Toss someone in, or grab a big handful of snakes and toss them into a passing jeep full of mooks.

Blow the generators. The secret warren of tunnels is guaranteed to have some sort of big power system that can be quickly rigged to blow up the whole island. Even better, there could be an active volcano that powers the facility (don't ask how) and that can be set off with some chewing gum and a paper clip.

Two: The Museum

A classic place for mooks to use as a drop point. They've got a gym bag full of heroin or arcanotech gear or the latest issue of *Guns & Ammo* to swap in exchange for a briefcase full of cash. The PCs are there to blow the deal. Bystanders are everywhere, and all those glass display cases -- well, you know!

Museums are also great places to add a little Thematic Unity. Is it a Lotus meet? Stage it in a room with treasures from the early dynasties of China. Are Buro agents present? Presto, it's a po-mo virtual reality kinetic sculpture altered environment interactive video gallery. Ascended? A collection of subversive political art that rages against the Powers That Be.

Cool Stuff

Ancient weapons. You've gotta have a display case full of ancient weapons. Swords, maces, nunchakus, whatever. Somebody (probably a chump mook) is going to smash that sucker and think he's Mister Cool. Put him in his place. Or, if you're a PC or named GMC, this is when you get to whip the weapon around and show just how much you know.

Museums are very popular with all sorts of people, but especially -- school kids! When you set up the scene, mention the school buses parked outside. It's a field trip! Dozens of screaming kids and their teachers just happen to waltz in as the guns come out, and next thing you know you've gotta be careful that you aren't blowing away Little Bobby instead of Big Brother Tsien.

Glass cases, glass cases, glass cases. Great for throwing people into, especially if they fly through the glass and are impaled on the collection of ancient weapons inside.

Dinosaur skeletons are just ripe for toppling over.

The old suitcase-full-of-money-dumped-over-the-balcony scene is de rigeur for a museum. They've got those big atriums full of tourists and everything.

Three: The Parade

Oh, crowds! Big tacky floats with stupid things made of paper flowers on them! A marching band! I tell you, parades have it all. If it's in China, you even get dancing dragons and lots of firecrackers! Don't forget to check out that next float -- hey, wait, who are those guys dressed as Vikings with the AK-47s?

Parades offer the kind of big, public, crowded spectacle that can't be beat. Rent the movie *Animal House* for a perfect example of a parade that goes way wrong. Out-of-control floats, screaming bystanders, collapsing band formations, and so forth.

Cool Stuff

Big balloons of cartoon characters. Oh, yes! Flying characters will have a field day with those. But flying characters who get too close to one that is (for no good reason) filled with flammable hydrogen gas had better watch out. Plus, a PC can snag one of the ground lines just as the ground crew takes off and be yanked up into the air where every mook in sight can get a clear shot.

Silly floats. Mooks in disguise, goofy scenery you can jump on, and best of all there is a high-speed performance automobile underneath every one! (No, really!) Punch your way through those cheesy paper flowers, get in the driver's seat, and you can send The Miracle of Seaweed float charging against that big demon.

Celebrity commentators. Has-been actors often get tapped to host parades, and are just ripe to be thrown into the situation.

Four: The Factory

This is so elemental that you should have already used it, but just in case . . .

Cool Stuff

Conveyer belts help PCs take the trash out. Toss a mook on there, and bingo -- exit, stage left. Plus, PCs can ride the conveyer belt into the next room, guns at the ready, and surprise the fools inside.

Heavy equipment. Power loaders, grinding machines, big tanks full of molten metal or boiling water, and the ever-popular Spray of Scalding Latex that scars the named GMC and leaves him a hideous, deformed freak who will harass the players for the rest of the campaign.

Chains, hooks, tools, and other improvised weapons are everywhere.

Five: The High Society Party

Ah, veddy refined. Have you seen that ring that Princess Schmendrick is wearing? And oh, that twelve-foot horned chap with acid for blood -- what's he drinking? I'll have one of those.

It's a swank joint, full of rich idiots in tuxedos and designer gowns snorting cocaine and eating caviar. Of course, burly doormen run everyone through a metal detector since terrorists and criminals like to whack rich folks. And it's awful hard to hide that Helix Ripper inside your Italian-tailored jacket. On the other hand, you never know who you might meet. The retired Special Operations Agent might still be quick with a life-saving knee to the groin if your back's

against the wall and that named GMC is all over you. And there is an endless supply of society women with mace in their handbags who can turn the battleground into a hazy, blinding hell!

Cool Stuff

All waiters are mooks and they're all carrying uzis. Just assume it.

The swimming pool is ready for a good hand-to-hand fight. Time to improvise some drowning rules!

A fight in the kitchen gets you big pots hanging on hooks from the ceiling that you can knock off onto the head of the mook below. Plus, someone's face gets seared on the grill.

Society types are bound to have good security. Guards with guns, rapid police response, and all sorts of alarms, sensors, and cameras can make things tricky.

Great opportunities for gags with haughty old society matrons (wailing about their poodle some supernatural creature just ate) getting shoved into the pool and sputtering something ludicrous.

Six: The Airplane

Feeling a little pressure? How about knowing that a gunfight is a really bad idea unless you want to send everyone on this flight -- including yourself -- on a one-way ticket to 'round-the-clock coverage on CNN following your fiery deaths in a massive crash? Put that gun away. It's time for knuckle-to-knuckle, down-and-dirty, pull-his-hair-poke-her-eye fighting! (*Passenger 57* has some good examples.)

Cool Stuff

Hostages, baby! They're everywhere, traveling with their families, so the heroes get the teary-eyed kid bawling "Save my daddy!" just before the twitchy mook cuts papa's throat. Aww! Better get some revenge for that poor kid.

Carts full of hot meals. Steaming rice-with-orange-meat, anyone? How about in the face? Oh, yeah. You've also got a drawer full of soda cans, too, which you can pitch like crazy.

Emergency exit doors. Screw the pressurized cabin -- that bad guy has got a one-way ticket to street pizza city!

Mad bombers. Just when you think you've got enough problems with the 12 hopping vampires posing as a basketball team, some lunatic from the Leftist People's Rightest Front jumps up with a shoebox and an alarm clock and demands that the plane be diverted to Leeds.

Five words: Netherworld portal in the bathroom.

Seven: The Church

If you've seen *The Killer*, you know that a church full of candles and doves is a heck of a place to blow up. But that just scratches the surface! What about being there during a service? You've got crowds (can you tell I'm fond of crowds?), plus priests, altar boys, offering trays full of bucks, and (if it's a big American church at least) a TV camera broadcasting the whole thing live for the sucker invalids watching at home and begging for an end to their hemorrhoids.

Cool Stuff

Flying PCs or GMCs that come smashing through the plate glass windows are always a good way to start things off.

It's a Roman Catholic church, there's a wedding, and guess what -- the groom's in the Mafia! Completely independent of the PCs and their opponents, there are a bunch of spaghetti-sucking gangsters there with weapons. Better yet, turn it into Romeo and Juliet: two warring crime families are making the peace and their kids are getting married. When the shooting starts, each assumes the other is ambushing them.

Quiet assassinations in the confession booths. There's nothing like seeing the trickle of blood from the booth that starts first titters, then screams, in the crowd.

A thick slab of irony, cooked bloody rare. Religious icons everywhere, the preacher talking about the lion laying down with the lamb, and next thing you know it's a freaking bloodbath and the entire Youth Fellowship Peace League of pre-teens is taking gunshots to the head! How ironic!

Eight: The Nudist Colony

Hubba hubba! Hilarity ensues as our heroes get to learn just how buff they really are when they're in the buff. Supernatural creatures who can normally pass for human in a big overcoat have some serious problems. Martial artists have little to fear, but anyone relying on guns is going to have a real concealment problem. Unless, you know, it's a real small gun and, well, never mind.

Nudist colonies are good places for rich Ascended bad guys to be relaxing. They get to luxuriate in their human skins, all the while hearing the roar of the beast within. Plus their martial arts abilities work even if they're au naturel.

Cool Stuff

Acid in the bottle of suntan lotion. Ouch!

Look closely and count all the Ascended wheel tattoos.

Innocent sporting endeavors (volleyball, aerobics, etc.) that somehow end in inexplicable and fatal accidents.

Crotch kick, crotch kick, crotch kick.

Nine: Political Convention

For he's a jolly good Jammer, for he's a jolly good Jammer . . . It's election time, and the white male power structure is in drunken-sailor mode! Endless buffet tables of chow are devoured by starving, pasty-faced journalists while ruddy-faced politicos smoke cigars, suck down brandy, and fondle whores. There's nothing like politics, is there?

But something's wrong. It's not all innocent back-room deals and sweet-natured character assassination. There are sneaky guys with guns, a loony with a bomb, and protesters with strange bulges in their clothing who misspell "ethical" on their protest signs. Political conventions are vortices of power and money, and they draw the criminal element like flies to -- well, like flies.

Cool Stuff

Big crowds. You know what to do with them.

Rent *The Manchurian Candidate.* Brainwashed ordinary people are descending on the convention with firearms to snuff out the lone voice of reason in an electorate gone mad.

Everyone's interested in politics! The Jammers would like to blow the place up. The Architects want to peddle their influence. The Lotus want to learn how the game is played in the modern day. The Hand want to save that little city park with the good feng shui. The Ascended -- oh, that's right. It's their convention.

Dramatic assassinations are always fun, but chases across the convention floor are better. Journalists with cameras mounted to their heads will be in hot pursuit, catching the whole thing live for CNN. Burly ex-military delegates will try to intervene. Convention security will disgorge teams of guys in black suits and sunglasses. It's chaos! It's politics!

Cool touch: a PC is standing in the crowd, watching himself on one of the big live-TV monitors. Then it cuts to another camera and he sees someone -- someone familiar! A lost love? An assassin? But where was that camera? Where's that special someone? Quick, start shoving people around and make a scene! (See *Brazil* for a good example of this trick.)

Ten: Seedy Pub

There's a tear in my beer . . . hey, that's not a tear! It's an ear! Better call the cops, there's trouble at the tavern. Whether it's Smoky Joe's, The Green Lantern, or The Ottery Tar Barrel, your local pub is ripe for some action. Burly working-class folks with short tempers and a high blood alcohol count will gladly clean your clock. Saucy waitresses pack .22 automatics in their garter belts. The bartender has a double-barrel 10-gauge shotgun (sawed-off, natch) behind the bar. And the owner is, of course, a master of several martial arts (known to the adept as kicking butt or can of whup ass) involving chains and meaty fists.

Cool Stuff

Pool tables to knock someone onto. Pool cues to knock them onto pool tables with. Bad guys like to sprawl a hero onto a pool table and then drive a knife through the hero's hand and into the table.

Hurl someone into the jukebox! Then chortle as it plays something ironic like "Express Yourself".

Glass pitchers, beer mugs, tables, chairs, stools -- so many things to throw, smash, trip over, or what have you.

A band should be playing. They might feature a beautiful, innocent lead singer who is blinded during the fight or the band might be a bunch of Harley-riding badasses who don't like music critics. For comic relief, have the whole band go diving for cover except for the piano player, who keeps playing no matter what.

The patrons will, of course, start a brawl at the drop of a hat. As soon as one punch is thrown, tables flip over and everyone starts slugging random people. (See numerous western movies for examples.)

Swing from the chandelier and kick some bad guy square in the face.

Someone simply must go flying over the bar, smash into the big dirty mirror, and collapse onto the dozens of liquor bottles. Big ouch. Just as they clear their head, their eyes focus through bloody tears and they see the bartender leveling the sawed-off in their direction.

Some psycho with too many firearms cleans out the whole place, so that the PCs innocently walk into a pub full of corpses, blood, and one very big killer with two very big guns. (See *Desperado.*)

A Few More

There are gobs of places that work great for ***Feng Shui*** fights. Here are a few more just to get that little squirrel running in the cage of your head: Halloween Party, Cemetery, Supermarket (see *Raising Arizona*), Cruise Ship, Amusement Park, Times Square on New Year's Eve (*Strange Days* is close), Deserted Warehouse, Porno Theater, Corporate Boardroom (see *Robocop*), Opera House, Playground, Inside a Bus, Indoor Mall (see *Commando* or *Terminator 2*), Bank (see *Heat*), On Top of a Blimp (see *Black Sunday*), Police Station (see *Terminator*) . . . gosh, the list just goes on and on.

All right, no more excuses. Get out there and do some property damage -- and don't spare the ammo!

A New Type of Celestial for In Nomine

by Beth McCoy

Art by Dan Smith

In a battle between good and evil, there's always a cry for "balance," for someone who doesn't follow the rules, but has ethics none-the-less -- for someone who dreams in shades of gray . . .

A Gray Renegade is angelic slang for a demon who, for whatever reason, is halfway to Redemption *without* high levels of dissonance or Discord -- and, for whatever reason, unwilling to take that final step, preferring to exist with near-human levels of selfishness. Demons usually call this type of Renegade "insane," even by demonic standards.

Gray Renegades are very rare, most often coming from the ranks of Lilim, Habbalah, and Impudites. Balseraphs, Djinn and Calabim are less likely to become Gray, and Shedim, by their nature as corrupters, find it almost impossible.

There are as many reasons to go Gray as their are Gray Renegades -- and a few extra, from the ones who didn't survive.

Habbalah have the most mechanistic rationale. Gray Habbalah are the ones who have experienced enough of their own "emptiness" resonance to relieve them of the belief that they are angels, but have acquired the possible delusion that they can walk the tightrope between selfishness and *true* good deeds, using their emotional-projection abilities against demons, Hellsworn, and other appropriate targets. Gray Habbalah also get to keep indulging in their own emotions, which may be part of the appeal.

Impudites and **Lilim** usually go Gray because of their natures: they get along well with humans and there are some evils that they just don't like (e.g., curtailing freedom, for Lilim, and killing humans, for Impudites). Furthermore, Impudites didn't have far to Fall in the first place; it's a relatively small step from not wanting to "waste" humans to wanting to protect them in other ways, out of simple self-interest. Unhappy humans aren't much fun at parties.

Lilim make very tempting Grays for a number of reasons: the Free Daughters have a certain motive to "buck the system" and do what they want, and Lilith's Rites are as suited to a freedom fighter as a terrorist. Their pseudo-angelic resonance (Perception-based) can be used to justify the notion that they, unlike just about all other demons, can actually perceive a little of the True Symphony -- they just have their own personal theme that sings loudest in their pretty heads. They're also the most likely demons to fit into a group of angels -- by their nature, they can be Geased into something resembling

trustworthiness. (And betrayal, of course, but that's such a minor detail when they're so cute . . .)

Balseraphs might be able to go Gray, but their utter selfishness usually keeps them from even *realizing* other beings exist, except in so far as they affect the Balseraph in question -- the Liars went from the Most Holy to the Most Unholy, in one unbroken step, and it shows. **Calabim**, likewise, are too short-tempered and destructive; too likely to lash out at the innocent as well as the guilty. Both types, when Gray, often suffer from hideous mood-swings as they strike at what bothers them and then grow remorseful upon realizing they did something "evil."

Gray **Djinn** are almost nonexistent because they simply don't care enough, either way. When they appear, it's usually because someone has managed to drag them along into Renegade-hood -- Lilim and Habbalah are especially good at manipulating Djinn through the Djinn need to be cared *about*. Impudites can be quite charming as well, but the Djinn's Will needs to be fairly low for that approach.

Shedim, of course, have the worst time of it. They *must* corrupt their hosts, and failure to do so generates dissonance and Discord. While having lots of Discord may be a selling point for Redemption ("Hey, look, I've been playing nice with my hosts!"), it doesn't do anything for a Shedite who wants to stay free of authority *and* play nice with its hosts. The only so-called "Gray" Shedim must inhabit the bodies of humans who are already Hell-bound (in the Shedite's opinion, at least) and corrupt *them* to the point of death without harming others -- too much. "Gray" Shedim are neither nice nor safe to be around, unless they're one of the lucky types with a Band attunement to let them get around the corruption problem. Asmodeus' Shedim have this ability . . .

A final type of Gray is a **new-Fallen** angel who hasn't gotten around to pledging loyalty to a Prince, and isn't sure he wants to. He still remembers his former nature, or at least his old habits, and may harbor delusions of eventual Redemption. Some new-Fallen Habbalah might scorn the suggestion that they would work with a *Demon* Prince -- though there are "angelic" Habbalah Princes for these "tough cases" to approach.

Reasons Gray Renegades Don't Seek Redemption

All: Even if they can find an Archangel willing to give them a chance -- which is rarely an easy task -- demons do not always survive Redemption! (PC Demons will, but they aren't supposed to know that they're *player* characters.) Simple fear of destruction works well to justify anything, in a demon's self-centered mind.

Balseraphs: Arrogant and paranoid, Balseraphs might not want to do the humble pleading that most Archangels require. Furthermore, a Balseraph is skilled at constructing realities in his head -- he may worry that his sincerity is a lie that fools *himself*. And his paranoia will always be niggling at him, telling him that a "sympathetic" Archangel will grab him up and destroy him, laughing.

Djinn: Gray Djinn Just Don't Care. Enough said.

Calabim: Calabim are destructive and temperamental. Sometimes, they simply can't muster the right attitude that would let them survive asking an Archangel for help. Knowing that, they don't try.

Lilim: Gray Lilim are hit with a double whammy -- in the first place, they're none too fond of binding themselves to

service; even formerly-Bound Lilim, once on the run, might think twice about doing *that* again. In the second place, they've usually got a Geas or 20 on them, and Lilim can be tracked by their Geases and made to do nasty, nasty things . . . Even a truly repentant Lilim might not *bother* asking an Archangel for Redemption, knowing how her Geases ruin her value.

Habbalah: The ability to project emotions is powerful. Habbalah are deluded anyway, so it's not hard to imagine that they've swapped one delusion -- "I'm an angel keeping the weak and unworthy from Heaven, punishing them as is God's will" -- for another: "Okay, I'm a demon, but I'm more effective this way, so I'd better stay a Habbalite and fight demonic influences, as is God's will." And they get to stay sexy and loving it.

Shedim: Shedim do disgusting things to their hosts. It's a rare angel who will bother to listen to a Shedite, so see "fear of destruction," above, as a reason why a Shedite might try to go Gray instead of seeking Redemption.

Impudites: Being an Essence-battery is a good thing -- in a group of demons, an Impudite is the next best thing to a cleric! ("I'm out of Essence after that fight! Medic!") Like a Gray Habbalite, a Gray Impudite may have convinced himself that he's more useful with his ability to drain humans -- taking care not to deplete any one human *too* often, of course -- than as an utterly pacifistic Mercurian.

As said before, Gray Renegades are incredibly rare: it is very difficult for a celestial to balance between the selfish impulses that make him a demon, and the selfless urges to right what he considers to be wrongs. Most Grays either backslide into evil, trying to be Bad enough to return to Hell without being killed outright, or tire of their halfway state and find a sympathetic Archangel to Redeem them.

Or die.

Because they're working against the plans of Hell, and because they might go Bright, Asmodeus hunts Grays -- which means that if you have several of them in a group, they're going to be a top priority with the Servitors of the Game as soon as somebody finds out.

Gray Renegades are also likely to interact with angels from time to time, and many of the "softer" angels think Grays are just Redemptions waiting to happen. Sometimes they're right, sometimes not, but occasionally one will try to play "missionary" with a Gray or six. Dominic considers that this is just asking for an Outcast or Gray new-Fallen -- and so *his* angels go around hunting Grays. He'll tolerate one or two Gray Renegades, if they seem on the path to Redemption and are staying put with their angel buddies (as opposed to skipping town), but triads will be coming around monthly to make sure the angels aren't slipping and the Renegade isn't plotting something evil.

All of this means that, if the PCs are a *group* of Gray Renegades, they have the attention of the Heavenly Inquisition and the Infernal Secret Police. They are probably one of, at most, three groups of Grays. Their survival value is low -- this will become a "fugitive" campaign sooner or later, and the players and characters should both be aware of that. While the campaign can be run on *just* that level, the primary reason to go with Gray Renegades instead of Outcasts or normal Renegades is for the moral and ethical dilemmas -- is the group stable, singly or individually, or are they sliding towards Redemption? Or are they backsliding to evil? Will they wind up betraying angel friends, demon allies or each other? Can they beat the odds?

"It's just us against the world . . . When do we attack?"

by Jason P. Prince

Art by John Grigni

Introduction

This is a scenario for FASA's ***Crimson Skies*** boardgame. The premise for this aerial engagement is the rivalry between two of Hollywood's up-and-coming actors, the dashing Peter Swift and the stoic Gregory Williams. Both men have begun making appearances in major motion pictures, and are touted by the media as destined for stardom. They have been portrayed as friendly rivals for roles, with Peter's looks competing with Gregory Shakespearean training. Another connection between the two is that both are pilots who have publicly steered clear of being involved with the renowned Hollywood Knights. The truth is that both have failed Charlotte "Charlie" Steele's standards, and refused to join a lesser outfit.

After this secret humiliation, Peter turned to Hughes Corporation to seek a patron, impressing the man himself with his abilities and confidence. Gregory took the whole thing rather personally, blaming the rejection on why he has been unable to raise his profile and get choice parts. In time Gregory would have managed to get his star hitched to a few successful shows or films, and all would have been well -- but then too much wine and an intrepid reporter sent things public.

A bold, third-page column in one of the less reputable, but widely read tabloids set off Gregory's thirst for revenge.

At the Palace last night, the famous rubbed shoulders amidst the sultry tones of Miss Billie Holiday (who is incidentally on a tour from New York -- which none dared hold against her after the first song). This reporter found herself in a sea of gossip and rumor, and then she ran into the debonair Peter Swift. Peter (whom was kind enough to request we be on a first name basis) discussed many things about the movies and Hollywood. When I asked him about his future as a flyer -- and whether he would be approaching the Hollywood Knights -- he let it be known, and I quote with his permission, "Well, my dear, Mr Hughes has more important things for me to do. I am off to sunny Texas to show them what the Firebrand can do."

Well, I said, how exciting. It seems he is to be traveling with one of the Hughes test pilots and if all goes well the Firebrand will do for the Texas Rangers what it has for the city of sparkle. This is not the high point of this article, dear reader. Shortly after, in a conspiratorial tone, he went on. "As soon as I get back expect to see me in a starring role in the long awaited sequel to ***Pirate Canyon,*****" he said. Had not I read in this very paper just the other day that Gregory Williams was rumored to have that role. "Well my dear, Greg is a fine actor but with all due fairness, he isn't the pilot I am. Part of my trip to Texas will be practicing canyon flying for the role."*

At that point, the gorgeous Miss Lucy Devon interrupted us, and I could see I was no longer in a good position to compete for Peter's attention. It appears that Gregory Williams has fallen behind in the long duel to the top, perhaps fatally. One wonders what he has to say when he finds this out.

On the scoop -- Cherie Wilks.

Overview

Gregory Williams did, indeed, get word of the loss of the part his agent had promised him. Gregory was further outraged when he missed catching Peter Swift before he left on Hughes airship, the *Majestic.* In a fury, he decided that if Peter failed to return from Texas, or at least was disgraced, then he could turn things around. With some money behind him, Gregory set out to find the plane and fliers to complete the scheme.

He decided to seek them in Arixo, where he could at least try for anonymity in his role. A seedy bar found Greg talking to some Arixo self-styled vigilantes with a hatred of Texans -- the Harbingers of Death. Drawing upon his fine acting skills, he persuaded them that the *Majestic's* visit represented just one of many steps being taken to create an alliance between Hollywood and Texas. With the promise of supplying a Vampire in return for their assistance in seeing the airship, and most importantly Firebrand, destroyed, Greg had a deal.

The canyon country where the Hughes Aviation airship *Majestic* is moored is the home to the Texas Ranger Air militia squadron, "Dave's Flight." They have a mix of experienced and novice pilots, training in the twisting cliff passages. Such practice is consider essential by the Ranger command, to be able to properly combat pirates and others who would use the landscape to avoid detection before and after they strike.

On board the *Majestic* are Peter and a Hughes test pilot, Juan-Carlos. Peter has brought the Hughes-Lockheed Firebrand to show off to the Texas Republic and, in particular, the Texas Rangers. Juan-Carlos is here to protect Hughes property; Mr. Hughes believes a movie star would be a better choice to show off his plane, but also knows the value of a good wingman. The quiet and confident Juan-Carlos flies his customized Bloodhawk.

Set-Up

This scenario uses the Canyon Map in the ***Crimson Skies*** boxed set. For reference purposes, the edge of the map with the ***Crimson Skies*** logo to be north.

One special feature of the scenario is the airship. To play the scenario, an airship the same size the ones on the other maps must be traced or otherwise copied. This will represent the *Majestic,* which is treated as a normal airship (That is, it may be collided with). The airship is positioned along the north edge of the hex grid, taking up a horizontal east-west line, which touches a mesa and a couple of buildings.

The Harbingers are split into two areas. The first two pairs plan to attack the airship immediately, and have flown up the river canyon from the east (the right-hand side of the map). They begin the game in any of the first three hexes over the river at speed 2, facing northwest. The other pair, consisting of Brigands, has been assigned to hit the Ranger airbase, and begins in the clear hex immediately south of the river where the rest of the Harbingers are.

The Hughes aircraft have just launched as the scenario begins, and may start anywhere within two hexes of the *Majestic.* The Rangers are fortunate to have dawn patrol (Lead and Wing 2) on the runway. They start in the southern-most hex of the runway, facing northwest. They will have to use the special rules below for taking off to get airborne. Lead and Wing 3 are not so fortunate. They must scramble, taxi, and then get aloft, as per the special rules. They begin the game in any of the four largest buildings on the airfield (and specifically *not* the smallest at the center of the two runways). Their actual positions must be secretly recorded before the beginning of the game and revealed when the

Ranger player wishes to begin taxiing them. They can both begin in the same location.

Special Rules

Ground Attacks

Stationary or taxiing planes have their effective size reduced by 2, which means they are easier to hit. Planes that become airborne during a turn do not suffer this penalty. An HE rocket, in addition to its regular damage to its intended target, will also do d5 (d10/2 round up) .30 dum-dum hits to any aircraft in the same hex the target of the rocket was in, due to flying fragments of debris. If the HE rocket misses, all planes in the hex -- including the target! -- still take the shrapnel damage.

Planes in hangars ignore this damage unless the hangar itself was the target of the attack. Attacks should be rolled separately against each plane. The cover of a building adds 2 to the size of the plane under attack.

Taking Off

The Ranger planes on the runway must travel 3 hexes in a straight line on a runway and be moving at their maximum acceleration in order to lift off. Once a plane has taken off, it is airborne and moves normally. Pilots may "redline" their engines and "push" their max speeds to get airborne earlier if their acceleration and top speeds are not both 3 -- which would allow lift off in one turn. All hexes used for taking off must be runway hexes and the plane must travel in a straight line. If a plane has movement left over from getting airborne, it should be plotted as per the usual rules. Planes that become airborne may fire in that turn as normal. Area effect rockets may be fired at any time.

Scrambling means that Lead and Wing 3 cannot begin moving until turn 2. To taxi and take off, a plane moves at a maximum of 1 hex per turn on any surface other than a runway (which must be plotted as normal but ignores gees.) Taking off "in the rough" is not considered possible in this scenario.

The Tanker

A fuel tanker and a rocket trolley are currently sitting near the runway, in the hex with the smallest building. This target should be considered size 4 for difficulty to hit. If hit with a HE Rocket or magnesium round, it does damage immediately as if a flak rocket had just gone off. In addition to the normal damage, it inflicts d5 (d10/2 round up) .30 magnesium rounds equivalent hits to any aircraft in the Mega hex, whether on the ground or airborne. Planes in hangars ignore this damage.

Pilots, Planes and Payloads

All rocket payloads have been predetermined and are included under each plane. What ammunition each gun carries must be determined as normal before the scenario begins. The Harbingers and Gregory have come expecting to destroy an airship, so they have made sure their payload is specifically designed to deal damage. A couple of planes carry drill rockets, to allow them to engage fighter craft at longer ranges. The Hughes Aircraft were expecting to go for a morning demonstration and they carry large numbers of flash rockets. Fortunately, the display involved some target shooting and they have some HE rounds. The Ranger dawn patrol is fully equipped but the scrambled planes have no rockets at all.

The Harbingers of Death and Gregory Williams

Lead 1: Mike "Deadeye" Wellsinker

Vampire 6-7-9-6-5-6
4 Armor Piercing Rockets

2 High Explosive Rockets
Aerial Torpedo

Wing 1: Lucy "Lacey" Grant

Devastator 5-7-4-6-4-5
4 High Explosive Rockets
3 Drill Rockets
2 Sonic Rockets

Lead 2: Gregory Williams

Vampire 4-3-4-3-6-4
4 Armor Piercing Rockets
2 High Explosive Rockets
Aerial Torpedo

Wing 2: Boris "Gauntlet" Chekov

Fury 3-6-3-6-3-6
2 Flare Rockets
5 Drill Rockets
Aerial Torpedo

Lead 3: Pat "Killer" Morgan

Brigand 4-5-6-6-3-3
Tail gunner "Hugo" 4-5-4-4
8 High Explosive Rockets

Wing 3: Desmond "Elephant" Matthews

Brigand 7-3-3-2-4-4
Tail gunner "Woody" 3-2-2-4
6 High Explosive Rockets
Aerial Torpedo

Hughes Aircraft

Lead 1: Peter Swift

Firebrand 6-4-5-7-5-3
8 Flare Rockets
4 High Explosives Rockets

Wing 1: Juan-Carlos

Bloodhawk 4-8-5-2-9-7
8 Flare Rockets
4 High Explosive Rockets

The Texas Rangers -- Dave's Flight

Lead 2: Dave "Dave" McGovern

Warhawk 7-7-7-6-6-6
4 Beeper Rockets
2 Flare Rockets
2 High Explosive Rockets
3 Seeker Rockets

Wing 2: Henriette "Queeny" Smart

Peacemaker 3-5-5-3-5-5
2 Beeper Rockets
6 Seeker Rockets
2 Sonic Rockets

Lead 3: Joseph "Dogboy" Mulgrave

Valiant 4-6-5-6-5-4
No Rockets

Wing 3: Sally "Wild Cat" Walsh

Raven 3-3-3-5-4-4
No Rockets

Hughes Airship -- The Majestic

The *Majestic* is of military standard of construction, so the lower of the two figures should be used when determining damage. Its engine pods mount twin .40-caliber guns loaded with dum-dum ammunition; the nose and tail pods carry twin 60-caliber cannons, loaded with armor-piercing ammunition. As usual, all guns fire two hexes further. All airship gunners have 3-3-3-3. One above-average crew is chosen before the game starts and secretly written down, and are revealed when they act. The upgraded crew is rated 4-4-5-4. The *Majestic* will not move during the game.

Texas Ranger Seeker Rocket Launcher

The Rangers have a seeker rocket launcher at the airbase. It is in the southernmost building of the base. It has 10 rows of armor. It has 12 seeker rockets that it may fire at a rate of two at a time, each in either seeker mode or as an armor-piercing rocket. The launcher may begin firing beginning on the second round of the game.

Rules of Engagement

The Harbingers and Gregory's objective is to destroy the airship *Majestic* and Peter Swift's Firebrand. The Hughes pilots and Rangers must stop this from occurring.

Winning the Mission

If both Peter's Firebrand and the *Majestic* are shot down, then the attackers win a total victory. If only one of the aircraft is destroyed, then the Harbingers and Gregory achieve a partial victory. If neither is lost then the defenders win. If either side's Hollywood star pilot is killed, then that side loses. The measure of success in this scenario is based on what Hollywood will think of this event and what it will mean to the success of either star.

by the Precedence Publishing Staff

Due to a printing error, page 53 of the rulebook for the ***Great War Expansion Set*** for the ***Babylon 5 Collectible Card Game*** was not included in the initial printing. Printed below are the Non-Aligned Faction rules in their entirety, including the missing page 53 of the ***Great War Rulebook.***

The League of Non-Aligned Worlds

The Great War introduces the League of Non-Aligned Worlds as a new faction for the ***Babylon 5 CCG***. For most purposes, it is treated just like any other race. Exceptions and highlights will be noted here.

The League is the fifth "standard" player race. Cards loyal to this race are designated as "Non Aligned." The League represents a diverse collection of starfaring species, each with its own needs, drives, governments and goals. Many Non-Aligned characters list a Species to which they belong as well as their race. Some of the species in the Non-Aligned worlds include the Drazi, the Pak'ma'ra, the Vree and the Gaim.

Reminder: The terms species and race are not interchangeable. No matter their species, any "Non-Aligned Character" is a member of the Non-Aligned race.

As an emerging leader in the League, you will lead your species first to preeminence among the "lesser" powers of the League. Then, you will forcibly carve the League a place among the greatest powers of the galaxy, whether by diplomacy, intrigue, military might, or by applying the special advantages conferred by your faction. This will not be an easy task, as the League starts at a disadvantage compared to the current galactic powers, and none of the major races are eager to surrender their place to "upstarts". But it is time for the declining powers to move aside, and make way for your young and vital species!

Unlike the other standard races, there is no single "ambassador" for the League. Each species has their own representative to the rest of the League. Therefore, a Non-Aligned player does not have any single specific starting ambassador. Instead, the player chooses a character listed as an ambassador for one of the Non-Aligned species, and that character becomes his starting ambassador for play.

In addition, due to the diversity of the Non-Aligned Worlds, a Non-Aligned player begins with a second species ambassador in play in his Inner Circle. However, due to the fragmented nature of the League, Non-Aligned unrest begins at 2, rather than 1. The additional starting character does not count against the 3 additional cards a player selects for his opening hand, and does not count as the sole character allowed in the opening hand.

Setup for Multiple Non-Aligned Factions

If there is more than one Non-Aligned player, each player in turn chooses a starting ambassador. Then, in reverse order, players choose their second starting character. After this is done, the Non-Aligned players choose the remaining 3 cards for their opening hand.

A Non-Aligned ambassador's assistant can provide the ambassador's assistant bonus to any species' ambassador, but only within the same faction.

Species' Ambassador versus Faction Ambassador: Ambassador, in the card text, is a specific game term which refers to the leader of a faction. There will usually be more than one Non-Aligned character in play who is labeled as an ambassador for a species. Cards which refer to an ambassador apply to a *Faction's* ambassador only, not to Non-Aligned characters who happen to be the ambassador for a species. Think of the faction ambassador as the spokesman for the rest of the faction. For example, the conflict Psi Attack cannot target an ambassador. If a faction's ambassador is She'lar then She'lar cannot be targeted. But, Vlur/Nhar, who was that faction's second starting character is still a valid target despite having the title "Pak'ma'ra Ambassador."

The League, at the time Babylon 5 begins operations, is divided and relatively weak. Tensions between the League and all major races begin at 2. Many league races are predisposed to favor the Humans, who aided the League in the Dilgar war, and others fear the aggressively expansionist Narn. The Centauri are viewed with disfavor, as the declining Centauri Republic once dominated many of the now-independent Non-Aligned worlds. The Minbari have often been isolationist, and little is known of their true goals. Still, though these sentiments are common, there is no real consensus among the many species of the League. The Humans have suffered setbacks, and some resent the parental attitude they take toward the League worlds . . . and the growing anti-alien sentiment expressed by some members of the Earth Alliance government. And though the League has no goodwill toward the other major races, they are not individually prepared to defend themselves against an aggressive major star power. It will be the task of any Non-Aligned player to change the current state of affairs, to unite the League, and to choose who will be a friend and who an enemy to the united strength of the League worlds.

The League as a whole has one vote on the Babylon 5 council, which can only be cast to break a tie. If the voting is ever tied after the five races (including the Vorlons) have cast their votes or abstained, the League vote must be called. Each player casts one vote for each Non-Aligned character in their faction who is a 'Species Ambassador'. If the vote is a tie, the League abstains. Otherwise, the League vote is cast in accordance with the majority vote of the species' ambassadors.

Summary

Starting Ambassador: Any 1 "Species' Ambassador."
Additional Starting Inner Circle Character: Any 1 "Species' Ambassador" not chosen as a Starting Ambassador.
Opening Hand: Standard 3 cards + Starting Ambassador, and 1 additional starting (Inner Circle) character.
Total Opening Hand Size: 5 cards.
Starting Unrest: 2.
Starting Tensions: 2 toward each other race.
Voting: Tiebreaking vote only, requires League vote.

Precedence will be distributing adhesive stickers which will be made available at retail outlets worldwide to give to purchasers of ***The Great War*** starter sets. This sticker will correct the rulebook by providing the missing rule page when inserted in the appropriate place. The missing rules information will also be available on our web page, or by calling Precedence toll free at 1-888-256-4955 in the USA, 1-602-449-0928 elsewhere, or sending an S.A.S.E. to Precedence Entertainment, Great War Rulebook, P.O. Box 28397, Tempe, AZ 85285.

Unity University

By Thomas L Bont, Mark L Williamson and Christopher J Lawton

Members of LaTUGA

Art by andi jones

Unity

Location: 0201 (replaces Saxe), Five Sisters, Spinward Marches

GMs may replace the existing entry with this one, or select another appropriate system.

UPP: A65583 G P

- A – 10K diameter
- 6 – Standard Atmosphere
- 5 – 50% Hydrographics
- 6 – Millions of Inhabitants
- 8 – Civil Service Bureaucracy
- 3 – Law Level – Weapons of strict military nature prohibited.
- G – Occasional Non-Imperial technology.
- P – Planetoid/Asteroid belt in system.
- Class B Starport with extensive orbital and ground facilities designed for bulk passenger handling.

Background

In a move of cooperation unprecedented in known space, all the major races (and many of the minor ones) determined to sponsor a cooperative center of higher learning. Spearheaded by the Aslan Hierate, Unity University was founded as the first jointly-sponsored, cross-race educational institution. The intent of the endowing races was to build a center of learning and culture where the galaxy's finest minds would gather to learn and then take that knowledge back to their respective societies. The fruits of research performed at Unity University were to be distributed to all participating governments so each could benefit from their investment and justify the university's existence and expense. The effort has been a complete success.

Determining the final location of Unity was the first of many obstacles confronting the sponsors. Each government initially demanded that the university be located near its own territory. Unfortunately, the only centrally located space was within the Imperium and a truly neutral system was required. Furthermore, the Zhodani Consulate would not agree to locations anywhere trailing of the Spinward Marches. No single location would truly satisfy all the participants but a compromise location was found which left all the races at least equally dissatisfied.

That location was the planet Saxe. Saxe, an underdeveloped world,

located in a neutral system within the Spinward Marches was a politically acceptable location. Unfortunately, its state of development led directly to problems in building and maintaining the university. Conveniently, the system was within reach of moderate off-world resources and could be jointly developed by the sponsoring governments.

While Unity was formally founded in 1012, many years were required before the university was ready to accept students. Saxe's ground and space facilities were far from adequate to support the proposed university. Construction of such a major project would have been difficult if just one race competed for the numerous construction contracts. Awarding contracts and coordinating the efforts of companies from seven different races created a bureaucracy that may well outlast the university. Staffing the university proved equally difficult and costly. Competition for positions at Unity University was (and remains) strong and each race was determined to place as many of its own citizens on staff as possible.

Unity University began accepting students in 1032. The graduating class of 1036 was 1700 strong. Most of those students came from the Imperium but a significant percentage were Vargr. Graduating class sizes steadily increased in size at 20 to 30% per annum for the first 20 years of operation and have since stabilized at about 200,000 students per class. The student body has grown much more races diverse over time as well.

Today	Undergraduate Programs	Graduate Programs	Staff Positions
Imperium	300,000	60,000	30,000
Solomani	150,000	30,000	15,000
Zhodani	225,000	45,000	22,500
Vargr	200,000	40,000	20,000
Aslan	150,000	30,000	15,000
Hiver	5,000	1,000	500
K'Kree	5,000	1,000	500
Minor Races	40,000	8,000	4,000
Total	1,075,000	215,000	107,500

The thoroughness of the entrance exams and dedication of the staff insure that dropout rates rarely exceed 10% of the class. The professors of Unity University operate under one edict, "Produce qualified graduates!" The pressure to "publish or perish" is not an issue for the staff or administrators, although most still produce highly prized papers. Access to the massive resources of the university and the prestige of holding a position here has produced an academic

staff that is unequalled in known space. Resources are rarely a problem as the sponsor races almost compete to contribute to the school. Indeed, serious negotiations are occasionally undertaken to impose spending limits though none have yet been successful. What many called a foolish pipe dream has succeeded beyond any of the founder's wildest hopes.

Administration

While the administration of Unity University has been very successful, there were serious staffing problems to overcome in the beginning. In the early years, sponsors tried repeatedly to place someone from their respective governments as Dean of Unity. When it was clear there would probably never be a consensus, all agreed on the Aslan who spearheaded the campaign in the first place, K'rak mon Gr'yl (She Who Bites Tails). She made an excellent dean and over the next 10 years, Unity University grew to become the place of learning and tolerance she had envisioned. When her 10- year term of office was up, the sponsor governments again fought over the position of dean. Serious consideration was given to lifting the 10-year term of office limit so that K'rak mon Gr'yl could serve another term. K'rak mon Gr'yl refused the honor and suggested that if the sponsor governments could not arrange for a truly neutral dean, then perhaps they should look beyond themselves for someone. There were many debates and a decision was finally reached. The Board of Governors final decision surprised all the involved races, including the Aslan. The employees of Unity University were to elect the Dean from their own ranks. There was one unusual stipulation; the new dean would have to relinquish all citizenship to its home government and would not be allowed to regain that citizenship once its term of office was up. The former dean would have to remain on Saxe in a teaching position (and possibly be reelected Dean following 10 years of teaching) or retire to one of the small towns that have sprung up around the various campuses. Retired and active deans would be allowed travel papers and could roam as they wished, but would have no special rights inside any governmental province.

This had a surprising affect. Nearly all instructors, professors, and staff relinquished their citizenship to their home provinces within two days of receiving the news and Saxe was renamed Unity. This caused a great deal of excitement in some circles but when it became clear Unity had no intention of declaring itself "independent" the crises waned. Since then, Unity University has become a truly neutral training ground for any subject imaginable. If it is not taught at Unity, then it cannot be learned.

It is noteworthy that there have been three Vargr Deans. Whether this is because Vargr are simply more adept politicians than other sophont races or because they just seem to excel in giving orders is unknown, but it has opened a whole new area of research on Unity. Either way, it has given all Vargr a new sense of pride in their race.

Board of Governors

A Board of Governors was formed by the member races to "manage" Unity University. Each race supplies one governor. There are currently seven major races and 17 minor races contributing to Unity. In the beginning, there were only five minor race members on the board. Over time another 12 have applied (by promising to contribute resources) and have been accepted. All board resolutions require a 3/4 majority to pass. The major races occasionally pressure the minor races into accepting their terms, though this is becoming increasingly uncommon as the number of minority members of the board grows. If the minor races ever achieve a 3/4 majority, there is sure to be a reaction from the major races. Strikingly, the Aslan have sided with the minor races on numerous occasions. It is interesting to note that the Zhodani governor always seems to know "which way the wind is blowing" and what appropriate actions to take. The past few years have seen an increase in Anti-Psi helmet use in the meeting room.

The board currently resides on Unity, as distances involved are too great to meet elsewhere. The term of office is 6 years, though many like the duty and decide to stay on. As this is an appointed position (and quite prestigious these days) the board members are usually from the political elite and have the acumen to acquire additional appointments. Quite a few have decided to retire on Unity afterwards (but none have yet given up its citizenship to its home province).

The chairman of the Board of Governors (elected by a simple majority of the other members) is in charge of the token force assigned to Unity for protection. Each member race is expected to supply at least one ship to the task force. As

this is usually considered easy duty and there is little of strategic importance on Unity, generally the oldest ships of the respective fleets are assigned this duty. There is currently 1 battleship (very old and usually in port for repairs), 2 cruisers, 3 destroyers and any number of smaller support vessels. If the time ever came for a serious showdown, there would be a race to see who could get out-system the fastest to alert their respective governments.

Acceptance

Admittance to Unity University is based strictly on academic achievement. As Unity is essentially an independent entity, there are no strings to pull or buttons to push. The Acceptance Committee at Unity University operates as a blind committee. No one beyond a few high-level university administrators is cleared to know who sits on this committee. Committee membership is a yearly duty that rotates through the entire academic staff in a semi-random fashion. Professors typically sit on the membership committee for one year out of every fifteen. Even the dean is not exempt from this duty if selected. The Acceptance Committee is also charged with the evaluation of acceptance exams and handles cases of academic ‘coasting’ by alumni.

Each world usually has its own screening process to limit the number of people taking the Unity entrance exam to manageable numbers. Local education departments administer screening tests drafted by Unity University personnel. These tests, and the final entrance exam, are updated every year. Applicants that pass the screening test receive round trip middle passage and accommodations (courtesy of Unity) to the nearest Class IV or V starport for the entrance exam. Screening tests are scheduled such that successful applicants will need to leave for the actual entrance exam immediately (i.e. bring your bags to the test). Unity University contracts local merchant vessels for so called "Baby Runs" for these particular events.

Unity entrance exams are given at every Class V and IV starport on a yearly basis. The personal records of those that pass this stringent battery of tests (a three-day mental and physiological ordeal) are forwarded to the Unity Acceptance Committee. Six to eight months later, depending upon travel times, prospective students are notified of their results. Successful applicants are awarded round trip middle passage tickets to Unity. Departure dates and travel itineraries are arranged to ensure that new students arrive at Unity coincident with the beginning of a new class. These arrival times are not negotiable. Depending upon location, applicants may have little to no advance warning of their departure times. Applicants may take the entrance exam any number of times but are limited to one attempt per year (and one free passage to the starport). Local planetary screening policies may or may not require that the applicant retake screening tests for each attempt.

Individuals born on Unity may attend the university as students but face the same entrance requirements as any other sophonts. Due to the proximity of the University, the lower educational system of Unity is among one of the best in known space. Consequently, there are a disproportionate number of natives attending and graduating.

Individuals born on non-sponsor worlds may take the test at any Class V or IV starport, though they must make their own travel arrangements. The number of non-sponsor government students attending Unity University is less than one percent. The Minor Races voice the strongest arguments against this policy but have been unable to get the entry requirements changed. The Minor Races feel that races that send students to Unity University should have to pay for the privilege. This is one area where the Aslan are in constant conflict with the Minor Races.

Alumni of Unity University are not required to take the acceptance test again for further study. They are automatically accepted. However, Unity University will not pay for passage to Unity for continuing education. Each student must make travel arrangements for themselves or remain on Unity after graduation and immediately enter graduate studies.

Curriculum

The curriculum of Unity University includes virtually any subject that can be taught in a classroom and many that are not. Classes range from weapons training to outdoor skills to professional and scientific skills. Most training dealing with thievery and strict military applications are difficult to qualify for (or forbidden by policy) so students may have difficulty acquiring this sort of education at Unity (though there may be any number of unofficial ‘tutors’ available for those in the know). Many social skills, such as carousing, do not lend themselves to the classroom either, though a

healthy after class culture has arisen to provide these experiences. GMs should exercise good judgment when allowing PCs to generate skills through attending classes at Unity or else they may turn a shining example of civilization into a seeming den of cut throats.

There are degree fields for all sciences: social, technical, engineering, business, etc. Degree titles are Journeyman, Adept, and Master. The Journeyman degree usually lasts 4 years. The Adept represents a more in-depth knowledge of the subject matter and usually requires an additional 2 years. The Master degree represents the pinnacle of learning and usually requires an additional 2 to 4 years of training and research beyond Adept although in some ‘esoteric’ fields up to 10 or even 15 more years may be required to reach mastery.

Earning a degree at Unity University and reentering society usually guarantees at least a 25% to 50% increase in starting salary. A large and growing number of mega-corporations are finding Unity University graduates in their senior ranks.

There is a non-University-sponsored Psionic Institute on Unity. This is a source of no little concern to the Imperium. Its existence is usually overlooked due to the overt benefits the Imperium receives from Unity University itself. Within the Imperium publicity about this branch of the Institute is actively discouraged.

Society

In the early years, the presence of the university was greatly resented by the natives of Saxe. There were aliens ‘running all over the place’ and the local population did not like it at all. But as time wore on, it became clear that Unity University was good for business. The economy was undergoing what appeared to be a permanent upswing. No matter the decisions made concerning the university, it always turned out for the best. When Unity University proposed that the planet’s name be changed to Unity in response to the dictates of the sponsor governments, the motion was passed in record time with nearly 98% approval. Since then, over half of the planetary economy has been converted to servicing Unity University.

There are hardly any questions related to race on Unity in a social setting today. It is a major *faux pas* to even bring it up. First year students quickly learn this and as time goes by learn to take advantage of it. There are many upper-classman willing to devote time to tutoring. When a Vargr is having problems with Jump Space Physics, he rarely cares if it is an Aslan or another Vargr that is giving him the help, as long as he learns the material. Moreover, in some instances, learning from someone of another race is beneficial as it generally leads to a completely different mode of thinking about a problem. Unfortunately, this is not so in the "real world" and many Unity University graduates report a sort of culture shock on returning home to find the old prejudices still in place.

There will always those that cannot abide by this policy. At least one first year student or collections of students believe there should be race-specific divisions in berthing, commissary privileges, and training schedules. Occasionally these students come to blows (or worse). But the most basic tenet on Unity is education, and when the planetary police (heavily augmented by the multi-government security force stationed there) comes in to break it up and send the offending students back home, affairs quickly return to normal.

How to Game Unity

There are many ways to use Unity in a campaign. Here are three:

1) As a starting point for a campaign.

> Starting out on Unity is just like starting out on any other planet in the Traveller Universe. The characters can simply start the game as students (or have an adventurous time simply getting to Unity) or the GM may require the players to roll the average of their character’s stats or less for acceptance and "Boom" they are there. They can choose to just live on Unity in a support-type capacity; working for the university in the technical services or administration department or working for any of the hundreds of other businesses that have sprung up around the campuses to support them. Getting a job in any of these other capacities is handled just as in the GURPS Basic Job Table.

However, if the characters wish to attend Unity University, they should take the advantage "Unusual Background – Unity University Student" worth 5 points. It is quite possible to play the entire campaign on Unity as there are almost certainly foreign agents stationed there to gather information for their respective governments before the university officially releases it. This could lead to adventures by itself.

Earning a Degree

If the characters are students attending Unity University, the GM may wish to use game mechanics to make the characters earn their degree. In order for the characters to successfully graduate from Unity University, they must roll the average of all their Stats or less for each year in school to graduate. Round to the nearest whole number.

Four successful rolls indicate that the character has graduated. Graduates acquire the advantages "Unusual Background - Unity University Graduate" and "Reputation – Attended Unity University" (see table below for status bonus).

If a roll is failed, another year will be required for graduation (the success roll for that additional year is made with a –1 modifier). Two consecutive failures indicate that the character has failed miserably and been expelled. Failed students acquire the advantages "Unusual Background - Was Accepted to Unity University" and "Reputation – Attended Unity University +1" (see table below) through normal character point expenditure. If the character wishes to remain on Unity, he may seek employment in any of the industries that have popped up or simply become a drifter.

If the character gets a critical success for any of the years in school and graduates in the minimum time allotted, then the character graduates with honors. Two such critical successes earn high honors. Three critical successes earn salutatorian. Four critical successes earn the status of Valedictorian. These advantages are subject to the associated character point cost (a player that earns advanced honors and does not wish to pay for them with character points has the option of declining – the character may simply be an underachiever).

Any failed roll limits the character to a maximum of "Normal Graduation" regardless of any other critical successes achieved in the process.

Benefits of Attending Unity University

If the character graduates, consult the table below for a list of advantages and special reputations he receives (and must buy with character points).

Once a character has finished school (either through graduation or failure), Unity University provides a middle passage ticket back to the character's homeworld. It may be redeemed at any time.

Successfully completing a graduate degree increases the characters reputation. Failing out of a graduate program has no ill effects on the advantages already earned. Multiple degrees of the same level do not increase advantages.

2) As an Unusual Background

If used as an Unusual Background, then characters simply choose the different advantages and disadvantages from below in the Mandatory Advantages/Disadvantages for Unity University Students Table and from the optional Advantages and Disadvantages.

Optional Rule: Simply choosing the advantages and disadvantages should be limited to the Normal Graduation equivalency.

Suggested Point Levels for characters upon graduation from Unity University.

Journeyman Degree 100-150 points
Adept Degree 125-175 points
Master Degree 150-300 points

There are no "skill awards." The player selects the skills that would be appropriate and justifiable for the degree sought (with GM acceptance). In this instance, Unity University is a tool to help GMs and Players justify skills.

A good starting point is a 25-50 point character and 20-30 character points per year at Unity University. Players can put no more than twice the character points in a skill than years at Unity: 4 years at Unity University, then only 8 points in any one skill learned there (above and beyond what is already known).

These 20-30 points per year can be used for stat gains at the normal rules cost (or house rules).

If players are gaming on Unity and their characters are students, then this number should be cut down to prevent characters from becoming over-inflated.

3) The players may start the game involved in the founding or construction of the university (or in continuing construction of a functioning Unity University). The construction of Unity University was riddled with intrigue of all sorts: sabotage, graft, espionage, etc. The range of possibilities are unlimited (imagine Disney World constructed by the UN!).

Examples include:

- Owners of a struggling construction firm trying to fulfill the contract of a lifetime (and facing many unethical competitors/governments)
- Smugglers supplying goods to contractors or construction workers (anything from stolen solar panels to proscribed drugs)
- Spies trying to plant surveillance equipment or suborn the staff
- Saboteurs trying to disrupt the construction or plant doomsday devices
- Union rabble rousers or strike breakers
- Special governmental or commercial agents investigating graft (or any other crime – note that what is considered criminal in one culture may be considered quite ethical by another)
- Simple (or not so simple) construction workers caught up in a random plot (see above)

Advantages and Disadvantages

Mandatory Advantages/Disadvantages for Unity University Students Table

Did not graduate but did attend Unity University

Cost	Description
5	Unusual Background – Was accepted to Unity University

Normal Graduation

Cost	Description
10	Unusual Background – Unity University Graduate
1	Reputation +1 (all who review the character's records)

Honors/High Honors Graduation

Cost	Description

Cost	Description
10	Unusual Background – Unity University Graduate
3	Reputation +2 (all who review the character's records)

Valedictorian/Salutatorian Graduation

Cost	Description
10	Unusual Background – Unity University Graduate
5	Reputation +3 (all who review the character's records)

Adept/Master Graduation

Cost	Description
10	Unusual Background – Unity University Graduate
7	Reputation +4 (all who review the character's records)

New Advantages

There are new Advantages available for characters attending or working at Unity University. These are optional.

Traveler's Aid Society5 points or the GM's discretion

Through either work or special studies, TAS has decided to award you a membership. Good job!

Contact variable

As per the Basic Book. Good examples would be an old professor, someone on the Board of Governors, anybody else employed by Unity University, one of the many different spies working on Unity, etc.

Patron variable

Unity University would make a powerful patron if on assignment for the university. Senior members of the staff, administrators, and members of the Board of Governors will also serve as patrons.

New Disadvantages

There are new Disadvantages available for characters attending Unity University or for characters working there. These are optional except for Loss of Galactic Citizenship which is required of former deans as described above.

Race Naivete' -5 points/level

You think life off of Unity is still as easy and simple as it used to be. Everyone is your friend, no matter what they look like, and you find it hard to believe that someone from another race would take advantage of you just because you are (insert race here). As such, you receive a –1/level to all Will Rolls when resisting suggestions from members of other races.

Race Liberal -5 points

You harbor no preconceived notions about other races and treat them all with equal respect. This produces a –2 reaction penalty to members of you own race who do not have this disadvantage and see you interacting with members of different races as you would your own. This disadvantage bestows a +1 reaction modifier to members of other races not actively hostile to your own. Relations with races that are actively hostile suffer a further –1 reaction modifier (you **must** be up to *something* sneaky).

All Theory/No Reality -1 points/level

You excelled in all your theoretical coursework but always had trouble with labs. Characters with this disadvantage make excellent designers but poor craftsman. Levels of this disadvantage must be paired with specific mechanic/engineering/operation/craft skills. The character suffers a –1 modifier/level to actually using the selected skill (including defaults) to operate, build, repair, or modify equipment (there are no penalties for design, intuiting functions, or reverse engineering).

Loss of Galactic Citizenship – Unity Resident -20 points

NO citizen rights off Unity. No (or close to none) due process, no licenses for practicing law, medicine, piloting, credit, etc. You are the equivalent of a foreign national with no embassy. You are a legal alien, but your rights are restricted depending on the province you are currently in. It does bestow an additional +1 reputation to all that know about it though. The local representative on the Board of Governors has permission to grant release of citizenship from his or her province. This disadvantage is required for Deans and optional for any employee of Unity University. Students are usually forbidden this disadvantage by their respective provinces (they want you back!).

There is no "Unity Citizenship," per se. Since Saxe was originally a neutral planet when it was literally taken over by the original university sponsors, it effectively belongs to the sponsoring race by fiat. Anyone can apply for Unity Resident Status without giving up their rights in their respective provinces. It usually takes about two days for the paperwork to be processed. Undocumented, non-residents are summarily deported. Unity Resident Status is nothing more than a change of address and grants no special benefits beyond protection from deportation.

Deans and former deans are literally "beings without homes," and can apply for Unity Resident Status. In effect, they become legal aliens of all provinces. They are not allowed to relocate off Unity and are only allowed travel visas to other provinces. These visas are temporary and usually expire at the end of their business.

Jobs at Unity University

Expanded Job Table for Unity

Comfortable Jobs:

Instructor (Academic Advisor/Tutor):

- Two skills appropriate to the curriculum: 20+.
- Teaching: 20+
- Research: 14+
- $150 x best skill.

Professor (guides multiple Instructors):

- Three skills appropriate to the curriculum: 24+.
- Teaching: 22+
- Research: 16+.
- Administration: 16+
- $200 x best skill.

Wealthy Jobs

College President (manages multiple Professors and Instructors):

- Two skills appropriate to the curriculum: 20+.
- Teaching: 24+
- Research: 18+
- Administration: 18+
- $500 x Administration skill.

Professors are never hired off the street. They must first work as an Instructor for four years before qualifying for a chaired position. The Board of Governors can make recommendations, but the final decision to promote, hire, or fire instructors comes from the Acceptance Committee. College Presidents are selected from the Professors of that college by popular vote every four years (the dean holds a veto though it is rarely exercised).

Zauberpunk

by Stephen Kenson

Art by andi jones

Cyberpunk-Fantasy is one of the most popular "genre jams" in roleplaying: the juxtaposition of magical fantasy against the high-tech, low-life future. ***GURPS Technomancer*** presents an alternate 20th century Earth where the Trinity nuclear test unleashed magic on an unsuspecting world. ***GURPS Cyberworld*** describes a dark future of government corruption and corporate control. "Zauberpunk" is a setting that combines the two. "Zauber" is a German word for "magic." Zauberpunk is when magic meets the low-life punk ethos of the One-and-Twenty.

History

The history from ***GURPS Technomancer*** happens as described. What follows is a brief outline of events from ***GURPS Cyberworld***, with an emphasis on any changes brought about by the existence of magic. In the 21st century, pressure fell increasingly on the United States as the "policeman of the world." Former Soviet Russia formed an economic alliance with Japan, promising resources, magical knowledge, and a ready work-force in exchange for technology. This formed the beginning of an ongoing Russo-Japanese alliance, in economic competition with the powerful North American corporations.

In 1999, there was a huge outbreak of Ambulatory Necrotic Plague world-wide. Plague zombies infected huge segments of the population, and there was a rise in associated necromantic and magic-resistant diseases, notably vampirism. Many governments and municipalities were forced to declare martial law in order to keep the plague under control. Riots and breakdowns in infrastructure followed.

In 2006, problems caused by the necrotic plague and subsequent concerns about magic use led to a world-wide stock market crash called the Grand Slam. The disaster sent inflation skyrocketing in most nations and led to a restructuring of the world financial system, as well as increasing lack of confidence in magical forms of prediction, which failed to foresee the crash.

The greatest change for the United States came in 2010, when President Burris was killed by an assassin using an anti-personnel rocket armed with an enchanted warhead. Vice-President Patterson immediately assumed office and blame fell on a terrorist group called the Army of Satanic Order (ASO). President Patterson called for immediate strikes against the ASO and exposed to the nation a vast, demonic conspiracy. Almost immediately, stronger measures for controlling magic and mages were passed through Congress, to prevent the "demonic threat" from spreading. Numerous wizards who failed to cooperate were blacklisted.

In 2024, the continuing deterioration of American society led to mass riots and civil unrest. President Patterson suspended the Constitution and declared martial law. Full power is given to the Provisional Government (ProGov) "for the duration of the emergency." Some 20 years later, ProGov is still in control, and the "state of emergency" seems permanent. America is a dictatorship, under the rule of the ProGov and the National Emergency Resource Coordinating Commission (NERCC), or the "nerks."

The World

In 2045, exactly 100 years after the formation of the Hellstorm, the world is a very different place. The United States remains under the rule of the ProGov and the NERCC, led by ProPrez Adam Hammond. The country has a "citizenship scale" that rates a citizen's rights and privileges. Mages are given preference, provided they are willing to cooperate and abide by the ProGov's restrictions. The NERCC and the ProGov's propaganda machine still rely on the specter of a "demonic conspiracy" to keep citizens in line. Chimera tend to be low-scale, unless they have some kind of useful skills or influence. Societal prejudice towards chimera has grown, since they are often associated with fears of "demonic magic."

The truth is far more disturbing than most people imagine. In fact, there *is* a demonic conspiracy, but the ProGov isn't fighting it, they *are* it. President Patterson sold his soul to demonic forces for the aid necessary to achieve his coup, and his followers are similarly indebted to demons who move unseen in the halls of power in Washington. Nobody knows exactly what these demons want; they may simply enjoy causing human suffering, or their machinations may be preparations for some kind of invasion or other demonic plot. A few fringe conspiracy-theorists who have figured out what's going on suspect the demons may be setting up for Armageddon.

Mexico's government fell during a particularly harsh outbreak of necrotic plague. The nation was annexed by the United States, both to ensure control of Mexico's considerable magical resources and to deal with any security risk posed by plague outbreaks and rumors of "blood sacrifice cults." The ProGov treats the Mexican states like poor relations. There is a small, but growing, rebel movement which has attracted many disaffected mages and chimera.

In 2025, Argentina, backed by the Condor Group, invaded and annexed its neighbor Chile. The United States and other nations were too concerned with their own affairs to notice. Argentina is the major power in the Southern Hemisphere, and their neighbors wait and watch fearfully, waiting for another invasion. American authorities are also concerned about possible Argentine aggression, and maintain the Central American nations as "buffer states."

The Russo-Japanese Alliance is a major world power, with considerable manufacturing clout. Although it still lags behind America in terms of technomagic, the Alliance is continuing to rise as America sinks into the grip of the "permanent emergency."

China's moderate reform government collapsed in 2032. Since then, China has maintained a "bamboo curtain" against all outsiders. China remains at the technological forefront in alchemy and genetics, and rumors of strange Chinese genetic experiments abound.

United Europe is a moderately stable alliance of nations, playing second-fiddle to the larger and more powerful alliances like the Russo-Japanese and the Americans.

In 2037, Australia suffered a terrible outbreak of an unknown strain of Ambulatory Necrotic Plague. In a matter of five months, every person on the continent was dead, a great many of them reanimated as plague zombies or other strange undead. The surviving Australian government established itself in New Zealand, and the world-community has quarantined Australia; destroying any plane or ship attempting to leave. Thus far, no viable solution has been offered for dealing with the "zombie nation." Weapons of mass destruction are too likely to cause environmental problems, and no two nations can agree on a military solution. Governments and corporations are known to back covert missions to Australia to collect technological information and resources or data on the necrotic plague. Otherwise, the nation is off-limits.

The Megacorporations

One of the strongest powers on the One-and-Twenty is the megacorporations or "korps," which have continued to grow in power and influence all throughout the worst troubles the world has faced. They are dominated by the "unholy trinity" of the Leviathan Group,

Manadynamics and Sephiroth Industries, the three largest corporations in the world. After the top three come various other corporations like North American Technology & Thaumaturgy (NAT&T), Kosmozavot Tenno-Tanjo, Ishido Communications, Korsakov-Shimadzu, Rio Largo Manufacturing (Argentina) and Fabrique Europa.

The korps have little or no interest in politics, provided they do not interfere with their bottom line. Many korps recruit mageborn from America and other nations, providing them with education and shelter from some of the harsher realities of life in the 21st century.

Space

Magic has accelerated the race into space. The Moon is home to America's Kennedy Base, supported by NASA as a space colony and mining facility. Other outposts on the Moon include a Russo-Japanese moonbase and mining facility. Major orbital stations include the American Hermes platform, the Russian Mir station, the Russo-Japanese Tenno-Tanjo platform and Sephiroth's Tiphares and Kether stations. Argentina is clearly gearing up for ventures into space, constructing an orbital teleportation facility near Tierra del Fuego. The race is on for missions to Mars between the Russo-Japanese, the Americans and Argentina.

Magic in the One-and-Twenty

Magic still has a major impact on the development of technology in the 21st century. Technomagic has pushed many areas of development to Tech Level 8 or even higher in some cases. The major technological developments include:

New Spells

Golem Limb (VH) Enchantment

Similar to the Golem spell (***GURPS Magic***, p. 39) this enchantment animates a prosthetic limb and attaches it to a wearer, making it a functional replacement for a missing limb. The spell grants the prosthetic full flexibility and range of motion, regardless of its material composition; a solid metal limb can function normally using this spell. Many ancient heroes possessed golem limbs, like Nuada of the Silver Arm, from Celtic myth.

The limb has DX equal to that of the wearer and ST 14. Additional DX and ST can be enchanted into it as well. The wearer can feel through the limb, but does not feel pain from damage done to it. Damage to the limb does not heal normally, but any Healing spell can repair it.

A golem arm costs character points equal to 30% of the cost for the difference in ST and 60% of the cost for the difference in DX, half that for a golem hand. A golem leg costs 10 character points.

Energy Cost to Cast: 200. Additional DX costs 500 per +1. Additional ST costs 300 per +1. Halve costs for a prosthetic hand.
Prerequisites: Enchant, Animation.

Graft Healing

The caster can use this spell to graft different biological or even non-biological parts onto a living creature. The subject of the spell must be either willing or unconscious and unable to resist. The spell ensures that the subject will not reject the graft. It becomes a normal part of the subject's body. Biological grafts continue to grow and heal normally, while non-living implants are harmlessly incorporated into the subject's body. This spell greatly eases implant and organ replacement surgery, ensuring compatibility. The caster is at -2 to graft biological parts not of the subject's species, and -4 for grafting non-living objects.

If a magic item is grafted to the subject, the subject can use the item normally. GMs may require subjects with grafted magical items to pay character points as if the item were a Knack (see below).

Energy Cost to Cast: 20. One try.
Time to Cast: one minute.
Prerequisites: Cure Disease, Restoration.

Knack Tattoo (VH) Enchantment

Grants a subject a magical Knack (***GURPS Magic***, p. 86) by tattooing a pattern on the subject's skin. The tattoo covers a number of square inches equal to the knack's cost in character points; so a Night Vision tattoo (Energy Cost 200) would cost 4 points and cover four square inches. The design of the tattoo can be whatever the caster desires, although it must incorporate some appropriate symbols for the knack being enchanted. GMs may require characters who get knack tattoos to devote any earned character points to paying for them.

Energy Cost to Cast: Equal to the energy cost of an equivalent magic item.
Prerequisites: Tattooing 12+, Enchant, one spell from each of 10 different colleges.

Zauberware

In 2021, Manadynamics perfected the Graft and Golem Limb spells, starting the "zauberware" revolution. Originally designed to provide replacement limbs and organs for medical purposes, zauberware quickly spread beyond its original designs and became almost a fashion trend. Other corporations began developing their own zauberware designs.

Common zauberware includes golem limbs, often with enhanced ST or DX or built-in weapons like Claws or Flame Jet. Replacement eyes are enchanted with spells like Aura, Mage Sight, Dark Vision, Hawk Vision and See Invisible. Implants providing Dexterity, Might and Vigor are also known. Zauberware can duplicate virtually any of the implants from ***GURPS Cyberpunk*** or ***GURPS Ultra-Tech***, along with some unique technomagic combos:

Hideaway Flesh Holster (TL9)

A flesh holster (***GURPS Ultra-Tech***, p. 107) can be enchanted with Hideaway, allowing it to hold much larger and heavier objects than normal, such as large weapons (rifles, swords, even spears). The object still must be able to fit through the opening of the flesh holster. Such holsters are generally enchanted so as not to add to encumbrance.

Powerstone Implant (TL8)

A powerstone can be implanted in a suitable body cavity. The advantage is that the user is always "touching" the powerstone and can drawn on its stored energy at any time. The stone is also difficult to detect and take away. The limitation is that other powerstones recharge slowly in the presence of the wearer and the implanted powerstone cannot be upgraded without removing it surgically. For game purposes, the character is considered to have the Extra Fatigue advantage, with the -30% limitation "Only for spellcasting."

Scrollchip (TL10)

A scrollchip is a TL10 version of a digital scroll from ***Technomancer***. It is used in the same manner, except the user must have a suitable jack to plug the scrollchip in.

Spellchip (TL10)

A spellchip is a skill chip (***GURPS Ultra-Tech 2***, p. 117) with the knowledge of a particular spell encoded onto it. The chip provides the user with the knowledge necessary to cast the spell, however the user must either be a mage or in a High Mana area like the Manabelt. The spellchip ignores all prerequisites except Magery requirements. The user expends fatigue on the casting normally, adjusted for the effective skill provided by the chip.

Ghostchip (TL10)

A ghost chip is a receptacle for a Soul Jar spell. The chip has all the normal properties of a soul jar, plus the spirit in the chip can attempt to "possess" anyone who jacks the chip. Roll a Contest of Skills between the spirit's Will and the subject's. If the spirit wins, it takes control of the subject's body for as long as it wishes. If the subject wins, the spirit cannot try again for at least an hour. A ghostchip enchanted with Machine Possession can also "take over" any machine it is plugged into, including a computer. If the data on a ghost chip is ever erased, the spirit is destroyed.

Chimera Grafts

The Graft, Alter Visage and Alter Body spells permit the creation of artificial chimera, adding animal traits to otherwise normal humans. These include virtually any of the traits of chimera from ***Technomancer***, as well as any other animal features permitted by the GM. Gangs often go in for common animal-traits, like sharp teeth and cat's eyes, for example. Alter Visage and Alter Body spells are common for cosmetic changes, while Graft is used to provide more comprehensive alterations, like adding new limbs or other organs. Players and GMs can consult ***GURPS Bio-Tech*** for additional inspiration.

Tattoo Magic

Tattoo Knacks are popular enchantments, especially among the young and organizations like the Yakuza. Most street-tattoos focus on protective or sensory spells, along with some combat-useful spells like Might or Dexterity. A mage can determine what spell a tattoo provides using Identify Spell. Any of the legally restricted spells from ***Technomancer*** are also legally restricted as knacks.

Street Alchemy

Alchemy has filtered its way down to the streets in the One-and-Twenty. Backroom alchemists set up illegal labs to brew different elixirs and sell them on the black market. Various legally-controlled elixirs from ***Technomancer*** like combat elixirs, Lecherousness and Love can be bought cheaply on the streets. Mana-active drugs like PHTP and spelljack are epidemic on the streets, both in high and low society.

Some zauberware can take advantage of different elixirs. Characters with a Poison Reservoir can carry an elixir rather than a normal toxin. Morpheus is a popular choice.

Sample Characters

"Aqua" Reggie Vasquez, street alchemist (100 points)

ST: 10 [0], **DX:** 10 [0], **IQ:** 14 [45], **HT:** 10 [0]
Advantages: Acute Taste and Smell +5 [10], Contacts [three] (Street; skill-18, 9 or less, somewhat reliable) [9], Magical Resistance +3 [6], Resistant to Poison [5].

Disadvantages: Enemy (Drug and Alchemy Enforcement Agency, 6 or less) [-15], Greed [-15], Stubbornness [-5]
Quirks: Never uses drugs himself; Very punctual; Thinks mageborn just "got lucky"; Attracted to fox chimera; likes to give his potions pleasing flavors.
Skills: Alchemy-16 [16]; Biochemistry-12 [2]; Computer Operation-15 [2]; Cooking-14 [1]; Driving-9 [1]; Fast-Talk-14 [2]; Merchant-14 [2], Pharmacy-15 [6]; Poisons-13 [2]; Streetwise-14 [2]; Thaumatology-13 [4]
Zauberware: Claws [15], Poison Reservoir [10]

"Aqua" Reggie Vasquez is a freelance street alchemist, brewing up elixirs in his home laboratory and selling them to a variety of customers. He makes everything from home-brewed hair-restoratives and birth control elixirs for the Low-Cs who can't legally buy the good stuff, to combat and mind-control elixirs for sale to the black market. He always keeps a few elixirs on hand, just in case. Reggie's one restriction is that he doesn't deal in drugs; no spelljack, no addictive potions. He doesn't like to mess with that stuff. Otherwise, if the money's good, he's in. Reggie is wanted by the Drug and Alchemy Enforcement Agency for several counts of illegal production and distribution of elixirs.

Johnny Demonic, cyberwiz (100 points)

ST: 10 [0], **DX:** 10 [0], **IQ:** 14 [45], **HT:** 10 [0].
Advantages: Lightning Calculator [5], Magery 2 [25], Mathematical Ability [10], Zeroed [10].
Disadvantages: Addiction (Stimulants) [-5], Curious [-5], Low Empathy [-15], Skinny [-5], Unfit [-5].
Quirks: Always wears mirrorshades, even indoors; Celebrates major victories by getting a new tattoo; Cheats at computer games, then later regrets it; Avoids sleeping when he's "on the job"; Eats constantly, but never gains weight.
Skills: Area Knowledge (Net)-14 [1]; Computer Games-13 [1]; Computer Hacking-16 [4]; Computer Operation-15 [2]; Computer Programming-17 [4]; Cryptanalysis-13 [2]; Electronics (Computers)-15 [2]; Electronics Operation (Computers)-14 [2]; Mathematics-15 [1]; Research-13 [1].
Spells: *(base skill level 14, 13 with VH)*: One point was spent each of the following spells: Seek Number, Wrong Number, Identify Caller, Magic Switchboard, Sense Foes, Sense Emotion, Truthsayer, Mind-Reading, Soul Rider, Speed Data, Purify Air, Create Air, No-Smell, Static Charge, Ether Static, Seek Emitter, Purify Signal, Lightning, Seek Food, Know Recipe, History, Measurement, Seeker, Trace, Scryguard, Counterspell, Ward, Keen Eyes, Apportation, Locksmith, Voices, Seek Machine, Reveal Function, Machine Possession, Magnetic Vision.

Johnny was trained by a korp. He won't say which, but rumor has it that it's one of the big-boys, maybe even Sephiroth or Manadyne. Instead of working as a korporate wage-slave, he decided to hit the streets and make use of his talents as a magical hacker and "computer consultant" to earn a living. Before he left, he erased all traces of his existence from the korporate and government computer banks. He also got some face-work done, such that most of his old acquaintances wouldn't even recognize him these days. Johnny conducts most of his business over the Net, a lot of his clients have never even seen him, and rumors abound that he's everything from an awakened computer to a real demon living in the Net.

Adventures

Characters in a Zauberpunk game are most likely to be street operatives working for the korps, or rebels working against the ProGov and their demonic patrons, or both. GMs can run a fairly straightforward action-adventure campaign with the characters as mercenaries, street-ops or even government or corporate special forces. Conspiracy campaigns involving the ProGov, demons, mysterious artificial intelligences and Seelie abductions are also a good possibility. GMs can easily adapt adventures for other cyberpunk games, particularly ***Shadowrun***, to the zauberpunk setting.

Crossovers

The zauberpunk setting provides fertile ground for crossovers with several other ***GURPS*** settings:

CthulhuPunk: Perhaps the stars *were* right during the Trinity nuclear test and Oppenheimer's ill-timed words did

more than just bring magic into the world. Perhaps they awakened the Great Old Ones from their slumber and started the world down the road to ruin. In this case, the "demonic conspiracy" behind the ProGov is actually Mythos-inspired. It is a simple matter for Cthuhuloid cults to operate in a world already filled with strange happenings, and creatures like Deep Ones or Ghouls are likely to be mistaken for new chimera or unusual forms of undead. The Seelie are almost certainly a cover for a Mythos creature (or several different ones).

Fantasy: Oppenheimer's unwitting "spell" may have actually attracted the dark elves' Banestorm. Perhaps the Hellstorm and the Banestorm are one in the same, or related in some way. Strange creatures may come out of the Hellstorm from time to time, and it is quite possible that wizards on Yrth or Earth might find ways to cross over. Perhaps the Seelie are actual elves or faeries from Yrth who are exploring Earth.

Reign of Steel: Experiments with the Awaken Computer spell prove disastrous, creating artificial intelligences hostile to humanity. When the AIs unleash magic-resistant plagues on humanity and begin using their own golems and constructs to take over, magically capable underground rebels have to fight back.

Time Travel: Infinity Unlimited discovered the parallel of Merlin (their name for the ***Technomancer*** Earth) during the "Soulburner" adventure in ***GURPS Time Travel Adventures***. The Zauberpunk world may be Merlin's future, or yet another parallel with similarities to Merlin. As the Tech Level advances, Infinity is going to be watching very carefully, lest the inhabitants start experimenting more with dimensional and para-chronal travel. Perhaps the Seelie are para-chronic travelers themselves, from another parallel undiscovered by either Merlin or Infinity.

Magic Card Spotlight: Goblin Bookie

by Will McDermott

[*Editor's Note:* This article originally appeared in *The Duelist* magazine, Issue #30, October 1998.]

Goblin Bookie is an incredible card that could easily make its way into top tournament decks... what's that? Goblin Bookie isn't tournament legal? Why the #$&* am I writing about it then? What? Oh, am I still typing? Sorry.

Okay, so you can't use Goblin Bookie in your tournament decks, but that doesn't mean you can't amaze your friends with the wonders of this little gem hatched under the warm...auspices of Mark Rosewater, **Magic: The Gathering**-*Unglued* lead developer.

According to Mark, R&D has for a long time wanted to create a card that allowed players to reflip a coin, and *Unglued* provided the perfect venue. Because the set sports a number of dice-rolling cards, rerolling was added to the Bookie's repertoire as well. Mark made Bookie a creature so its effect would be reusable, but some developers wanted players to sacrifice Bookie for its effect. Mark argued the player's side and got his way.

So, what can you do with Goblin Bookie? In a nutshell (or is that eggshell?) Bookie improves your odds whenever you use a card that depends on a coin flip (or a die roll) for some effect. If you combine Bookie with Clam-I-Am, you can even get *several* chances to improve a die roll. And don't forget, you can target your opponent with Bookie's effect to make him or her get "lucky" twice in a row on any die roll or coin flip.

Within the *Unglued* set, there are a number of overpowered/undercosted cards that rely on a good die roll for that extra oomph. With a Bookie in play, you can try twice each turn to get your Chicken Egg to hatch. You can go for a tougher or more powerful Elvish Impersonators. You can get two chances at matching your first die roll when boosting Free-Range Chicken or try for more damage every turn with your Goblin Bowling Team.

Plus, don't forget Spark Fiend and Jumbo Imp-potentially two of the most powerful cards in the set. Goblin Bookie can help you keep your Imp alive every turn (and even make it bigger), and it can help you with that crucial initial roll of the dice on the Spark Fiend.

Once you leave the confines of the *Unglued* environment, Goblin Bookie takes on some more serious characters. Wild Wurm, a 5/4 *Tempest* creature for , makes you flip a coin to keep it in play when you cast it. With a Bookie around, your odds improve from 50/50 to 75/25. Better yet, combine Bookie with Frenetic Efreet from *Mirage* to give yourself a 75 percent chance to phase out your Efreet in response to your opponent's Terror.

Obviously, Goblin Bookie isn't a tournament-quality card, but if you want a better-than-average chance to win with that fun coin-flipping deck, you need a Bookie running the numbers for you. How else will you get five fuse counters on that Goblin Bomb? In fact, according to Mark, Bookie became a Goblin because of Goblin Bomb (I think it's yet another part of Mark's secret ultimate Goblin deck).

Deck Spotlight

Goblin Bookie

Bombs Away

Bombs Away uses Goblin Bookie to help put fuse counters on your Goblin Bomb while Giant Fan blows even more counters from your other cards onto the Bomb, building up to a big BOOM. To provide a plethora of counters, I've added cards like Wall of Roots, Gemstone Mine, Serrated Biskelion, and the Spikes. Even if you don't get your explosive combo into play, Bombs Away provides some decent power with fast mana, Wildebeests, and Spikes. -*Mark Rosewater*

Green (24)
- 4 Birds of Paradise
- 2 Elven Rite
- 2 Hungry Hungry Heifer
- 4 Spike Feeder
- 4 Spike Weaver
- 2 Stampeding Wildebeests
- 2 Wall of Blossoms
- 4 Wall of Roots

Red (7)
- 4 Goblin Bookie
- 3 Goblin Bomb

Artifacts (5)
- 3 Giant Fan
- 2 Serrated Biskelion

Lands (24)
- 1 Dwarven Hold
- 14 Forest
- 4 Gemstone Mine
- 1 Hollow Trees
- 4 Mountain

Betting on Chickens

Okay. This *Unglued* deck won't win any Standard tournaments, but it has Chickens and dice rolling. What more could you ask for? Use Goblin Bookie and Clam-I-Am to alter your rolls on Chicken Egg, Spark Fiend, Jumbo Imp, etc. Ricochet, Charm School, and Prismatic Wardrobe should provide some control while your Chickens, lead by the Chicken à la King, apply poultry beatdown. -*Will McDermott*

Red (16)
- 4 Chicken Egg
- 4 Goblin Bookie
- 2 Krazy Kow
- 2 Ricochet
- 2 Spark Fiend
- 2 Ultimate Nightmare of Wizards of the Coast® Customer Service

Blue (8)
- 2 Chicken à la King
- 4 Clam-I-Am

2 Common Courtesy
Green (4)
2 Free-Range Chicken
2 Growth Spurt
White (4)
2 Charm School
2 Prismatic Wardrobe
Black (4)
2 Jumbo Imp
2 Poultrygeist
Artifacts (4)
2 Blacker Lotus
2 Jack-in-the-Mox
Lands (20)
2 Caldera Lake
4 City of Brass
2 Gemstone Mine
4 Island
6 Mountain
2 Reflecting Pool

by Scott Haring

{*Editor's Note:* This interview originally appeared in the March 1999 issue of *Comics Retailer* magazine, Issue #84.]

Jill Lucas, President of FASA, Inc., has guided the company through the last several tumultuous years with a great degree of success, not only avoiding the disasters that befell several other major companies, but even finding ways to keep FASA strong and prosperous. Now that things seem to be turning around for the industry as a whole, FASA is primed to take advantage of the upturn with two new game lines and a miniatures company. Lucas talked to *Comics Retailer* in mid-January, just after the announced purchase of FASA Interactive by Microsoft.

What's new with you guys? How does the purchase of FASA Interactive by Microsoft affect FASA Corp., the paper side?

It greatly increases our exposure. Microsoft handling the ***BattleTech*** property and the ***Shadowrun*** property, as far as electronic computer games go, the exposure they're going to get as opposed to what we can get in our industry is just enormous. It's yet to be seen what kind of response we're going to get on that, but I know our exposure is just going to be tremendous.

An early rumor was that Microsoft didn't really want *Shadowrun* because of a competing property being developed by Digital Anvil (also owned by Microsoft). Not true?

No, that's not the case.

So Microsoft is going to move forward with the *Shadowrun* property FASA Interactive was working on?

Well, there's no mistake they bought it for the ***BattleTech*** property. It's a proven, $70-million-plus-making computer game. And ***Shadowrun*** hasn't had a title out. So it's only natural that ***BattleTech*** would be their focus. But at no point was there no interest in ***Shadowrun.*** They have the license to work with all our games -- ***Shadowrun, Earthdawn, Renegade Legion*** and ***BattleTech.***

What about *Earthdawn*?

We are going to cease production on it. The line, unfortunately, will be shut down, and we're moving forward. ***Dragons,*** the book that was next in line and is already written, we're going to put it up online so the ***Earthdawn*** players can still have access to that material. And we're checking with our novel authors now to see if we can put the rest of the novels up online for them.

Is this the end of any attempt to find new publishers for the line?

Yeah. With the new Microsoft deal and the electronic rights over there, same as with ***Renegade Legion,*** we'd just as soon have a clean break and not enter into any other rights agreements.

Is Microsoft going to do anything with *Earthdawn*? Have they expressed an interest, or is it just an option?

It's an option. It's really too early to tell . . . Jordan Weisman just started there Monday. It's a great game line, ***Earthdawn,*** and we put our heart and soul into it, and it's got some of the best production values in the industry. We're very proud of it. But it's . . . it had a healthy run, there's a lot of adventuring people can still do in it, but with all things, sometimes you have to move forward. We've got two new games coming out, and rather than split our focus and not do justice to any of them, we decided to focus on the two new ones. One door closes, a new door opens -- if we hadn't shut down ***Renegade Legion,*** we wouldn't have ***Shadowrun*** today.

It's been a while since you've done something new, and now you have *Crimson Skies.* Is it a hit?

It's a little early to say it's a hit, but we've had a really positive response from everyone we've talked to about it. It seems to fill a void that isn't out there, and it's been selling quite well. We're very happy with it.

How would you describe that "void"?

It's a more of a back-to-basics, simple beer-and-pretzels kind of game. There's fictional aspects of it, but it's the ***Renegade Legion*** system, that type of thing. There aren't a lot of games out there like that. Right now, the focus is either roleplaying or specific miniatures . . . this is a more familiar system to our audience.

So the appeal is the system, in addition to the game world?

Yes, I think so.

Tell me a little about the game world, and what you have planned for it. Certainly the miniatures game isn't everything.

Crimson Skies is a stand-alone game. In the way FASA does things, it has a lot of fictional aspects that allow us to broaden on that. We've got a series of short stories prepared for it, we've got a campaign expansion prepared for it, a pirate expansion prepared for it; so there's product coming down the line. But this was not the "FASA universe" we've been working on for several years. That's ***VOR.*** This is a game that came out of a fun night with Ross Babcock and Jordan Weisman and some of the people at FASA Interactive. We agreed that it was a fun concept, and it was kind of like a bonus -- a bonus for us and a bonus for the consumers.

Tell me about this other game world you mentioned.

VOR: The Maelstrom.

Is this FASA's attempt to crack the Games Workshop "big box full of miniatures" market?

We bought a miniatures company, so it's our attempt to capitalize on that, as well as do something we haven't done. We've got Kevin Adams on staff, and have for over a year, working on the sculpting; we've got Matt Wilson working on a lot of conceptuals, working closely with our art department. We wanted to come out with a new universe, we felt miniatures was the way to go, but we got sidetracked because of industry conditions and a lot of other things going on at FASA. The game would have been out about a year ago had we been able to give it our full attention.

Can you describe the game world? Is it fantasy, or science fiction? Is it dark, with lots of "spiky bits"?

It has its moments of spiky bits. It's basically . . . you caught me before my pre-GAMA spiel, so I'm not on this yet . . . basically, the worlds are being sucked in by a space anomaly that is consuming and fusing worlds together. The Earth has been pulled out of its orbit, you've got the United States split up, you've got Union and Soviet troops . . . you've got these fused worlds and the survivors are fighting for resources. You've got hulking growlers, which are huge, massive guys -- these miniatures will knock your socks off. You've got the Chi, which are more Zen-like fighting guys that have mystical tattoos. You've got a lot of different things that have been brought into this universe. It's very open-ended, and there's room for lots of interesting terrain and interesting races, yet there's still that familiar aspect of human troops.

What's the release date?

We're looking at the end of May.

Not going with the traditional GenCon release?

We've got ***MechWarrior 3,*** a roleplaying game, coming out at that point. These days, everything gets held back for GenCon, and we thought it would be nice to have something for the beginning of summer. That's the plan right now; we'll see if we'll be able to pull it off.

Is GenCon as important as it used to be?

I don't know yet. The jury's still out yet. GenCon has the potential to change, but it hasn't as of yet. It's always good to have a big convention where you can show things off to the direct consumer; that aspect hasn't changed. The consumer's still there, we're still getting a chance to show things off, and we're getting that excitement. It psyches up the company, it psyches up the consumer, it's still doing OK.

Been a tough couple of years for just about everybody in the business. Are you guys still doing pretty good? Are you happy where you are?

We're never happy with where we are, but that's what makes FASA FASA. The industry has had a lousy, lousy time, and I don't think that's any surprise. We survived it this year, and we're very pleased. We took a long, hard look at the industry and thought about a lot of things we could be doing other than this, but we had faith ultimately in this industry and what we could do, and things really did pick up in September and in the last quarter. And the Microsoft deal does bring in resources that enable us to weather any kind of storms that come in the future. We're very confident in the product we're coming out with and the added exposure we're getting through the computer products, and we're feeling very positive about '99 and beyond.

How do you feel about the industry as a whole? Do you see it making the same comeback FASA has, or are the problems more widespread?

I think it already is. The success of ***Shadowrun*** . . . no one thought an eight-year-old roleplaying game could make any kind of dent in the market, and it came out in August, and I'm on my fourth printing here in January. It's doing exceptionally well, and I'm sure White Wolf is doing the same with ***Vampire,*** and a lot of the other products out there (are doing well). There's an interest, there's a resurgence. That means that manufacturers can't let up, we've got to keep working, finding new ways to get information to the retailers and the distributors. I think, overall, the industry is bouncing back. Of course, it had nowhere else to go but up.

You mentioned the retailers and distributors . . . it's been very fashionable the past year for manufacturers to blame everything on distributors who don't care and retailers who are clueless. What's your take on all this? Completely unjustified, an exaggeration of a real problem, or what?

Oh, there's a real problem. My theory -- and it's just a theory -- when cards came in, this industry got trained to go for the quick buck. You could move a box of cards and make a huge profit, and it was such a hot thing that you got a lot of new retailers in that diversified (into cards), but the only thing they knew how to do was to sell things like they sold cards, and that created a really bad sales pattern. It taught everybody that you get a product in, you sell it, you breathe a sigh of relief and you move forward to the next product. But that's not how roleplaying works. That's not how miniatures work. You have to keep backstock, you have to keep certain amounts of products in, and you have to perpetually keep your audiences involved. And the distributors also got used to not having to deal with inventory issues; let's face it, when card product comes in and it blows out immediately hitting the dock, that is a beautiful product to have. And roleplaying and miniatures and things like that make stock levels a pain in the neck -- they're not turning it instantly, and they have to actually plan for a lot more. It's harder work, and I think the industry in general got used to not having to do hard work. Most successful business have to work hard. We got a pass for a couple of years, a lot of people in the industry did. I think it trained them poorly. And I think that all the manufacturers are pulling their hair out -- I know they did last year -- trying to figure out how to correct this problem. I can tell you that

our ***Tech Readout 3060,*** which as far as a ***BattleTech*** product goes, is gold -- it is an instant seller, historically it's the strongest type of product we can do for ***BattleTech.*** The players love 'mechs, we don't do them very often, they're very art intensive. And everyone I talked to after the product shipped -- they were out of it. Even when we were going to be at their door, they were out of it. That's stores, that's distributors, that's everybody. Out of sight, out of mind. They sold through it, it didn't matter (anymore). And that's not how, in the adventure game business, you stay in business. We're still trying to correct that problem.

Do you correct that through education? Or do you wait for evolution to catch up with the "bad" retailers and distributors?

You can't do that. You have to educate, you have to take a proactive stance. In some ways, it means you have a heightened exposure on the web -- a lot of people don't want to hear that, but if the manufacturer can't get the product on the shelf or keep it on the shelf, they've got to find an alternate way to stay in business. That's not absolutely necessary -- it's necessary to have a web presence, that's where the technology is taking us. But there are a lot of stores that are doing just beautifully with all gaming product, and even during the height of the cards did beautifully, they just kept their focus on it. You need to educate them, you need to gain their confidence that your product will sell, and in some cases that means sending a distributor an overage, guaranteed. I don't know if I'd do that for all products, but certainly there are some products that I am so confident in that I have no problem sending it to them. Because they'll sell it. So far, every time we've done that, they have. Slowly, they start to believe that when we tell them they're under-ordering, they are. It's a gradual thing. We have a lot of new people, too, that we have to train.

How important is GAMA in this? Or is this something each manufacturer has to do on his or her own?

It has to go beyond GAMA. (The GAMA Trade Show) gets the cream, it gets very proactive retailers. We see a lot of the same faces, because these guys are very proactive, and they're around. And even if it's a new store, the fact that they're there says that they're on the right track. But it needs to go beyond that, because not all the stores show up. Whether they don't have the funds, whether it's too far, whether it's bad timing, there are a lot of reasons. You've got to take the education beyond GAMA, but GAMA's a good start.

How do you do that education beyond GAMA? Do you have your own retailer list? Do you count on the distributors to contact the retailers for you?

Both. We believe in keeping the distributors informed, and a lot of the distributors do a very good job of informing the retailers. But they also have a lot of products, so we don't kid ourselves that we can be the focus of every distributor all the time. We have our own retailer list as well, and we have our release schedule posted up on our web site, and we're trying to make the information as accessible as we can. We do our promo packs that have our sales information, our catalogs, our promotional flyers and things like that. The packs have stock numbers, so it's easy to inventory for the distributors, it's easy for the retailers to order, we're continually evolve and find new ways that makes it easier for both groups.

Let's talk about Ral Partha. You've brought in Bob Watts from Heartbreaker . . .

Yes, that was quite a coup for us.

What will Ral Partha be doing differently under Watts' and FASA's management?

Bob Watts is a very dynamic man, and he is going to do a lot of things that make it a much more efficient company. Already -- he's been there since October -- their backorder fill rate has gone from six to eight weeks to one week. That alone is a huge improvement. Ral Partha was always one of the leading manufacturers, but their focus got diverted when industry times were bad, and maybe they went in one direction when they should have done another, it's hard to say. But it's always good to have someone from the outside step in and refresh and reenergize and head off in a new direction.

Is *BattleTech* and the new *VOR* going to be the heart of the new Ral Partha, or they going to continue to do all the other fantasy and science fiction they've always done?

It's a little early, but ***BattleTech*** is their strongest-selling product. That's been the case for several years. They're definitely interesting on expanding, not only with FASA product, but hopefully they can continue with TSR product and do their own line of figures and get other licensees in.

Any fearless predictions for 1999?

For the industry? I don't know. I think it will definitely be a better year than last year. I don't think that will be hard, but I think it will be the case. But that's a positive thing, that's movement in a good direction. As far as FASA goes, we're going to be operating for the first time in a long time with some good capital and a lot of energized people and a new product -- we're very excited about '99.

So FASA gets to spend some of Bill Gates' money, too?

(laughs) Yeah, FASA gets to clear up a lot of old things and do some new things, too. It's good. Getting the miniatures game and company going, there's a lot. We always have our hands in something. It will be interesting to see what the next thing will be.

So you're still bullish on the adventure game industry as a whole?

FASA is a company that's had their hands in so many things. We worked on the TV show (***BattleTech***), we created the computer-generated animation for that show, we've started virtual reality companies, software companies, we're adept at licensing . . . we wouldn't be here if we didn't think there was something to be here for.

[**Attention Retailers!** You can get a free subscription to *Comics Retailer* by contacting them at circulation@krause.com.]

by Rick LaRue

Art by andi jones

The Situation

While en route to a distant world, the player characters must stop in a rarely-traveled system. During routine sensor sweeps of the system, the characters discover a derelict ship bearing unfamiliar markings, floating amidst an asteroid field. The ship bears the name *Whitestar* and is a type of merchant trader not used in almost two centuries. It seems powerless and adrift, but closer inspection shows barely noticeable energy signatures coming from somewhere inside the vessel.

Boarding the ship reveals a long dead crew, killed by some unknown means and another more shocking surprise. Tracing the energy signature leads to the discovery of almost a dozen individuals still alive in cold sleep. The player characters must bring the ship's major systems back on-line and revive the sleepers before the failing cryogenic chambers completely malfunction. The revived crew soon begins to exhibit strange and aggressive behavior, threatening the player characters and one of their own, who seems oddly unaffected.

The survivors are a mercenary retrieval team in the employ of a megacorporation. They seem obsessed with completing their long-forgotten mission. The only rational survivor, a very pregnant woman with a dangerous secret, is desperate to persuade the player characters to stop the other survivors from completing their mission. Unknown to the player characters, she is an agent of a long-dead Emperor, trying to manipulate them for her own reasons. Outnumbered, the player characters are forced to retreat to their own ship with their new ally. The adventurers must stop the insane mercenaries to prevent the massacre of a primitive race on a nearby planet. To do this they must place themselves in the middle of a battle for possession of a long lost Ancients' site and stop the discovery of its valuable secret.

This adventure is designed to be played by four to six 100- to 150-point ***GURPS Traveller*** or ***GURPS Space*** characters and can be placed anywhere the GM wishes. It could easily be inserted into an existing campaign any time the party is traveling a long distance to a distant sector outside the boundaries of surveyed space.

The Story So Far . . .

Two hundred and eighteen years ago, scientists of CommTech, a megacorporation specializing in communications research and development, detected what appeared to be galactic background noise of unusual strength. The signal abruptly ended after exactly 40.531 standard hours. After the initial occurrence, the team of scientists found no other trace of the mysterious signal, but continued to monitor the same frequency with hopes it might reappear. After months of silence, the signal returned 346 days, 18 hours after initial detection. Better prepared this time, the scientists were able to isolate the signal's frequency and determined that what they originally believed to be a separate signal, was actually distortion caused by a highly focused tachyon wave traveling at faster-than-light speeds through normal space. Before an origin could be pinpointed, the signal stopped again, exactly 40.531 standard hours after it began.

Due to the regularity of the occurrence, the scientists began to suspect an artificial instead of natural source. With the intriguing data, the lead scientist took the team's findings directly to CommTech's CEO. If the initial data proved accurate, they may have inadvertently discovered a means of communicating at tremendous faster-than-light speeds.

Research on project Alpha-Comm progressed slowly. Not slow enough for CommTech to lose interest, but slow enough for the CEO to reconsider the massive expenditures required to maintain the top-secret project. The scientists admitted they were at an impasse, and without a break, they could go no further. They decided that a retrieval mission should be sent to the distant Alpha Carnin system, from which the signal was believed to originate, and attempt to locate and acquire whatever was producing it. Seeing no other choice, the CEO agreed to authorize a covert retrieval mission.

Unfortunately, CommTech's secret project was not as secret as they had hoped. With the help of an agent within the megacorporation, Emperor Tomutova II learned of the potentially revolutionary discovery. He was not impressed with the idea of such a level of technology being in the hands of a megacorporation that lacked the proper "respect" for the Iridium Throne.

Through sheer luck, the agent, one Dr. Marla Rishar, had been assigned to assist in the project. Through a series of contacts, Dr. Rishar was ordered to obtain as much information on the project as possible and keep the Emperor informed as to its progress. When it was decided to send a retrieval mission to Alpha Carnin, it became imperative that Rishar go with it. Dr. Rishar was passed over on the first round of choices to accompany the mission as one of three scientific advisors. Oddly, an unfortunate accident befell one of the scientists assigned to the mission shortly afterward. Dr. Rishar was his replacement.

In an attempt to avoid drawing unwanted attention to the mission, CommTech chose to use the *Whitestar,* a reconfigured Endurance-class merchant trader, to transport the retrieval team to Alpha Carnin. The *Whitestar* was an unremarkable vessel of a type often used for cargo transportation. Its movements would attract little attention, and once it entered Jumpspace, no one would know its destination. Due to space limitations, and to prevent the *Whitestar's* crew from learning anything more about mission's purpose than was absolutely necessary, all fifteen members of Retrieval Team Theta-Nine, including Dr. Rishar, entered cryogenic sleep for the duration of the trip.

When the *Whitestar* failed to return, CommTech discontinued project Alpha Comm. Within a decade, two important events occurred. First, Emperor Tomutova II died and was succeeded by Empress Margaret II. Second, CommTech fell victim to a hostile takeover by a rival corporation (owned, coincidentally, by the second cousin of the new Empress). In the ensuing confusion surrounding both events, the details of Project Alpha-Comm were lost. From that point on, no mention of any further work on Project Alpha-Comm was ever reported and the fate of the *Whitestar* was never learned. Until now . . .

The Fate of the Whitestar

Everything went as planned until the *Whitestar* reached its destination. A new experimental Jump-3 jumpdrive engine had been retrofitted into the cruiser before it departed. The drives replaced the normal Lanthanum coils of the inner jumpdrive engines with a less expensive experimental material called Tarinium. Lacking proper testing, the new engine coils contained an unknown and dangerous design flaw. Upon prolonged use, the surface of the Tarinium coils would ionize, forming a gas deadly to most life forms. The ionized gas would continue to build up pressure within the reaction containment unit until released. The trip to Alpha Carnin required repeated jumps and lasted far longer than the prototype engines had been tested to withstand. When the *Whitestar's* crew attempted to power down the jumpdrive engine and return to normal space at their destination, the containment unit ruptured and poured the deadly ionized gas into the ship's environmental systems. The gas quickly flooded the ship, killing the crew before they could react. Only the retrieval team, safely held in cryogenic sleep survived.

Unknown to anyone, the *Whitestar* drifted through its destination system for more than two centuries with the retrieval team peacefully frozen in a timeless slumber. Less than six months ago, main power failed when the internal hydrogen supply of the ship's fusion reactor ran out. With main power off line, the cryogenic chambers switched to their internal battery supply. Since then, several of the units have malfunctioned due to battery failure and lack of maintenance and

the rest will follow suit within a few weeks.

The Whitestar's Mission

The ship's original mission was to transport corporate retrieval team Theta-Nine, consisting of one dozen elite security troops and three scientists, to the third planet of the Alpha Carnin system. The Theta-Nine team was to investigate and secure the source of the signal, possibly a site belonging to the Ancients, and report back. Additionally, they were to make a limited inspection of the site and attempt to identify and recover any obvious artifacts. They never reached the planet.

Unknown to any of the crew, one member of the corporate retrieval team is an Imperial agent. She was sent to gather information for the Emperor so the Imperium could exploit the site themselves. She had nothing to do with the engine malfunction, since she was at the time in cold sleep.

The Whitestar Now

The crew discovering the *Whitestar* will find the ship adrift within the biozone of the system's sun. Its armored hull has kept it well protected from the rigors of an extended time adrift and despite its age, the ship appears whole and in relatively good shape.

Sensor scans of the ship reveal no life signs, but a weak energy signature can be detected somewhere in the lower midsection of the ship, probably the cargo hold or low berths.

The ship can be entered through the two-person air lock just aft of the forward bridge section. It is currently unpowered and must be opened manually (a ST-6 roll). A thorough inspection will reveal some clues to the *Whitestar's* fate.

The gas that killed the crew has long since become inert, but environmental control systems must be repaired before life support can be restored. Main Power and Computer Systems must be restored before repairs on the Life Support system can begin. Currently, the atmosphere within the ship is stale and unbreathable.

The rescuers will find eight dead crew members -- two at the controls on the bridge, three in engineering, and the last three are in the access ways leading to the cargo hold. No signs of violence are evident, but the exact cause of death is impossible to determine without an autopsy. In addition, several deactivated robots are scattered about the ship, one for every two investigators. Each appears to have shut down while attempting to recharge from the ship's power supply.

If the characters are tracking the faint energy reading, it will lead them to the low-berth section adjacent to the cargo hold. The sources of the readings are 16 cryogenic sleep chambers. Fifteen of the 16 chambers are occupied, but only 11 are operational. All of the chambers are in need of maintenance, and the power indicator on each unit is dangerously low.

Main power is off-line and must be restored before any systems can be made operational. The small internal hydrogen tank of the fusion reactor is empty and must be refilled or replaced. This requires a successful Mechanic (TL9) (Power Plant) skill roll and 30-Skill hours. Even with full power restored, all lights within the ship will be dimmed. Since the accident occurred while the Vilani crew was preparing to reenter normal space, lights had been dimmed as per traditional "jump dimming" procedures.

With power restored, it is possible to reboot the computers. All ship's systems are computer-controlled and can be accessed from any of the ship's crew stations. Reactivating the computers require a successful Computer Operation skill roll with appropriate modifiers for unfamiliar equipment. Once the computers are up and running, the PCs will find they are locked out of all major systems. A security program (activated when the Captain failed to enter his daily log for three consecutive days) was in operation when main power failed and has locked all computer access until the proper security codes are entered. Only the dead Captain knows the codes, so a successful Computer Hacking/TL9 at -6 is required to deactivate the program on restore computer access. Attempts take 2 hours - 10 minutes per point of success. Only one attempt can be made.

If computer access is not restored within 30 minutes after the computers are rebooted, the robots will finish recharging and resume their patrol of the ship as part of the security program. The robots are able to identify all crewmembers by voice print recognition software and will identify the visitors as intruders as soon as they speak within earshot of the robots. Alerted robots will attempt to subdue them immediately. In direct violation of the Shudusham Accords, CommTech has fitted these robots with concealed laser weapons equivalent to a TL9 Laser Pistol. Considering the importance of Project Alpha-Comm, CommTech decided the added protection, and element of surprise the armed robots would add if the *Whitestar* were boarded, was worth the risk. If the PCs attack the robots with deadly force, they will switch to termination mode and use their lasers to attempt to kill their attackers. If the player characters took the precaution of disconnecting the robots from the recharge ports, the robots will not activate.

Upon entering the engine room, it will be obvious to even an untrained character that the engines have been heavily modified or replaced. The Whitestar's engine room is a disorganized mess of open access panels, crisscrossing power conduits, and obviously mismatched parts. Anyone with Engineering or Mechanic/TL9+ (Jumpdrives) can make a thorough inspection of the engines in about an hour. A successful roll will confirm that the engines have been replaced with a more advanced system. If the roll succeeds by 4 or more, the engineer will discover the damage to the jumpdrive coils. A second successful skill roll will reveal that it was not the installation of the engines that caused the accident, but a failure within the engines themselves.

Before the jump drives can be used, the containment unit breach must be located and repaired, or activation of the engines will flood the ship with ionized gas again (requiring a resistance roll vs. HT each turn of exposure. A successful Mechanic/TL10 (Jumpdrives) roll and (50-skill) hours will repair the engines enough to function, but the crew will have to wear Vacc suits during operation. To completely remove any danger of gas contamination, the engines must be replaced at a Class B or better starport. The maneuver drives are undamaged and will work normally with enough power.

The cargo hold has been heavily modified to house the additional Jump Fuel tanks required by the new Jumpdrive engines.

Reviving the Sleepers

Spending almost 200 years in cold sleep has had an unexpected effect on the survivors. A build up of chemicals has caused a condition called Cryogenic Narcosis, which will cause erratic and dangerous behavior upon revival. Of the survivors, only Dr. Marla Rishar seems unaffected. She was seven weeks pregnant when she entered cold sleep and the normal build up of hormones during pregnancy have altered the Cryogenic Narcosis, preventing most of the degenerative effects and adding a few new twists. Unfortunately, intermittent failure of the cryogenic freeze capsules allowed gradual aging during the 200-cold sleep and the woman is now at a stage of pregnancy equivalent to almost eight months. The rest of the team shows similar signs of limited aging, including body hair and fingernail growth, marked weight loss and minor malnutrition. The backup nutritional supplements contained in the cryogenic chambers have been exhausted and any further chamber malfunctions will cause the death of the occupants.

When the crew is first revived, they will seem weak and disoriented, but no worse for the wear. Eleven of the 15 occupied cryo-chambers are still functioning. They are occupied by Dr. Rishar, Lt. Colonel Latimer and nine of the original 12 members of the retrieval team. The first goal of the revived individuals, after learning the details of their current situation will be repairing the ship, in hopes of using it to return home. As their condition worsens, they will become more aggressive and fixated on completing their original mission. Once repairs are nearly complete, the

retrieval team, suffering from their narcosis, will aggressively drive the PCs and the unaffected Dr. Rishar off the *Whitestar* and race off to complete their mission. In response, Dr. Rishar decides to continue with her mission as well, but in her new, more fragile condition and due to the modified effects of Cryogenic Narcosis, chooses to enlist the player-characters' aid. She will use the condition of her "teammates" to her advantage, claiming they are obviously impaired and must not be allowed to continue. She will, if necessary reveal some of the facts of their real mission, stating that her "teammates" are planning on completing the mission to recover a dangerous artifact, possibly a bio-genic weapon. This is a lie, since she has no idea what secrets the site contains other than the possible communications array.

Reaching the Planet

The *Whitestar* is not far from Alpha Carnin III and getting there should not be a problem. The GM should add whatever encounters he feels are necessary to maintain the proper pace of the adventure.

Rishar, Latimer and the rest of the team are unaware of the exact location of the Ancients' Site. The actual amount of time necessary to find the site is up to the GM, depending upon the equipment available to the crew and how he wants the rest of the encounters to proceed. Preferably, the player characters and the *Whitestar* should reach the planet at nearly the same time, making it a close race to find and reach the site before the other group.

The Ancients' Site can be located anywhere within the tropical region of the planet, and should be surrounded by miles of tropical rain forest.

Alpha Carnin III

The world is called Alpha Carnin III on recent star charts, but the name used by the indigenous Mayatin is unknown. This small world is mostly covered by water. Landmasses tend to be small and clustered along the equator. Three continents exist, with numerous large islands and island chains. Climate is tropical, with sub tropical or temperate regions in the far northern or southern reaches of the larger continents. Vegetation is primarily dense rain forest along a thick band at the equator, gradually changing to hard wood forests and plains as you move north and south. Alpha Carnin III has its share of mountains, which occur along the coasts of the major continents or as the source of the island chains. A wide variety of flora and fauna exist, including numerous species of insects, avians and carnivores. The GM should feel free to add animal encounters to make any unprotected overland travel difficult and dangerous.

Planetfall

Once in orbit, the planet's surface can be reached by whatever means available to the crew. The Theta-Nine team aboard the streamlined *Whitestar* can land the ship itself. The open air-raft housed in the spacedock of the *Whitestar* is non-operational, due to its nuclear power unit having long since run down.

There are two sites suitable for landing spacecraft. The first is 40 kilometers northwest of the Ancients Site, while the other is closer (18 kilometers) and due west. The first landing site, although farther away, has a more accessible land route. Latimer's team will choose to use this one since they must travel by foot once making planetfall.

Their journey will take them straight through a number of territories held by the Mayatin. The Mayatin will watch the team's progress, maintaining a respectable distance and attempting to remain unseen. Once Latimer's team comes within ten kilometers of the Ancients' Site, the Mayatin will guess their destination and act. The Mayatin's first attempt to stop Latimer's team will be peaceful, using superior numbers to try to frighten them off. Unfortunately, by this time, the team will be heavily affected by the Cryogenic Narcosis and the encounter will quickly degenerate into a "bug hunt." After this, the Mayatin will resort to hit-and-run ambushes to prevent the team from reaching the "holy" ruin.

The second landing site crosses some very difficult terrain, and will require an extended trek of several days or some type of grav vehicle. No Mayatin inhabit the first 12 kilometers of this route, so travelers can get reasonably close

before attracting their attention. Once detected, they will react as above unless a way to communicate with them can be found.

If traveling by different routes, encounters with the Mayatin will not be influenced by the other group's actions, as the Mayatin from different tribes will not communicate or cooperate until after coming within one kilometer of the Ancients' Site (see below).

If the Rishar-led group chooses to take the same route as Latimer's team, the Mayatin will react the same as above. Spotting the Mayatin before the ten-kilometer mark will be difficult and communication with them is nearly impossible.

The Ancients Site

The site can be anything the GM wants it to be. For instance, a communication relay station, linked in the distant past to a vast communications array. Now the station "awakens" once each local year and attempts to reestablish contact with the array. Other possibilities for the site include a power facility or weapons cache. In any case, the station is of great religious importance to the Mayatin. Instinctually, they know the station is somehow important and linked to their past, but its exact connection is long forgotten.

Regardless, the Mayatin view the station as "holy" and refuse to allow anyone, even themselves, to approach within 500 meters of it. Once the Mayatin realize that Latimer's team and the player characters are headed for the station, they will become frantic to prevent it. All the tribes from the surrounding area will cooperate in this endeavor, putting aside their normal disagreements to prevent the desecration of the station. The area within a one-kilometer radius of the station is considered neutral ground belonging to all the Mayatin and no ritual combat may take place, but this rule does not apply to non-Mayatin. Unless the adventurers have established contact with the Mayatin and agreed to help them stop Latimer's team, they too will be constantly harassed until they retreat beyond ten kilometers from the station. Under no circumstance will the Mayatin allow anyone to enter the station.

If the player characters insist on entering the station, they must do it covertly. Gaining entrance requires an Electronics Operations/TL14 (Security Systems) skill roll. Alternately, the doors could be blown open, but any blast capable of damaging the doors would most likely destroy whatever lay beyond it.

Wrapping Things Up

At this point, Risharís team has most likely defeated Latimer and the corporate retrieval team. If they have entered the station, then either all of the local Mayatin are dead or they are unaware of the player-charactersí activities. In either case, the heroes are faced with a difficult choice. If they allow Marla Rishar to return with what she knows, or choose to sell the information themselves, the Mayatin will most certainly be wiped out by future survey teams. They must decide what to do with the dangerous information they hold and how to keep their pregnant spy quiet.

Further Adventures

This adventure sets the stage for many future scenarios. Perhaps while on layover at a starport, Dr. Rishar escapes from the group before they decide what to do with her. To prevent her from selling the dangerous information that will threaten the innocent Mayatin, the player characters must pursue her across the sector. Maybe the party decides to sell the information themselves and are hired to return to Alpha Carnin and lead a corporate research party. It is also possible that the player characters will end up stranded on the planet. Surrounded by hostile natives and the survivors of Latimer's team, the castaways must survive until help arrives, or find a way to escape.

Connected adventures do not even have to occur right away. For instance, what if after several months, the megacorporation that took over CommTech learns Dr. Rishar's story and decides her young child is "special." Because of the circumstances of his birth, they want to take him into custody for "observation." Rishar, having no one else to

turn to, seeks out the PCs and begs them to help her protect or rescue her child. Another possible scenario is that Latimer (if he survives), could suffer from long term effects from the Cryogenic Narcosis and blame the heroes for his condition. He could become a recurring enemy of the player charactersí, popping up at the worst possible times.

This adventure could also provide the GM with an interesting opportunity to bring in a new player. The new player character could be one of Latimer's team, who after treatment for Cryogenic Narcosis asks to join the group.

Appendix

Cryogenic Narcosis

Cryogenic Narcosis is caused by the prolonged interaction of neurotransmitters and lactic acid with the chemicals used during cryogenic suspension while a cryogenic chamber is operating at less than optimal temperatures. It effects the endocrine and nervous systems, causing increased production of adrenaline and the degradation of mental faculties, particularly reasoning and logic. At first, victims will seem edgy and disoriented, but otherwise normal. Over time, the condition rapidly degenerates causing aggressive behavior, delusions and paranoia. If untreated, it will cause permanent insanity and possibly death. The only known treatment is a complete blood transfusion and strict vitamin regiment. Treatment is available at any major medical facility. A Diagnosis/TL10 skill roll at -4 is required to identify the disorder. Treatment requires a Physician/TL10 skill roll and six weeks treatment.

Upon awakening from cryogenic sleep affected individuals will suffer from the following quirks and disadvantages: Distractible (-1 pt., p.CI89), Edgy (-5 pts., p.CI90) and Uncongenial (-1 pt., p.CI94). Thereafter, every 24 hours the individual must make a successful HT roll with a cumulative -1 each day, or progress to the next stage of the disorder. When an individual progresses to Stage Two his condition worsens as follows: Distractible becomes Short Attention Span (-10 pts., p.CI94), Edgy becomes Bad Temper (-10 pts., p.B31), he develops Paranoia (-10 pts., p.B35), Minor Delusions (-5 pts., p.B32) and IQ is reduced by 2 points (-15 pts.). Each day an individual suffers from the effects of Stage Two, a successful HT at a cumulative -2 must be made. Failure indicates the individual has entered Stage Three. The effects of Stage Three are as above, except Short Attention Span becomes Absent Mindedness (-15 pts., p.B30), the IQ loss becomes -4 (-30 pts.), Bad Temper intensifies to Berserk (-15 pts., p.B31) and the Delusions become Severe (-15 pts.). Even if the individual is treated after Stage Three is reached, all Stage One effects become permanent. As above, each day spent at Stage Three requires a successful HT roll or one point of HT is lost and cannot be healed normally without treatment. Individuals suffering from Stage Three will eventually die if left untreated. Any Critical Failure of a HT roll causes the current stageís effects to become permanent, as well as progressing the disorder to the next stage.

An unknown side effect of the disorder is a heightened resistance to psionics. Any use of psionics against an individual suffering from the disorder is resisted at +2, regardless of the individual's willingness.

It appears that the increased hormone levels present in a pregnant female are able to counteract the disorder's effects to some degree. Any pregnant individual affected by the disorder will suffer from Stage One effects only. The individual still gains the resistance to psionics, but at an additional cost. All existing mental disadvantages (including quirks) are gradually heightened to the next appropriate level (i.e. Overconfidence becomes Glory Hound, etc.) over the course of several days (1d6+1 days). The afflicted individual will not notice the change. What effect this may have on the unborn child has never been fully diagnosed.

Corporate Retrieval Team Theta-Nine

The individuals the player characters find in cold sleep were a corporate retrieval team designated Theta-Nine. They were one of many teams, used by megacorporations throughout the Imperium to recover equipment and personnel trapped in potentially dangerous situations. Originally numbering 15 (12 security specialists and three scientists), Theta-Nine was placed in cryogenic sleep to avoid contact with the crew of the transport ship and reduce the risk of discussing the delicate mission. All Security personnel are highly trained and experienced soldiers loyal to their current employer. They are led by Lt. Colonel Vincent Latimer, a seasoned veteran and skilled officer. He has spent the

majority of his life in the service of CommTech, and is unencumbered by the petty dictates of morals or ethics when they conflict with the concerns of his employer. He has the rest of the team's utmost loyalty and devotion.

The individuals that comprise Theta-Nine's security contingent are a motley crew of veterans with varying specialties. Lt. Colonel Latimer has hand picked his team to be resourceful and able to work together under extreme stress. Typical team members can be built on 150 points using the Marine Special Operations (Enlisted) Template on p103 of ***GURPS Traveller.*** Lt. Colonel Latimer's statistics can be found below. The equipment available to the corporate retrieval team should be determined by the GM as appropriate to the campaign.

None of the team members are aware that Dr. Rishar is a spy for Imperium Intelligence. They will be as surprised about Rishar's pregnancy as she is, but will not begin to suspect her of wrongdoing immediately.

The team is suffering from Cryogenic Narcosis (see above) and within 24 hours will exhibit most symptoms to varying degrees.

The complete details of the team's true mission (see above) will never be willingly revealed by any member of the team. Instead, they will maintain that they wish to repair the ship and travel to a habitable planet to gather fresh supplies for the return trip home. During the course of the repairs, the player characters should come to realize that the team still intends to finish their original mission (whatever its details). Unless the player characters agree to actively help them complete their mission, they will be viewed as an annoyance at first, later as an obstacle to be overcome and finally as the enemy.

Lt. Colonel Vincent Latimer

Age 42, 5' 11", 175 lbs., Bald with black goatee and mustache, brown eyes, a long scar running from behind his right ear down his neck, ending under his arm.

ST: 12 **IQ:** 13 **Speed:**6
DX: 13 **HT:** 12 **Move:**7
Damage: Thrust 1d-1; Swing 1d+1
Dodge: 6

Point Total: 200

Advantages: Combat Reflexes [15]; Fit [5]; G-Experience [10]; Rank 5 (Lt. Colonel) [25]; High Pain Threshold [10].

Disadvantages: Fanaticism (CommTech) [-15]; Callous [-6]; Sense of Duty (To his command) [-10].

Quirks: Wears a .45 caliber "dud" slug on a chain around his neck. [-1]; Converts battle plans to nursery rhymes [-1]; Likes to talk about his plans for retirement [-1]; Never uses foul language [-1].

Skills: Administration-12 (M/A) [1]; Armoury (Small Arms)-13 (M/A) [2]; Battlesuit-13 (P/A) [2]; Beam Weapons (Laser)-15 (P/E) [1]; Brawling-14 (P/E) [2]; Computer Operations-13 (M/E) [1]; Demolition-12 (M/A) [1]; Electronics Operation (Comm)-13 (M/A) [2]; Engineer (Combat)-13 (M/H) [4]; Explosive Ordinance Disposal-12 (M/H) [2]; First Aid-13 (M/E) [1]; Free Fall-14 (P/A) [4]; Gesture-12 (M/E) [1/2]; Gunner (Laser)-15 (P/A) [2]; Guns (Pistol)-16 (P/A) [2];Guns (Rifle)-16 (P/A) [2]; Intelligence Analysis-13 (M/H) [4]; Interrogation-12 (M/A) [1]; Judo-12 (P/H) [2]; Knife-13 (P/E) [1]; Leadership-15 (M/A) [6]; Mechanic (Jumpdrives)-12 (M/A) [1]; Piloting (Starship)-12 (P/A) [1]; Running-12 (P/H) [4]; Savior-Faire (Military)-13 (M/E) [1]; Scrounging-12 (M/E) [1/2]; Shortsword-12 (P/A) [1]; SIGINT Collection/Jamming-12 (M/H) [2]; Tactics-15 (M/H) [8]; Traffic Analysis-11 (M/H) [1]; Traps-12 (M/A) [1]; Vacc Suit-14 (M/A) [4].

Languages: Language (Anglic)-13 [0]; Language (Vargr)-12 [2].

Equipment: As determined by the GM based on the difficulty and style of the campaign.

Lt. Colonel Vincent Latimer is a company man. No more and no less. Recruited by CommTech after his first tour with the Imperial Marines, he has done exceptional work for them as part of their Acquisition and Retrieval Division. Being assigned to lead the mission to Alpha Carnin was the opportunity Latimer had been waiting for. Success meant a wealthy retirement and assured a place for him within the megacorporation. Failure meant nothing since Latimer never failed. Or so he thought.

The Lt. Colonel is not an evil man. Most people find him personable and easygoing except when it comes to the job. Latimer is devoted to CommTech. They have treated him well, and provided for him in every way. His loyalty is unwavering and he would do anything they asked. He sees his work as being for the greater good of the company, and ultimately for the Imperium. If a few have to suffer as a means to an end, then so be it.

Under other circumstances, Latimer might be an ally for the player characters. Unfortunately, the Cryogenic Narcosis makes an otherwise reasonable man act irrationally. Latimer's skill at tactics and planning combined with the effects of his condition make him a truly dangerous foe. At the first sign the player characters are threatening the success of the mission, Latimer will treat them as an obstacle to be overcome. He will attempt to do this by the most efficient means possible. To him, "it's nothing personal, but I have my orders."

Doctor Marla Rishar

35, 5' 4",137 lbs , Shoulder length light brown hair, hazel eyes.

ST: 10 **IQ:** 14 **Speed:** 5
DX: 12 **HT:** 10 **Move:** 5
Damage: Thrust 1d6-2; Swing 1d6
Dodge: 5

Point Total: 100

Advantages: Mathematical Ability [10]; Patron (Imperium Intelligence) [10]; Wealth (Comfortable) [10].

Disadvantages: Curious [-5]; Pregnant (Includes Emotional [-5]; Overweight [-5]; and Unfit [-5]) [-15]; Secret (Corporate Spy for Imperium Intelligence) [-30]; Sense of Duty (To Imperium Intelligence) [-10]; Stubbornness [-5].

Quirks: Uncongenial [-1]; Proud [-1]; Nosy [-1]; Attentive [-1]

Skills: Acting-13 (M/A) [1]; Astronomy-14 (M/H) [4]; Computer Hacking-14 (M/VH) [8]; Computer Operation-16 (M/E) [6]; Computer Programming-18 (M/H) [12]; Cryptology-14 (M/H) [4]; Detect Lies-13 (M/H) [2]; Electronics Operation (Communications)-16 (M/A) [6]; Fast-Talk-14 (M/A) [2]; Guns (Pistol)-13 (P/E) [1/2]; Holdout-13 (M/A) [1]; Judo-11 (P/H) [2]; Leadership-12 (M/A) [1/2]; Mathematics-14 (M/H) [4]; Physics-18 (M/H) [12]; Research-15 (M/A) [4]; Savior-Faire-12 (M/E) [1/2]; Swimming-12 (P/E) [1]; Teaching-13 (M/A) [1]; Writing-14 (M/A) [2].

Languages: Language (Anglic)-14 [0]; Language (Zhodani)-13 (M/A) [1]; Language (Aslan)-12 (M/A) [1/2].

Equipment: Personal Computer; Short Range Communicator; Personal Basics; Body Pistol; Imperial Warrant (see below).

Raised in a fanatically patriotic family, Marla grew up believing the Imperium to be the pinnacle of governmental ideals. During college, she was active in a number of pro-Imperium political groups. Her associations continued into graduate school and during her post-graduate doctoral work. Shortly after graduation, Dr. Rishar was approached by a megacorporation well know for its Imperial contracts. They offered her an internship where she could put her skills to use working for the Imperium. The megacorporation was actually a front for Imperial Intelligence and the internship was actually designed to indoctrinate the participants. Imperium Intelligence's goal was to create a group of highly skilled individuals, loyal to the Imperium and willing to act in its best interest. This translates as "provide us with any useful information you find". When her internship was done, she had no trouble finding a research job with CommTech. After years of exemplary work, Dr. Rishar was one of three scientists assigned to retrieval team Theta-

Nine to act as scientific advisor to the team leader. When the opportunity arose, Imperial Intelligence contacted Marla and convinced her to act as their agent while on the mission.

Two years before she began work on Project Alpha-Comm, Marla became involved with a fellow Comm-Tech scientist from another department. They were planning to get married when she returned from the mission. Unknown to either of them, Marla was several weeks pregnant when she left.

When first revived, she will be as surprised as the rest of the team to discover herself eight months pregnant. Although not severely affected by the Cryogenic Narcosis, Rishar will exhibit mild Stage One symptoms including the resistance to psionics as well as accentuated personality traits (see below).

Considering her situation, her pregnancy and the effects of the Cryogenic Narcosis, Dr. Rishar will not be acting like herself. Survival, and her duty to the Imperium will take first priority. Dr. Rishar recognizes the instability of Latimer and his people, and does not trust them to help her complete her mission for Imperium Intelligence. In response, she will do whatever she can to convince the player characters to stop the retrieval team and investigate the Ancients site themselves.

She carries an Imperial Warrant, signed by Emperor Tomutova II himself. This legal document requires the complete cooperation of all Imperial officials with the holder of the warrant, in execution of his or her Imperial duties. If the player characters fall under the authority of this Warrant, Dr. Rishar will not hesitate to use it. The Warrant reads as follows:

Capitol, 036-0906. The bearer of this warrant is under my direct orders. All Imperial officials must lend any and all required assistance. Tomutova II.

The Alpha Carnin System

Alpha Carnin

Type: G V **Star Mass:** 1.1
Biozone: 0.8 - 1.2 **Stellar Radius:** 0.0 **Inner Limit:** 0.0
Cometary Belt: Normal

ORBIT	WORLD TYPE	DISTANCE (AU)
#1	Hostile Greenhouse	0.30
#2	Hostile Greenhouse	0.65
#3	Earthlike	1.00
#4	Asteroid Belt	1.70
#5	Empty Orbit	3.10
#6	Small Gas Giant	5.90

Alpha Carnin I

Orbital Distance: 0.30
Planet Type: Hostile Greenhouse **Diameter:** 7005.0 **Gravity:** 0.7
Density: 4.5 **Composition:** Low-Iron
Axial Tilt: 6 Degrees **Seasonal Variation:** Minor
Day Length: 145 hrs. (6.0) **Year Length:** 9.0 days. (0.1)
ATMOSPHERE:
Pressure: Standard **Type/Composition:** Fluorine
Climate: Hot (90 - 130)
Surface Water: 0 % **Humidity:** 0 %
Primary Terrain: Hilly/Rough **Secondary Terrain:** Mountainous/Volcanic
MINERAL RESOURCES:
Gems/Crystals: Ample **Rare Minerals:** Absent
Radioactives: Plentiful **Heavy Metals:** Ample

Industrial Metals: Scarce **Light Metals:** Extremely Plentiful
Organics: Absent
MOONS:
Moonlets: 0 **Small Moons:** 0 **Medium Moons:** 0 **Large Moons:** 0
BIOSPHERE:
Dominant Life Form: None

Alpha Carnin II

Orbital Distance: 0.65
Planet Type: Hostile Greenhouse **Diameter:** 4636.0 **Gravity:** 0.5
Density: 4.6 **Composition:** Low-Iron
Axial Tilt: 27 Degrees **Seasonal Variation:** Earthlike
Day Length: 87 hrs. (3.6) **Year Length:** 48.0 days. (0.5)
ATMOSPHERE:
Pressure: Trace **Type/Composition:** N.A.
Climate: Hot (90 - 130)
Surface Water: 0 % **Humidity:** 0 %
Primary Terrain: Mountainous/Volcanic **Secondary Terrain:** Plains/Steeps
MINERAL RESOURCES:
Gems/Crystals: Extremely Plentiful **Rare Minerals:** Absent
Radioactives: Ample **Heavy Metals:** Plentiful
Industrial Metals: Absent **Light Metals:** Plentiful
Organics: Absent
MOONS:
Moonlets: 0 **Small Moons:** 0 **Medium Moons:** 0 **Large Moons:** 0
BIOSPHERE:
Dominant Life Form: None

Alpha Carnin III

Orbital Distance: 1.00
Planet Type: Earthlike **Diameter:** 5955.0 **Gravity:** 0.9
Density: 6.6 **Composition:** High-Iron
Axial Tilt: 0 Degrees **Seasonal Variation:** None
Day Length: 20 hrs. (0.83) **Year Length:** 416.4 days. (0.95)
ATMOSPHERE:
Pressure: Standard **Type/Composition:** Oxygen/Nitrogen
Climate: Tropical (80 - 120)
Surface Water: 80 % **Humidity:** 0 %
Primary Terrain: Forest/Jungle **Secondary Terrain:** Mountainous/Volcanic
MINERAL RESOURCES:
Gems/Crystals: Scarce **Rare Minerals:** Plentiful
Radioactives: Plentiful **Heavy Metals:** Scarce
Industrial Metals: Ample **Light Metals:** Ample
Organics: Scarce
MOONS:
Moonlets: 0 **Small Moons:** 1 **Medium Moons:** 0 **Large Moons:** 0
BIOSPHERE:
Dominant Life Form: Higher Animals (IQ 4-6)/Special (see below)

Carnin's Belt

Orbital Distance: 1.70
Asteroid Type: Type-S
MINERAL RESOURCES:
Gems/Crystals: Absent **Rare Minerals:** Absent
Radioactives: Scarce **Heavy Metals:** Plentiful
Industrial Metals: Plentiful **Light Metals:** Scarce
Organics: Scarce

Alpha Carnin V

There is no planet in Orbit #5.

Alpha Carnin VI

Orbital Distance: 5.90
Planet Type: Small Gas Giant **Diameter:** 32740.0 **Gravity:** 0.6
Density: 0.8 **Composition:** Gas Giant
Axial Tilt: 24 Degrees **Seasonal Variation:** Earthlike
Day Length: 16 hrs. (0.7) **Year Length:** 2718.5 days. (5.0)
ATMOSPHERE:
Pressure: Superdense **Type/Composition:** Hydrogen/Methane
Climate: Cold (0 - 40)
Surface Water: 0 % **Humidity:** 0 %
Primary Terrain: N.A. **Secondary Terrain:** N.A.
MINERAL RESOURCES:
Gems/Crystals: Absent **Rare Minerals:** Absent
Radioactives: Scarce **Heavy Metals:** Plentiful
Industrial Metals: Ample **Light Metals:** Scarce
Organics: Plentiful
MOONS:
Moonlets: 12 **Small Moons:** 3 **Medium Moons:** 6 **Large Moons:** 0
Giant Moons: 0 **Small Gas Giants:** 0
BIOSPHERE:
Dominant Life Form: None

The Mayatin

Mayatin are a race of nocturnal, arboreal brachiators indigenous to Alpha Carnin III. They vaguely resemble the pygmy loris of earth, but are larger and more intelligent. They have four long fingers and an opposable thumb, each ending in a sharp claw used in climbing. Their long prehensile tails are used to aid climbing and movement through the treetops. Their eyes are large and well suited to nocturnal vision. A thin layer of fur covers their bodies and has an unusual characteristic. From a distance, the fur takes on the coloration of nearby objects providing a limited chameleon effect. The effect does not function in direct lighting or upon close inspection. Their mouths are lined with numerous small, sharp teeth, suitable for their omnivorous diet. Males and females are usually about the same size, but females tend to have longer tails.

Mayatin did not evolve into their present form naturally. In the distant past, the mysterious race known only as the Ancients used a small arboreal creature native to Alpha Carnin III as the basis for a genetically manipulated race. The Ancients developed such races on numerous worlds to work on projects thought to be beneath the Ancients' station, but were required none-the-less. In the case of the Mayatin, they were designed to be able to survive well in the tropical environment and act as the maintenance crew of one of the Ancients' outposts. When the Ancients' civilization collapsed, the artificial Mayatin society rapidly degenerated into the primitive state they are found in today.

Their society is based on primitive tribal associations, with the eldest males forming a ruling council. Females are the heads of the household and primary educators of the young. They also tend to play an important, but subtle role in general tribal workings through suggestions and advice given to their mates. Information is passed from generation to generation through an elaborate set of oral traditions that include songs, plays and dramatic reenactments. Elders play an important role in society as sources of wisdom and lore. Relationships between tribes vary, but conflict is usually restricted to ritual combat. Defeated participants of such ritual battles are often treated as honored guests and sent home with elaborate gifts.

An alert character (a successful Vision roll) may notice a series of engraved metal disks adorned about the bodies of male Mayatin. The disks are made from a variety of materials, with no two bearing the same engravings. It would appear, that the number of disks worn by an individual is directly proportional to that individual's status among the Mayatin. Clan leaders and warriors bear the most disks, but no individual has more than a few.

Any character with Archeology (Ancients) may make a roll to recognize the disks. They are Coyns. A type of rare artifact recovered from Ancient sites. The Mayatin recognize them as a link to their past and associate them with prestige and importance. When two males engage in ritual combat, the victor is entitled to exchange his own Coyns for those of his defeated opponent, so long as they outnumber his own. To do otherwise is seen as an insult and often ends in actual combat.

Mayatin communicate through a combination of verbal language and pheromones. To others, the odor is an overpowering dry, musky smell that can cause disorientation. The Mayatin use the pheromones to convey added description to their verbal language, but it can be used alone to convey simple concepts and emotions. Communication between Mayatin and other races is extremely difficult, but not impossible. Use of the verbal component of the language combined with gestures and other body language can convey simple ideas, but without the olfactory component (and some type of protection from its effects), misunderstandings and delays will plague all attempts to communicate.

As a race, they have ST -1 (-10 points), DX +2 (20 points) and IQ -1 (-10 points). Their racial advantages are Brachiator (5 points), Fur (0 points), Secret Communication (Only General Concepts and Emotions with a special effect on non-Mayatins (see below), 10 points), Claws (15 points), Tail (Manipulator with No Striking Capability, Extra flexibility and a 2 hex reach, 25 points), Chameleon (Always On, 2 points), Night Vision (10 points) and Confuse (Power 5, Effects Non-Mayatins only, Untrainable, Always On, Area Effect, 2 levels of Increased Area, 3 Levels of Decreased Range, 8 points). Their racial disadvantages are Nocturnal (-10 points), Semi-Upright (-5 points) and Primitive (-10 levels, -50 points). They have the racially learned skills of Acrobatics at DX -2 and Climbing at DX (both free from Brachiator) and Stealth at DX +1 (4 points). It costs 4 points to be a Mayatin.

Their religion is based around their rather accurate creation story involving the Ancients. The story tells of their "birth" at the hands of the "Sky Gods." They were born to honor their creators and live forever in the jungles near the Holy Temple of the Sky Gods. It is said that one day, during the "Awakening," the sky gods will return and take the Mayatin with them back to the heavens.

Cargo/Maintenance Robot (TL9)

Brain: Standard brain with neural net option (20 lbs., .4 cf., $15,000, 70 points), Complexity 4.
Sensors: Basic sensors with thermographic vision, +3 acute hearing and radscanner (3 lbs.,.09 cf., $7,750, 31 points).
Communicator: Basic communicator with bullhorn option (.55 lbs., .011 cf., $275, 15 points).
Arm Motors: Two ST 15 arm motors with cheap option (each is 4.5 lbs., .09 cf., $2,250, .075 kW).
Drivetrain: Leg drivetrain with two legs and .3 kW motive power (12 lbs., .12 cf. per leg motor, $2,400, .3 kW).
Weaponry: One heavy laser pistol (3 lbs., .06 cf., $750, LR 2).
Accessories: Fire Extinguisher (2 lbs., .1 cf., $25, LR 6); spraygun (1 lb., .05 cf., $12.50, LR 6).
Power: Power requirement .45 kW. rE cell (20 lbs., .2 cf., $2,000, 20 points) with 270,000 kWs. Endurance 166 hours, 40 minutes (5 points)
Subassemblies: Two arms (right and left); head; two legs.
Arm Design: Right arm houses ST 15 arm motor, and one heavy laser pistol (.15 cf.). Left arm houses ST 15 arm

motor and .06 cf. Empty space (.15 cf.)
Head Design: Head houses Basic sensors, communicator, spraygun and .249 cf. empty space (.40 cf.).
Body Design: Body houses brain, rE cell, fire extinguisher, waste space for head rotation and .46 cf. empty space (1.2 cf.).
Leg Design: Two legs, each houses leg motor and .24 cf. empty space (.36 cf.).
Surface Area: Right arm 2, left arm 2, head 4, body 7, legs 3 each. Total surface area 21.
Structure: 63 lbs., $2,100.
Hit Points: Each arm 6, head 6, body 11, each leg 5.
Armor: DR 20/PD 4 metal armor (42 lbs., $840, LR 2, 100 points). Sealed ($450, 20 points).
Statistics: 179.55 lbs. (.09 tons), 2.3 cf. (6.09' tall), $32,652.50, Body ST 17, Arm ST 15 each (70 points), DX 10 (0 points), IQ 8 (-15 points), HT 12/11 (15 points). Speed 7.26. Cannot float (-5 points). Legality Rating 2. Point Cost: 50 points.

Endurance-Class 200-Ton Merchant Trader

200-ton SL Hull, DR 100, Basic Bridge, Engineering, 15 Maneuver, 8 Jump, 60 Fuel, 4 Low Berths (capacity 16), 1 Spacedock (holds up to 250 cf of air/raft), 10 staterooms, Utility, 2 Turrets (2 Missile Racks, 1 Sandcaster Rack and 3 360-MJ Turret Lasers), Fuel Processor, 26.5 Cargo.
Statistics: EMass 381.63, LMass 514.13, Cost MCr 49.6392, HP 22500, Crew 8, Hull Size Modifier: +8.
Performance: sAcc 1.167Gs, Jump 3, Air Speed 1,646mph
Computer Programs & Databases: Star Chart Database (200 gigs), Planetary Database (200 gigs), Starship Recognition (10 gigs), Library, Large (100 gigs), Cartography (TL10, Complx 5), Datalink (TL10), Targeting (TL10, Complx 5, +5), Transmission Profiling (TL10), Gunner (TL10), Damage Control (TL10), Vehicle Operation (TL10), Vehicle Operations Database.

by Ralph Melton

Art by Dan Smith

He checked the aim on the cannon again and lit the fuse as he heard Dr. Lucky's footsteps approaching. This time he'd kill him, for sure. The door swung open, silhouetting Dr. Lucky for a brief moment before the hissing flame reached the barrel . . .

BOOM! The cannon slammed backwards, smashing him into the wall, as the cannonball hung motionless in midair.

As Dr. Lucky walked past the wreckage, he commented, "I'll have you know that that cannon is a genuine Civil War antique. If it is damaged by your horseplay, I shall be most put out."

You're here at the J. Robert Lucky mansion on a stormy evening. You've hated Dr. Lucky for years, and this could be the perfect opportunity to do the old man in. Two things stand in your way:

* They don't call him "Doctor Lucky" for nothing. The uncanny luck that let him make his millions is legendary, and it applies just as well to his personal life. Trying to kill him is easy; actually getting Lucky is much harder.

* Not only that, but you're not the only one who wants to kill him tonight. You may have to cajole, flimflam, or ambush other players in order to make sure that you're the one to off the Lucky bastard.

This is a combination of ***Kill Doctor Lucky,*** the board game of murder by Cheapass Games, and ***Toon,*** the cartoon roleplaying game by Steve Jackson Games. In this game, you'll attack Doctor Lucky, but you'll also throw cream pies, fire guns, set traps, and bamboozle him -- and you'll do all these things to other players as well.

Toon is a simple roleplaying game designed to support the full range of silliness of cartoons. Characters can Fall Down temporarily, but they never truly die. Tasks are resolved by rolling 2d6 against a skill level.

Kill Dr. Lucky is an abstract board game. Players are trying to find opportunities to kill Dr. Lucky out of sight of any other players. Move and Room cards help players move, Weapon cards enhance their attacks, and Failure cards thwart other players' attacks.

Each of these games has a lot to offer the other game. ***Kill Dr. Lucky*** is great fun -- and one of my favorite aspects is that of describing how murder

attempts fail. ***Toon*** provides a roleplaying framework for that sort of failure.
Furthermore, ***Toon*** provides a richer variety of possibilities to ***Kill Dr. Lucky***; instead of just attacking Dr. Lucky, players can set traps for him and try to lure him into danger and so forth. ***Toon*** also provides ***Kill Dr. Lucky*** a basis for inter-player violence, which always livens up a game.

Kill Dr. Lucky, on the other hand, provides structure and focus to ***Toon.*** One aspect of this is the structure provided by any ***Toon*** adventure. But the ***Kill Dr. Lucky*** cards provide an additional structure to the game by providing seeds of inspiration. My friends and I often find it easier to decide "What can I do with a Big Red Hammer?" than to decide from the infinite world of possible silly things to do that ***Toon*** can sometimes provide.

Make Dr. Lucky Fall Down is for an Animator and two to eight players. You can use preexisting ***Toon*** characters if you like, instead of the ones that I've provided. Use characters that like or dislike each other strongly, as well as being willing to kill Dr. Lucky; Natural Enemy pairings are good.

You will need a copy of ***Kill Dr. Lucky*** in order to play. You will also need the pawns that ***Kill Dr. Lucky*** requires, and two dice. The Animator, at least, should be familiar with both games. It is not as necessary for the players to be familiar with both, but it helps if they're familiar with one or the other of the games.

The Rules

"Aha!" he said to himself in an unnecessarily melodramatic piece of exposition. "At last, I am alone with Dr. Lucky. This is a perfect opportunity for me to kill him. Now, what shall I kill him with?"

He rummaged through his possessions, and held up a . . . Monkey Hand. "A monkey hand?" he reflected aloud. "What makes a monkey hand an effective murder weapon?"

*In the next moment, the answer to his question became painfully obvious. "Oh, *bonk*, I see," he explained, as he bounced off the walls and floor. "This monkey hand *fold* still has *spindle* the monkey attached. *mutilate*"*

Set up the ***Kill Dr. Lucky*** board. Start all the players in the Drawing Room, and determine the first player and the beginning location of Dr. Lucky, as in ***Kill Dr. Lucky.*** Deal five cards to each player.

Play proceeds in turns until Dr. Lucky is killed. Each turn is made up of two phases: Movement and Doing Something. Both phases are optional, but the Movement phase must precede the Doing Something phase.

Movement

During the Movement phase of the turn, you can move yourself one room, and you can play zero or more Move and Room cards to move yourself, Dr. Lucky, and other players. You may take your free move before, after, or during playing Move and Room cards.

Playing a Move card allows you to move your target (yourself, Dr. Lucky, or another player) the number of rooms listed on the card, if you make your roll. Playing a Room card allows you to move your target to the room named on the card if you make your roll.

This much is very similar to ***Kill Dr. Lucky,*** with the addition of the ability to allow the Move and Room cards to move other players. The other addition is the requirement of successful die rolls to use Move and Room cards successfully:

* To play a Move or Room card on yourself, you must make a successful Run roll.

* To play a Move or Room card on Dr. Lucky, you must make a successful Fast-Talk roll. (Dr. Lucky does not get to make a Resist Fast-Talk roll). (*"Oh, Doctor Lucky? If you would come to the Trophy Room, I have a rare specimen of the Abyssinian Crested Jackalope to show you . . ."*)

* To play a Move or Room card to make another player move, you must make a successful Fast-Talk roll. In addition, the target gets to make a Resist Fast-Talk roll; if they succeed, the card has no effect.

If you fail your roll to use a Move or Room card, the card returns to your hand, and you may play no more Move or Room cards on that target for the rest of your turn.

Doing Something

After the movement phase, you can do one thing that requires a die roll. (The Animator should not require a roll for activities that add to the humor of the game but do not affect the course of the game. For example, Mrs. White should clean up the debris from thrown cream pies, and shouldn't be penalized for doing so.) Some of the possible things that you might do are these:

* **Snoop**: If you're in a named room, you may Snoop. If you make your See/Hear/Smell roll, you draw one card. The card you draw loosely represents something you found while you're snooping. If you make your roll by 5 or more, you draw two cards. (If you're playing with characters other than the ones provided, the Animator should fiddle with this rule so that on average, characters can draw about one card every time they snoop.)

* **Run**: If you make your Run roll, you may move one extra room.

* **Fight**: You may engage Dr. Lucky or another player in hand-to-hand combat if you are in the same room as your opponent. To do so, roll against your Fight skill. If you make your Fight roll and the other player fails his Dodge roll, you inflict damage.

* **Throw things**: To throw a weapon or a cream pie at someone, you must be in line of sight of them. To do so, make your Throw roll. If you succeed at your Throw roll, the target must make his Dodge roll or be hit.

* **Fire a Gun**: To fire a gun at someone, you must be in line of sight of them. Make your Fire Gun roll. If you succeed, the target must make a Dodge roll to avoid being hit.

As in ***Kill Dr. Lucky,*** you may not attempt to kill Dr. Lucky when another player can see you or Dr. Lucky. (There is no such restriction on attacking other players.)

You may play a Weapon card with your Fight, Throw, or Fire Gun attack to give a bonus to your skill equal to the point value of the card. If you use a Weapon card against Dr. Lucky, the Weapon card will be discarded after the attack is over, but if you attack another player, you can keep the weapon.

* **Fast-Talk**: You use Fast-Talk whenever you want to persuade, bamboozle, or seduce Dr. Lucky or another player. You must be in line of sight of your victim. To do so, you roll against your Fast-Talk skill, and your victim rolls against his or her Resist Fast-Talk skill. If you succeed and your victim fails, they must use their next turn to do whatever you Fast-Talked them to do.

* **Set a Trap**: To set a trap, roll your Set/Disarm Trap skill. The trap will affect the next character (a player character or Dr. Lucky) to enter that room, unless they make an Identify Dangerous Thing roll when they enter the room. You may use a Weapon card to improve your chances of successfully setting the trap, as with fighting.

* **Steal Things**: To try to steal something from another player (or Dr. Lucky), try your Sleight of Hand roll. If you succeed, you steal one card from them.

Many of these things (Throwing objects, firing guns, and fast-talking) refer to "line of sight." Line of sight works on horizontal and vertical lines as in ***Kill Dr. Lucky.***

Players will come up with things to do that are not covered by this list. The Animator will have to decide what sort of die roll is appropriate, and how this should interact with cards and with line of sight. Some examples of this sort of ad-

hoc decision are given in the sample characters.

Hit Points and Falling Down

Hit Points work as in ***Toon.*** Most weapons do 1d6 points of damage. When you lose all your hit points, you Fall Down and lose three turns. After that, you return to the game in the room where you fell down, with a full complement of hit points. Attacks on Dr. Lucky may be made in the presence of Fallen Down characters; they don,t count as witnesses. If you make another player Fall Down, you get half their cards, chosen at random.

As in ***Toon,*** some things may Boggle a character, such as being hit in the face with a cream pie, or having the character's player collapse helplessly in laughter. The Animator determines when a character is Boggled. When you are Boggled, you lose one turn, and cannot use Skills or Shticks, or see other Players until you begin a turn.

Odds and Ends

Cream Pies: You may pick up a cream pie whenever you enter the kitchen, the dining hall, or the servants' quarters.

Special weapons: The Civil War Cannon does 2d6 damage instead of 1d6. The Bad Cream may be considered a bad cream pie; it Boggles as well as doing 1d6 damage. In homage to cartoon traditions, the Loud Noise is considered to be a stick of Dynamite.

Dr. Lucky

J. Robert Lucky has had a long and glorious career in business, in spite of (or perhaps because of) the fact that he would sell his own grandmother to be boiled down for glue if he thought he could get away with it. The one invariant in his career has been sheer, astounding good luck.

His career started when he was a minimum wage employee at a Lucky Dogs fast food restaurant in his teens. The CEO was retiring, and when he went to name his successor, the particularly strong onions of the hot dog he was eating blinded him, and he pointed to Lucky by mistake. From that start, he went into one industry after another. The Lucky Ducks poultry farm got off to a flying start. The Lucky Strikes union-breakers were a success, and their softball and bowling teams took first place in their leagues. The sky was the limit for the Lucky Stars talent agency. And the Lucky Brakes auto parts company brought the competition screeching to a halt.

Dr. Lucky isn't a normal character; he's a plot device with a curmudgeonly temper who is perfectly oblivious to player's attacks on him.

Attacking Dr. Lucky is different from attacking other players in several ways. Any Weapon card used on Dr. Lucky is discarded when used. Also, instead of using skills like Dodge or Resist Fast-Talk to avoid danger, Dr. Lucky always defends against danger by using his Incredible Luck shtick. (Dr. Lucky does not attack players directly; he merely goes on obliviously about his business, while bad things happen to those who try to attack him.)

Furthermore, failure is *painful* when you attack Dr. Lucky. When you attack Dr. Lucky unsuccessfully, every other player may immediately play Failure cards on you. You take damage equal to the total value of the failure cards that are played. After each player's turn, Dr. Lucky moves sequentially along the numbered rooms, as in ***Kill Dr. Lucky.*** If he has been Fast-Talked to do something outside his normal routine, he does that now. If he moves into a room with a player character on this phase, it becomes that player's turn, as in ***Kill Dr. Lucky.***

Dr. Lucky

Hit Points: 11

Muscle: 2

Break Down Door: 2
Climb: 2
Fight: 3
Pick Up Heavy Thing: 2
Throw: 2

Zip: 3
Dodge: 3
Drive Vehicle: 3
Fire Gun: 3
Jump: 3
Ride: 3
Run: 3
Swim: 3

Smarts: 4
Hide/Spot Hidden: 4
Identify Dangerous Thing: 4
Read: 7
Resist Fast-Talk: 4
See/Hear/Smell: 5
Set/Disarm Trap: 5
Track/Cover Tracks: 4

Chutzpah: 2
Fast-Talk: 4
Pass/Detect Shoddy Goods: 5
Sleight of Hand: 4
Sneak: 4

Shticks:
Incredible Luck: 8

The Big Finish

At last, someone had managed to kill Dr. Lucky. A somber horde of black-suited men filed in to carry off the body. As the camera irised out, it focused on the label on one man's suit: "Lucky Stiffs Funeral Home."

When someone finally manages to remove Dr. Lucky's last Hit Point, the game ends. When I have the opportunity, I give two prizes, one for killing Dr. Lucky, and one for earning the most Plot Points. Plot points are awarded as follows:

* Making Dr. Lucky Fall Down is worth 3 Plot Points (if there's no prize for killing Dr. Lucky).

* Making another character Fall Down is worth 1 Plot Point.

* As usual for ***Toon,*** making the Animator burst out laughing is worth 1 Plot Point.

Variant: And Your Little Dog, Too!

Elizabeth Lindsay has proposed a variation on ***Make Dr. Lucky Fall Down*** based on the "Kill Dr. Lucky and His Dog" variant posted at http://www.cheapass.com/luckydog.html.

The dog is an annoying little yip-yip terrier with a Fight of 4 (for 1d of damage), a Dodge of 4, 4 hit points, and no

other interesting statistics. On each turn, after Dr. Lucky moves, the dog moves one room towards Dr. Lucky (on the shortest route possible). The dog will try to bite one character in the room it moves into if it can. If there are multiple characters to choose from, choose the one to be bitten the way you choose who goes next when Dr. Lucky enters a room.

The dog counts as a witness, so you can't attack Dr. Lucky if the dog is around. However, the dog can be attacked just like any player.

If a player makes the dog Fall Down, the dog returns to the game after that players' third turn. From then on, if Dr. Lucky is ever in the same room as the player, he will attack the player in revenge for the dog's death. (Dr. Lucky can attack before moving according to his numbers; he's special that way.) As in the boardgame variant, draw the top card from the deck to see if Dr. Lucky has a weapon to use in his attack.

Sample Characters

Miss Scarlett O'Hare

Miss Scarlett undulated provocatively across to Dr. Lucky. "Why, J. R., how nice to see you," she purred. "Why don't you give me a li'l old kiss . . ." Dr. Lucky leered at her. "But of course, my dear . . ." Miss Scarlett turned her face up to him, pursed her red lips, and thought of the surprise she had in store for him . . .

CLANGGG! The beartrap hidden in her cleavage sprang prematurely, making her shriek from the effects of Cruel and Unusual Underwire Damage. Dr. Lucky paused. As he turned to leave, he muttered, "I knew that you had some kinky tastes, but that is not the right kind of lingerie to attract me . . ."

Miss Scarlett is quite beautiful, and knows it. She first met Dr. Lucky when she tried to break into a Hollywood acting career through the Lucky Stars talent agency, and she quickly succumbed to his Lucky charms. From there, she started working for Dr. Lucky as his "secretary" -- typing skill not required. She and Mrs. Peahen have become bitter rivals for Dr. Lucky's affections.

Just recently, she and Mr. Lime have been talking together, and he has proposed marriage to her, and she has accepted, though more in order to wrap him around her finger than because she truly loves him. She has yet to tell Dr. Lucky about the marriage, and expects that he will do everything he can to oppose the marriage. But she's getting tired of being his kept woman -- tired enough to kill him to escape that captivity.

Miss Scarlett wears a slinky red gown with a plunging neckline. She carries a long-handled cigarette holder, a makeup kit, and a bear trap in her cleavage.

To play Miss Scarlet:

* Wrap any man around your finger by Fast-Talking him to take damage, get out of your way, or do something damaging to Dr. Lucky -- but don't let the guy know your plans.

* Pull material for a trap from your Cleavage of Many Things and set a trap. (You can pull anything you like from your Cleavage of Many Things on a successful roll. It'll all be "normal" stuff, though; it won't give the special bonuses of Weapon cards.)

* Speak in a soft Southern accent.

Hit Points: 8

Muscle: 1
Break Down Door: 1
Climb: 1

Fight: 5
Pick Up Heavy Thing: 1
Throw: 4

Zip: 3
Dodge: 4
Drive Vehicle: 3
Fire Gun: 5
Jump: 4
Ride: 3
Run: 6
Swim: 3

Smarts: 4
Hide/Spot Hidden: 4
Identify Dangerous Thing: 2
Read: 4
Resist Fast-Talk: 6
See/Hear/Smell: 9
Set/Disarm Trap: 7
Track/Cover Tracks: 4

Chutzpah: 6
Fast-Talk: 9
Pass/Detect Shoddy Goods: 7
Sleight of Hand: 6
Sneak: 6

Shticks:
Cleavage of Many Things: 7

Colonel Chutney

Colonel Chutney carefully lifted up the edge of the meringue on the pie. He uncorked a small bottle labeled "Dr. Foster's Special Recipe Wow-Wow Sauce," and added a drop . . . two drops . . . four drops . . . the whole bottle. It started to bubble and smoke as he carefully replaced the meringue. He went forth to offer Dr. Lucky a piece of pie.

Dr. Lucky, with Southern hospitality, insisted that Colonel Chutney have a piece of pie as well, and of course Colonel Chutney's British politeness compelled him to accept. As his ears started to blacken, curl and uncurl, and start to give forth smoke, it became painfully obvious that Colonel Chutney had chosen the wrong pie. His eyes watered and turned red and green and paisley, and he opened his mouth with a bellow of flame. He dashed for a carafe of water in a desperate attempt to recover from several points of New "Zesty Napalm" Flavor Damage.

Colonel Chutney is a British-style colonel with war stories from the glory days of the Condiment Rebellion. (And those were glorious days, such as the time when the Ketchup Cavalry routed a stand of French Fry Fanatics . . .) -- until Dr. Lucky (and his Lucky Dogs fast food chain) betrayed his former business partner and drove Chutney's Chutneys out of business.

Colonel Chutney and Mrs. Peahen have been having a clandestine affair.

Colonel Chutney, Professor Puce, and Dr. Lucky play poker together regularly, and Colonel Chutney always loses. Colonel Chutney suspects Professor Puce of cheating, but isn't sure. This, the hope to romance Mrs. Peahen more openly, and the bitter gall of being driven out of the food business by Dr. Lucky have led Colonel Chutney to get angry enough to try to kill the Lucky bastard.

Colonel Chutney wears a yellow-brown cavalry uniform. He carries a rifle (1d6 damage), a condiment set (including his special recipe of Wow-Wow sauce, which causes 1d6 damage to anyone who gets it in their mouth), and a Swiss Army Knife containing most any attachment that you can think of.

To play Colonel Chutney:

* Bluster. (Think of Yosemite Sam with a British accent.)

* Fire your gun freely and vigorously.

* Be gallant to women. Calling them "honey" and "sweet thing" is entirely appropriate.

Hit Points: 11

Muscle: 4
Break Down Door: 5
Climb: 4
Fight: 6
Pick Up Heavy Thing: 7
Throw: 6

Zip: 3
Dodge: 4
Drive Vehicle: 3
Fire Gun: 7
Jump: 3
Ride: 3
Run: 5
Swim: 3

Smarts: 2
Hide/Spot Hidden: 2
Identify Dangerous Thing: 2
Read: 3
Resist Fast-Talk: 3
See/Hear/Smell: 7
Set/Disarm Trap: 5
Track/Cover Tracks: 3

Chutzpah: 3
Fast-Talk: 5
Pass/Detect Shoddy Goods: 5
Sleight of Hand: 3
Sneak: 3

Professor Puce

Boingshnickschnickshnick, boingshnickschnickshnick, boingshnickschnickshnick -- Professor Puce bounced menacingly across the Dining Room on his Electric Scissor-Bladed Pogo-Stick of Doom (Patent Pending), drawing closer and closer to Dr. Lucky. He bounced high into the air for his final attack . . .

. . . And caught his suspenders in the chandelier. As he returned to the ground, the suspenders streeeeeeeetched -- and then, with a mighty TWANG, they snapped him up into the chandelier in a shower of sparking scissorblades, molten candlewax, and an unhappy amount of Extreme Wedgie Damage.

Professor Puce was a scientist who developed the auto part that made Lucky Brakes a success -- until Dr. Lucky stole his invention. Now, he makes money as a card sharp. He plays poker regularly with Colonel Chutney and Dr. Lucky. He cheats outrageously, (such as dealing himself five aces), but Dr. Lucky still wins half the time. And Professor Puce can't bear to lose . . . so much that he's willing to kill Dr. Lucky to win once and for all.

Inspector Gray has found out a dirty secret of Professor Puce's (the details of what the secret is are left to the players), and he has been blackmailing Professor Puce over it.

Professor Puce wears a lavender shirt with a purple coat, a purple top hat, and long thin dark mustaches. He carries a deck of cards and a Gizmo. (A gizmo may be changed to anything you want, once per game; it has a chance of being shoddy goods, though.)

To play Professor Puce:

* Steal cards from other players.

* Cheat other players through Sneaks and Fast-Talking.

* Twirl your mustaches.

* Use your Gizmo to come up with something scientific.

Hit Points: 9

Muscle: 2
Break Down Door: 3
Climb: 2
Fight: 6
Pick Up Heavy Thing: 2
Throw: 5

Zip: 3
Dodge: 5
Drive Vehicle: 3
Fire Gun: 6
Jump: 3
Ride: 3
Run: 3
Swim: 3

Smarts: 3
Hide/Spot Hidden: 3
Identify Dangerous Thing: 3
Read: 5
Resist Fast-Talk: 5
See/Hear/Smell: 8
Set/Disarm Trap: 7
Track/Cover Tracks: 3

Chutzpah: 6
Fast-Talk: 7
Pass/Detect Shoddy Goods: 7
Sleight of Hand: 9
Sneak: 7

Chef Olive

Chef Olive fumed and scowled in his kitchen. "I weel tolerate zees ignorance no longer! To order steak tartare cooked `well done, eet ees unthinkable! I weel cook heem a very special dinner . . . "

Chef Olive entered the room where Dr. Lucky was standing, carrying a porcelain dish of food. "Doct-air Lucky, I would like you to try zees. I call it 'Sauteed Eel Surprise.'

"Certainly, old chap," Dr. Lucky replied. "Dish some up for me."

Chef Olive moved to serve him, forgetting in his anticipation that the spoon in the casserole was made of metal. ZZZZZAP! He jerked and twitched violently as the electric eels released thousands of volts of electricity through his body. As he tried to recover from the throes of Electric Eel Casserole Damage, Dr. Lucky said, "On second thought, maybe I'll just have a glass of water."

Chef Olive is Dr. Lucky's cook. He has a volatile French temperament, and if he weren't such a good cook, he would not be the sort of person you want holding sharp knives. He is married to Mrs. Off-White -- whose embezzlement he does not know about.

He considers Dr. Lucky insufficiently appreciative of his culinary genius. In fact, he is only employed here because Dr. Lucky has threatened that harm would come to his beloved Mrs. Off-White if he does not stay. Cooking up something "special" for Dr. Lucky would be Dr. Lucky's just desserts. But he must not tell Mrs. White about his plan, because it would upset her sensitive temperament.

Chef Olive wears a white chef's outfit and a tall white hat. He carries a cleaver which he sharpens obsessively (1d6 damage), and a set of cream pies.

To play Chef Olive:

* Speak in an outrageous French accent.

* Make sure that others acknowledge your culinary greatness.

* Cook dangerous food items. (You can cook anything you like in the Kitchen, Dining Room, or Servants' Quarters with a Set/Disarm Trap roll.)

Hit Points: 10

Muscle: 4
Break Down Door: 4
Climb: 4
Fight: 7
Pick Up Heavy Thing: 4
Throw: 6

Zip: 4
Dodge: 4
Drive Vehicle: 4
Fire Gun: 5
Jump: 4
Ride: 4
Run: 7
Swim: 4

Smarts: 3

Hide/Spot Hidden: 4
Identify Dangerous Thing: 5
Read: 3
Resist Fast-Talk: 4
See/Hear/Smell: 8
Set/Disarm Trap: 8
Track/Cover Tracks: 3

Chutzpah: 3
Fast-Talk: 4
Pass/Detect Shoddy Goods: 7
Sleight of Hand: 5
Sneak: 5

Mrs. Peahen

Mrs. Peahen turned from contemplating the paintings in the gallery as Dr. Lucky entered. "Oh, Julius," she pleaded. "There's been so much bitterness between us. Can't we have an end to this acrimony? You used to be so sweet to me, when we were courting. Do you remember what you used to call me?"

Dr. Lucky furrowed his brows in thought. "I think I remember. I used to call you . . . I used to call you . . . Ah, yes! I used to call you ***collect.****"*

With an indignant squawk, Mrs. Peahen swung at Dr. Lucky with her handbag. Dr. Lucky, though, had wandered out of range. The force of the blow spun her around like a top until she rammed into one of the portraits, flattening herself until she neatly fit into the picture frame, and taking an inconvenient amount of I Think It's a Frame-Up damage.

Mrs. Dorothea Peahen married Dr. Lucky after a whirlwind romance in which she succumbed to the magical effects of his Lucky charms. She used to be an opera star before she married him, and she is still quite vain about her fading appearance. Now, she and Dr. Lucky have drifted apart, and there is no love between them any more. She is bitterly jealous of Miss Scarlett for her dalliances with Dr. Lucky. She has herself been dallying with Colonel Chutney. She hopes to kill Dr. Lucky to get his inheritance and get him out of her life.

Mrs. Peahen wears a long flowing gown and lots of jewelry. She carries a lorgnette (i.e., a set of glasses on a stick) and a small handbag containing an anvil (1d6 damage).

To play Mrs. Peahen:

* Speak in an overly dramatic voice.

* Hit disrespectful men with your handbag.

Hit Points: 11

Muscle: 4
Break Down Door: 4
Climb: 4
Fight: 7
Pick Up Heavy Thing: 4
Throw: 5

Zip: 3
Dodge: 4
Drive Vehicle: 3
Fire Gun: 5

Jump: 3
Ride: 3
Run: 7
Swim: 3

Smarts: 3
Hide/Spot Hidden: 3
Identify Dangerous Thing: 5
Read: 4
Resist Fast-Talk: 7
See/Hear/Smell: 8
Set/Disarm Trap: 5
Track/Cover Tracks: 4

Chutzpah: 4
Fast-Talk: 7
Pass/Detect Shoddy Goods: 6
Sleight of Hand: 6
Sneak: 4

Mr. Lime

As Dr. Lucky entered the Lancaster Room, Mr. Lime started swinging his pocket watch in front of Dr. Lucky's face. "Looook into my eyes. You are getting veeery sleepy. You feel a strange temptation to hit yourself in the head with this hammer. Dammit, man, pay attention to me! You are getting sleepy . . ."

Dr. Lucky yawned. "I am feeling a bit tired. I might go have a bit of a lie-down. Do you happen to know what time it is?"

"Oh, certainly," Mr. Lime replied. "It's --" Mr. Lime stopped and his jaws went slack as he looked at the swinging watch. He stood up, walked robotically over to the hammer, picked it up, and slammed it into his own forehead. When he came to, visions of pocket watches circled around his head, and Dr. Lucky had wandered off.

Mr. Lime has recently returned to the area, after discovering that he was an adopted child: in reality, he is the illegitimate son of Dr. Lucky and Mrs. Off-White (conceived just before the Lucky Bastard sperm bank underwent serious ethical investigations). Mrs. Off-White received him with affection (and introduced him to Miss Scarlet, whom he later proposed to); Dr. Lucky, though, sneered at him, but did say that if he really was his son, he would include Mr. Lime in his will. And since courting Miss Scarlett is a very expensive proposition (as it were . . .), Mr. Lime could use a bit of money right now -- enough to kill Dr. Lucky to get it.

Mr. Lime is learning Hypnosis, but he isn't very good at it yet. (Hypnosis works as a super Fast-Talk. If you successfully hypnotize someone, they will stay under your control as long as you stay within one room of them, until they take damage. Furthermore, if you tell your Hypnotized target that they can do something, they can.)

Mr. Lime wears a dark green suit and tie. He carries a pocket watch (which he uses to hypnotize his victims) and a knife (1d6 damage).

To play Mr. Lime:

* Speak in a campy hypnotist's voice.

* Try to hypnotize people into killing Dr. Lucky for you. (If this works, *you* get the points for doing Dr. Lucky in, not the person who actually did the deed.)

Hit Points: 10

Muscle: 4
Break Down Door: 4
Climb: 4
Fight: 7
Pick Up Heavy Thing: 6
Throw: 6

Zip: 3
Dodge: 3
Drive Vehicle: 3
Fire Gun: 6
Jump: 3
Ride: 3
Run: 6
Swim: 3

Smarts: 3
Hide/Spot Hidden: 3
Identify Dangerous Thing: 3
Read: 3
Resist Fast-Talk: 4
See/Hear/Smell: 9
Set/Disarm Trap: 5
Track/Cover Tracks: 3

Chutzpah: 4
Fast-Talk: 6
Pass/Detect Shoddy Goods: 6
Sleight of Hand: 6
Sneak: 5

Shticks:
Hypnosis: 5

Mrs. Off-White

Mrs. Off-White checked that the coils of the vacuum cleaner's hose were loose, turned the vacuum on, and sat down cross-legged. She pulled out a snake-charmer's flute and began to play a thin, reedy tune. The hose of the vacuum cleaner rose up and began to sway back and forth sinuously before eeling forth towards Dr. Lucky.

The tinkling notes of a passing ice cream truck entered the room. The change in music caused the serpentine vacuum cleaner to pause for a moment, shake its nozzle in puzzlement, and turn back towards Mrs. Off-White. As the vacuum began to suck her inside, she beat at its nozzle frantically, trying to avoid the imminent perils of Snake-Charmed Vacuum Cleaner Damage.

Mrs. Off-White has been the housekeeper for Dr. Lucky for many years. Long ago, she had an illegitimate son by Dr. Lucky. The son was given up for adoption, and finally returned to the place as Mr. Lime. Her husband Chef Olive suspects Mr. Lime of being her lover.

Mrs. Off-White has been embezzling from the household accounts for many years. Dr. Lucky suspects this, and is about to dismiss her with a poor recommendation. She fears that she would not be able to get another job at this point- and she's willing to kill him to keep him from firing her.

Mrs. Off-White wears a lace cap and apron. She carries a vacuum cleaner (1d6 damage) and a duster (Boggles the target).

To play Mrs. Off-White:

* Dust obsessively. Dusting other players will Boggle them.

* Clean obsessively-and you never know what you might find while you're cleaning, so be sure to clean under beds and couches, and anywhere else something might be hidden.

* Throw a cream pie at something-but clean it up later.

Hit Points: 10

Muscle: 2
Break Down Door: 3
Climb: 2
Fight: 8
Pick Up Heavy Thing: 4
Throw: 5

Zip: 5
Dodge: 5
Drive Vehicle: 5
Fire Gun: 7
Jump: 5
Ride: 5
Run: 7
Swim: 5

Smarts: 3
Hide/Spot Hidden: 5
Identify Dangerous Thing: 5
Read: 5
Resist Fast-Talk: 4
See/Hear/Smell: 9
Set/Disarm Trap: 4
Track/Cover Tracks: 3

Chutzpah: 4
Fast-Talk: 6
Pass/Detect Shoddy Goods: 6
Sleight of Hand: 4
Sneak: 4

Inspector Gray

Inspector Gray smoked a moody, film-noirish cigarette as he contemplated the situation. Clearly, he was going to have to use a clever disguise in order to break this case. He rummaged quickly through his trench coat, and shortly reappeared with the appearance of J. Edgar Hoover wearing a diaphanous peignoir. He blushed fiercely and returned to his rummaging, reemerging once more in a lovely sequined jumpsuit as Elvis, the King of Rock and Roll!

He sauntered into the room with Dr. Lucky. "Hellooo, Dr. Lucky," he smiled. "Want my autograph?" Dr. Lucky eagerly agreed and produced his autograph book. Inspector Gray produced a lit firecracker to use as a pen and

magnanimously signed the book, taking care to let Dr. Lucky keep the pen.

As he handed back the pen, he was overwhelmed by a rampaging horde of teenage girls screaming "Elvis! Elvis! Elvis!" As he struggled woozily to his feet, Dr. Lucky said, "You forgot your pen, Mr. King of Rock and Roll, sir." He stared at the millimeters of burning fuse for an instant before the firecracker exploded, sending him through the ceiling and high into the stratosphere, where he exploded in a shower of Elvis Has Left the Building Damage.

Inspector Gray was raised in poverty. Eventually, he managed to make a living as a private detective. While on a case for Dr. Lucky, he discovered that he was really Dr. Lucky's twin, the unlucky dark-gray-if-not-black sheep of the family, who was separated at birth. He's jealous about that, and hoping to kill Dr. Lucky and disguise himself to take his place.

In the course of his investigations, Inspector Gray found some dirt on Professor Puce, and has been blackmailing Professor Puce about it. (The details of exactly what Professor Puce's dirty secret is are left to the players.)

Inspector Gray is a Master of Disguise. When he is not in disguise, though, he wears a gray snap-brim fedora and a gray trench coat. He carries a pistol (1d6 damage) and a bottle of booze. He smokes cigarettes constantly, no matter how he may be disguised.

To play Inspector Gray:

* Disguise yourself as someone else (possibly another character). (When Inspector Gray is disguised as another character, he can use the other character's abilities, with an additional free Quick Change/Disguise roll each time he does so.)

* Suspect everyone. Everyone is guilty of something, and it's up to you to find out what.

Hit Points: 10

Muscle: 4
Break Down Door: 4
Climb: 4
Fight: 7
Pick Up Heavy Thing: 4
Throw: 4

Zip: 2
Dodge: 3
Drive Vehicle: 2
Fire Gun: 7
Jump: 2
Ride: 2
Run: 5
Swim: 2

Smarts: 3
Hide/Spot Hidden: 3
Identify Dangerous Thing: 3
Read: 3
Resist Fast-Talk: 4
See/Hear/Smell: 9
Set/Disarm Trap: 3
Track/Cover Tracks: 3

Chutzpah: 6

Fast-Talk: 7
Pass/Detect Shoddy Goods: 7
Sleight of Hand: 9
Sneak: 9

Shticks: Quick Change/Disguise: 8

By Emily K. Dresner

Art by andi jones

It's three o'clock in the morning, and you've been sitting in this black, stinking sewer for the last several hours. But time doesn't hold any meaning for you -- and for that matter, neither does your electric bill, your rent, human contact, or even direct sunlight. Because it has come down to yourself, your small, mangy, yet proud group of adventurers, and the red dragon in the next room, which has been giving you fits all night long.

So after due consideration, and another bag of Doritos, you confer with your team, your cohorts in adventure, and decide that yes, everyone has their hit and magic points up to maximum. Now is the time to strike. Now is the time to see what you're really made of if you're really that 17th level Elven mage you claim to be or just another wanna-be. Now is the time to see if you can make that next level.

With sweat beading on your brow, your trembling fingers reach down to touch the hoary keyboard, the slickness rubbing between the pad of your finger and the plastic casing of the key. Your fireball spell is ready, and hotkeyed.

```
> e
> You walk east.
> A large cavern. The sides of the cave have been melted by intense
heat. Scattered about the floor are the remains of those foolish enough
to trespass. In the center of a room is an enormous pile of treasure,
the type which can be considered at the outside as "large".
> Exits: w
> You see a large red dragon.
```

Time to kill, or time to die.

The Online Experience

Welcome to the wild world of online gaming, where elves are elves, dwarves are dwarves, and that cute little adventuring partner with the big eyes is really a 300-lb. man in Albuquerque. Nothing is quite what it seems, and the world is definitely in character.

At the most basic, playing online games is about logging into a service or a server somewhere and playing a name in a computer game. This is reminiscent of the old Infocom games of yore: it is the same text-based game with the same generic interface, with a few bells and whistles added in for flavor.

But online gaming isn't just about reading text when it scrolls on the computer screen and occasionally responding to it like a part of a Pavlovian experiment. It's about logging into an entire world that has been constructed for the purpose of playing a character and being part of the electronic universe. It's about interaction with human beings in a

completely new universe that exists entirely in cyberspace.

In a tabletop, traditional roleplaying game, all of the players physically occupy a room, manhandling their dice and grinning maniacally. There is plenty of opportunity for talking out of character, interrupting game flow to get a bag of chips, or stopping a major climactic battle for phone calls from Mom. The game goes away at the end of the night, and doesn't resume until it's time to play again.

The online world is different; the online world is persistent. The game doesn't go away at the end of the night. When a player logs onto an online game, he's no longer himself, as he would be in the real world. He no longer has to affect a funny voice or talk with a strange accent to differentiate the character from the essential human being. The only information given to the rest of the electronic universe about the player is the character: a name, a set of descriptions, and any statistics it might be carrying around with it as baggage. The character acts as the player would wish the character to act, exactly as imagined in the player's head. Except in specific conventions built into the system for out-of-character reactions, every act, every pose, every bit of speech is in character. There is no perceptible break in the game when someone needs to get a sandwich, or answer the phone. Even when the player logs off the world to deal with their real life, the game world continues onward without end.

Immersive Roleplaying

The online world changes constantly. It's an evolving setting peopled with picturesque characters. There is no perceptible break between the world and the character -- the world is always there, and your character is ready to play. This lends itself into one of the greatest advantages of online roleplaying games: immersive roleplaying.

A player is immersed in the world when they begin to emotionally identify with the world and the reality the character inhabits. The difference between a roleplayer and a character who is immersed is like different depths of water. An immersed character might say:

"I am this character in this world."

While a roleplayer might respond with:

"I am this character who plays in this world -- which is a fantasy/medieval setting."

While there are chances for this in intense tabletop gaming sessions, it isn't as common. There is a difference between being able to say what your character does and being able to describe ever move, every comment, and every thought, and this influences play.

The biggest advantage to online gaming is the ability to get into the character's head in a way that is never possible in normal tabletop. It's taking the reaction to the world and the people that inhabit it to a whole new level of intensity. In tabletop gaming, it is rare that every move, every thought, every pose, every gesture or comment is played out in full. On the other hand, this is extremely common in online gaming. And since the responses do not need to be uttered instantaneously, there is time to sit and really think, "What would my character do?" These poses, especially in intense situations, are written out in full, with care.

As an example, here is character named Aleister, who is a mage in some unspecified system. He is facing a hostile mage, who is another player character. In a normal game, the conversation between two players might go something like this:

Jack, playing Dweezil, says, "Al, I have a personal problem with your inability to dress. What is the deal with the plaid pants, flower print shirt, and top hat? My god, what lack of taste."

Em replies, "Al takes this as a personal insult which requires retaliation. Aleister raises his hands and casts the spell of silly string at you." And then she reaches down to roll the dice to see if the spell of silly string does its damage.

The same exchange on an online gaming world would look something like the following:

```
> Dweezil looks annoyed, and then slightly disgusted. He says to
Aleister as he picks off bits of bright pink silly string from his Oscar
de la Renta designer tweed jacket, "Al, I have a real personal problem
with your inability to dress. Can't you even make an effort?"

> Aleister laughs evilly at Dweezil, and mocks him openly. He prepares
the spell of Raspberry JELL-O. With a wave of a hand and an arcane
incantation of the worst sort, Dweezil is suddenly doused. "Take that,
Bill Cosby boy."
```

As seen above, there is a definite difference in interaction between the two characters. The ability to truly express each pose and motion of the hand breathes life into the character in a way no face to face gaming can really simulate. The player has time to really put life and thought into the character's motions, their feelings, their opinions, and occasionally in the way they dress.

The player can even react to the world, when something occurs. And instead of simply saying it, they can do it. In conventional gaming, it might be:

Em says, in response to being told there is a troll in the room, "Al uses his Anti-Troll Device."

On the other hand, the online world is more immersive and colorful. The world might react more like:

```
> You walk out onto the large bridge. It looks stable enough, except
for the family of trolls which lives beneath it. Goats? Goats? Who
has time to find goats?
> Exits: nw se
> Contents:
> BigTroll

> BigTroll says "Rar. You'll be tasty marinated with a light barbecue."

> Aleister says "Hold on a second, don't eat me." At the same time he
fishes around in his pocket for the Troll Eradicating Twinkie.
```

Sometimes, this is considered to be cooperative storytelling, and takes the game one step beyond the conventional sense into really getting into the character's head.

The Other Advantages

Online gaming offers several additional advantages over traditional gaming. First of all, it gives access to those who would never be caught dead buying a copy of the newest, hottest sourcebook in the local hobby and comic book store. They come for the roleplay, not the rules or the system.

Another great advantage of playing online games over the traditional tabletop is that the game is available from any computer that can log into the net. Stuck at Aunt Martha's over Spring Break? Can't find players for your ***Vampire*** campaign? Can't sleep at 3am? No problem.

The game never goes away. Not even the most mundane play-by-post game disappears when there are no players about or the sun is just about to crest the horizon. Online gaming is a 24-hours-a-day, 7-days-a-week experience. Since the games are accessible to anyone with a connection, the largest and most active worlds are inhabited by people from around the world, so there is almost always someone on at all times of the night. It's a blessing for insomniacs.

Another advantage is the countless ways to play. From IRC to playing through email accounts, it is almost unlimited. It doesn't require any special access except for specific pay-for-play games; it doesn't require any magical hookup or any special clients (although in some cases these are recommended.) There are hundreds of worlds to join, and even more players out there looking for someone to game with. All it takes is a little bit of effort and voila, in no time a game is found and gaming commences.

Additionally, there is nothing in the real world to break the flow of roleplaying. When it's time to cast a spell, there is no scurrying around for dice, or looking up tables in a book, or trying to find damage charts. In many games, there is no game master present to maintain the rule set for the world. The programmed engine takes care of the maintenance of monsters, combat, and miscellaneous minor world needs. This is not to say there are no Game Masters -- there certainly are. These take the form of Gods, Bartenders, Wizards, and other arbitrators to maintain order, pronounce judgments, and keep the story going. Sometimes the GMs are major plot characters, charged with generating story line to keep the world moving.

The final big plus to online gaming is the simple fact that it's on a computer hooked up to the net. One can be, at the same time, reading email or reading newsgroups, or writing a paper for class. Additionally, the web is one giant encyclopedia and character details or technical plot points can be worked out with a few minutes with a search engine. The information needed to enact a voodoo ritual or figure out when Napoleon invaded Egypt is just a click or two away.

Disadvantages

Ah, but it's time to talk about the disadvantages. There has to be some sort of down side to all this great roleplaying and interaction with the fellow gamer. And there is a big one: addiction. This is not the casual everyday addiction to eating donuts or laying around in bed until the afternoon on a Sunday. This is the drug-like, ignoring-the-real-world, can't-remember-what-the-sun-is-except-when-it-rises-electronically, not-moving-from-the-computer-for-48-hours-not-even-to-hit-the-bathroom addiction.

Immersion takes its toll. There is a time when the player is so immersed in the world of his character that the world is all that matters -- not the computer, or the television, or the fact that someone just crashed through his front picture window with an SUV. Addiction can get so bad that the player has trouble deciding if he loves the real world better then the online community in which he has become a part. The player just doesn't want to stop. There's always someone neat to talk to and interact with, there's a part of the world that is unexplored, there is always another move to make in the online game, another fidget, another piece of plot. There is always something else, because just like the real world, the online world doesn't stop for the gamer when it's time to go away.

And frankly, it's much more enjoyable to be an online persona who is a 17th-level Elven Mage who can wipe out red dragons with the tap of the F9 key then it is to go to another day of work-induced drudgery. When the choices are

between being the head of Clan Talamar on an electronic world or being Joe Schmoe in the medical records department, the choice is simple: taking on the dragon wins every time.

This becomes even more of a problem when the player carries electronic gaming problems into real world relations. A story goes a bit like this:

"I came upon this little female elf thing, and I killed her and took all her equipment. Hey, I had just joined the guild of Really Evil People, and that was what they told me to do. A few days later I was at the local comic store playing mini's, and this huge guy with an odor comes stalking in demanding to know who played so-and-so. It was me, of course, but I shook my head no. He figured it out pretty quickly from the guilty look on my face. How was I supposed to know that he was playing the elf?"

People tend to take what happens to their characters a little far, especially when they can no longer separate reality from fantasy. All gamers are, to some extent, guilty of carrying over their gaming stories into real life. Who hasn't heard the story about when your best friend was the dwarf and you were the cleric and you stormed the impenetrable fortress 15 years ago? But this is beyond all that, this is when the player starts to believe they are the character, and takes every slight and every gaming reference personally.

What to do when this happens to you? Quit. Go do something else. It's not real.

And All Those Other Problems . . .

There are some other disadvantages which are less problematic than addiction but just as much of an annoyance as getting a phone call in the middle of a really big, important gaming scene.

For instance: in the middle of a really deep, important scene, the character has just posted a long, elaborate pose, filled with depth, emotion, and turns of words which would cause Shakespeare to weep. It was beautiful, it was fabulous, and then your lover replies with:

```
> Jon says "Kewl."
```

Talk about a great way to kill a scene. This occurs more time than one can count -- even using all fingers and toes. Occasionally, just to make things worse, the player has spent a half an hour preparing a long, graphic pose and something in the scene has killed it in the last second. Nothing kills a mood faster then poor grammar, bad spelling, or just really bad wording. And unfortunately, it happens all of the time. Sometimes this is merely typos, and a player has fat-fingered a key:

```
<< OOC >> Hitherby says, "*Belial*. Not Denial. Darn it."
```

In some media it is more common than others, but it plagues the online community like a virus with no cure. The only solution is to bone up on one's English language skills, and apply them. The golden rule applies here -- if the player wants people to hang around his character, he should learn to communicate in the medium he has selected.

And it isn't just the ability to communicate in a written sense that can be a problem. A game that is freeform, without any hard and fast rules can bring about its own crop of problems: powermongers and munchkins. For example, many MUSHes and IRC based games don't have hard coded enforced rules on combat, but will enact it through the use of poses and biting commentary. But the powermonger might take advantage of this. For example, instead of a pose that suggests an attack, the character will carry through the attack to the finish. So, using a standard character type, instead of:

```
> Dvar the Conqueror wields his axe and BO and grunts.
```

The character poses, instead:

```
> Dvar the Conqueror pulls out his axe, cuts through your defenses, and kills you.
```

Ouch. Now that isn't too enjoyable. But it happens, and it happens all the time. Dvar will argue that he's the most powerful man on the MUSH because he's, well, Dvar, and you should have known that before you told him that his mother looked like the bottom of your shoe. (Luckily for the community, there is someone in charge who can boot someone like this if it happens too frequently.)

This is also called playerkilling, the act where one player character kills another player character without the victim's consent. In general, this is a very wide and touchy subject in the online gaming community, and every single world and game has a different set of rules regarding this particular policy. Some worlds endorse it and encourage it through the use of assassin guilds and point boards to see who has killed the most, and some explicitly forbid it on the game and will treat all offenders with a permanent ticket right off the game. In general, most games fall in between, where playerkilling is appropriate if it is in context of the game but wanton playerkilling is frowned upon. The best thing to do before picking up a sword and cleaving through ever-weak, doe-eyed little elf thing in sight is to read the rules or ask one of those who are in charge of the game for the game policy.

You're Doing WHAT Online? -- Identity, Gender, and the Unspeakable

Yes, it's true. That girl you fell in love with on your MUD is really a guy. And not a young guy, either. His name is not Esmeralda, his name is really Harold. You're in shock.

The only thing that the community of players sees when they encounter a character on their online world is the name and the description of the character being played. Sometimes the character has no interest in revealing true-life details about the real human at the keyboard. This is not uncommon: The person at the keyboard is playing a character and they don't want to be bothered with real world detail.

With the ability to mask identity, someone is going to be playing a gender switch. While it is more common for a man to play a female character, sometimes women get into the act and do a little gender switching themselves. This is not, in fact, a sudden phenomena associated with the sexual revolution. Playing an online game is a freeing experience, which allows gamers to try out options that would not normally be available to them in a normal gaming situation. It is completely natural to try and find out what it is like on the "other side of the fence". Sometimes, the character in question is either looking for more attention, or wants to make it on their own in the world the hard way. Occasionally, the revelation that your fellow character is not who she claims to be, comes as a bit of a shock.

Sometimes, the game becomes more intense, real life emotion begins to creep into the environment, and relationships bloom. First comes the occasional dragon hunt on Friday night, or maybe the looting of a few treasure hordes on Saturday afternoon. Soon, one thing leads to another, and the characters are hiding behind bushes in the main downtown area, or are renting out some small, out of the way room in an inn for some activities of the more dubious sort. The unspeakable happens, and details are, as usual, left up as an exercise for the reader.

This is all part of the online experience: it's gaming taken to a new level. It's an important part of being online, and being part of the game. But it's neither a surprise, nor a rarity. It all happens, and it's all more common than one would think.

Options

By this time, those who are still interested in playing and have survived the pitfalls are asking the most important, the essential question: How the heck do I do this?

Luckily, there are many ways of getting online, and it's all relatively simple. Most of the information is posted on the web.

PBEM and PBP

Called "Play by Email" and "Play by Post", these the easiest to access. All that is required is either a functioning email account for PBEM or web/Usenet access for PBP. They work very simply: someone sends out a posting and the players respond to it, much like a progressive story. For example, the game might be full of gritty cop scenes, and the sequence of postings might look something like this in email:

John writes:

```
> > The perp comes running out of the building, armed with a customized,
loaded, fully automatic AK-47. He has the coke shakes going on, and it's
clear that he's loaded down with drugs. He opens fire at the passing
cars.
```

George writes:

```
> Greg Stannish whips out his police issue .45 S&W and kneels behind
the brown '88 Oldsmobile with the cracked back window. He yells, "Halt!
Police! Put down the gun and step back!"
```

PBEM runs anything from online cooperative story writing to large, multi-player ***Risk***-like games to chess. They run the entire gamut of types of games that are available, and there are mail lists or web pages dedicated to finding players.

IRC

Short for "Internet Relay Chat", this is the replacement for the old CB radio operator networks of the past. Spanning giant networks with dozens of servers and thousands of users at any one time, IRC is very large -- although there are much smaller, private IRC networks that run on only or two servers. Access to IRC is almost always through a client, a small piece of software that accesses the game and formats the text. This might be a text-based client with few features or a graphical client with user lists and options available on pull-down menus.

IRC is a huge collection of private rooms, called "channels," which are dedicated to various topics, from government politics to religion to gaming. There are two kinds of gaming on IRC: pub-based gaming and private channels.

Pub-based is a 24-hour, 7-days-a-week game which is run like a normal channel. It has operators who maintain order and a constant stream of players wandering on and off at all hours of the day. Often, there is a secondary channel for combat, an automatic dice-roller, and a few other scripted perks via the channel's resident robot. The game is real-time, and the activity can scroll quickly.

Private channel gaming on IRC is quite a bit like tabletop gaming. Everyone decides on a meeting place and a meeting time. There is a robot that facilitates dice rolling and character sheets. One person, the operator, is the GM and controls the game much like a normal game master. With other online gaming, the players have a chance to work out their poses and put their emotions into the game.

For example, IRC gaming looks quite a bit like this:

```
* Aleister sits down at the back most table.
 Hi.
 Hey. I'm looking for some intelligent discourse and
commentary on Hemingway's "The Sun Also Rises".
* LadyVixen gets up and moves to a different table.
```

Additionally, there are IRC-like chat rooms that are available for both AOL and Compuserve. Both of these provide the same services as IRC-based gaming.

MUDs

This stands for "Multi-User Dungeon." MUDs have been around for a long time. The first one went live before 1980, called MUD1, and they've been running strong for over 20 years. From the first MUDs, they've broken off into dozens of derivations, from LPMud to AberMUD to Diku.

They offer a complete world with themes that vary from MUD to MUD -- everything from fantasy to science fiction to heroic. These are concentrated on hack-and-slash roleplaying, where the world and the NPCs are all part of the automated environment. There are literally hundreds of MUDs available for play at any time, of all different sizes, landscapes, and feel.

While effort has been put into the games in the last years to make them more roleplaying intensive by adding in guilds and quests, the game still revolves around killing a monster, getting gold and experience, and trying to climb levels to the point of becoming Immortal. On most MUDs, becoming Immortal allows the player to contribute to the building of the world.

Gaining access to a MUD requires straight telnet access, or the use of a client. The address of a MUD looks something like:

```
telnet lego.mcit.med.umich.edu 4000
```

The game becomes much like a text-based adventure game, with descriptions scrolling over the screen and the opportunity to go questing with various different people from all over the world.

```
> Midgar Town Square
> You are in the middle of a large town square. It is tiled with cobble
stones, and framed with flower beds. All around are shops. Streets
stretch out in all directions.
> Exits: n e s w
> Contents:
> Mara
> George
> Town Guard
> A large lance of DOOM!
> George says "Mara, did you kill the troll under the bridge?"
> Mara says "Not yet."
```

MUSH/MUCK/MUX/MOO/MU*

From the original MUD base came dozens of derivations, including roleplaying intensive worlds. Based on TinyMUD, these are called MUSHes, short for "Multi-User Shared Hallucination." Without a combat system or automated NPCs, these games are based entirely on the setting, with the characters taking a part in the world. The biggest difference between a MUD and a MU* derivation is the ability for any player to start creating their own homes, artifacts, and items without having to become a Wizard. Wizards also take on a different role: instead of being administrators who occasionally deal with troublemakers, hand out starting equipment, and build on areas, they are now Gods, Kings, rulers, and major characters which drive the plot of the game and keep the MUSH in motion.

These games are the biggest roleplaying bang for the buck and offer dozens of themes: from the land of Pern to Robert Jordan's *Wheel of Time*, to ***Amber Diceless,*** to various White Wolf based MUSHes. Often, these games require a character submission before being allowed onto the game.

Access to a MUSH is not much different then accessing a MUD. In this case, because of the nature of the game, a client is highly recommended. Without a client, one can telnet straight to the game:

```
telnet hoopy.foo.com 2477
```

Much like the MUD above, the interface is the same graphical text adventure with the scrolling text. The difference is in the game engine, which is character based instead of monster and object-based. But the general player mechanics are very close to those of a MUD.

```
> Aleister balances his top hat on one hand and his cane in the other.
He grins at Dweezil. "I see you're not looking any better. I hear milk
of magnesia helps."

> Dweezil gives Aleister a withering glare.
```

There are many derivations of the original TinyMUD engine, and most of these are simply in feel and usability of the game. A few engines have been tweaked for different purposes -- PernMUSH has been written explicitly for Pern, for example. Some derivations are:

MOO -- MUD, Object Oriented
MUCK -- Multi-User Chat Kingdom
MUSE -- Multi-User Shared Environment
MUG -- Multi User Game
MUX -- Multi User eXchange

Specialized Services

There are many services out there which host online games, but many of these are "pay for play" services, including TEN (Total Entertainment Network), and Kali. Included in this catch-all topic are games like ***Ultima Online*** from Origin Games or Meridian 59 from 3DO which require accounts. These bill either by flat rate or by the hour. Also, there are services, like BattleNet, which require a paid for product, in this case by Blizzard Games, but is free for use.

Not all of these games that fall out of the normal categories are "pay for play." There are many specialized chess games, new action games like ARC, and dozens of casino games which are free.

Helpful Links

Presented here are a handful of helpful links to get started gaming immediately. **WebRPG** -- A play by post hosting service, along with gaming bulletin boards, online community, and basic online eZine. http://www.webrpg.com.

Mud Connector -- The Internet's single best source for MUD based information. Thousands of links, 1000+ MUDs annotated, FAQs, clients, and mud reviews. http://www.mudconnect.com.

DALnet -- One of the most popular IRC networks, along with EFFnet and UnderNet, which supplies nickname and channel services. http://www.dal.net.

TUCOWS -- Source to links, with ratings, to all the interactive net software. Includes not only MUD/MU* clients and IRC clients, but clients for chess games, online war games, and other goodies. http://www.tucows.com.

Emily K. Dresner is a long time online gamer -- 9 years. She has been everything from a plebe on the streets of Midgar to a MUD Administrator.

by Francis K. Lalumiere

Methuselahs have a wide array of instruments at their disposal. Sitting far above mere mortals, they pull the strings of entire armies of vampires and wield powers born from Darkness itself. But even for such beings, sometimes there's just no substitute for the mindless efficiency of a sawed-off shotgun. Every job requires its tool. So should you decide to walk the weapons way, there are a few things that need to be considered before jumping into the fray.

VTES: Arms Dealer

Getting 'Em

Stuffing your deck full of weapons will only get you so far. Methuselahs know of much more subtle ways. In you're playing Brujah, *Al's Army Apparatus* is a safe bet, as is *Arms Dealer*, for both of them will let you go through your library and quickly obtain a weapon. But other clans still have options left. The Ravnos, for example, can maximize their savings by using *Ravnos Cache*, thaumaturgists can use *Magic of the Smith*, and *Vast Wealth* will work for anyone. In times of dire need one may resort to the *Terrorists*, but since they're limited to the Assamite and can only fetch you a bomb, I'd throw in one more *Vast Wealth* instead.

Using 'Em

Ranged weapons must be treated differently than melee weapons. You'll usually want to use melee weapons in conjunction with aggravated damage, thus increasing your chances of burning a vampire in combat. To that end you might want to equip such vampires as *Basilia* (Gangrel), *Samantha* (Gangrel Antitribu) or *Lambach* (Tzimisce). Also, *Dawn Operation* could come in handy. If you plan on Celerity letting you pile additional strikes up to the ceiling, a *Bastard Sword* or *Bang Nakh-Tiger Claws* will make you happy. Otherwise I'd go for the *Gas-Powered Chainsaw*. It helps to always keep one of those move cards close by in case your opponent decides to walk away from a good fight. If you're playing Nosferatu, *Storm Sewers* becomes a very interesting asset, despite the stench; for Brujah, *Brujah Debate* offers a nice combo in one card (+1 hand damage and an optional maneuver).

Since ranged weapons should ideally be used at long range in order to protect the weapon-wielder himself, the idea here is to get moving. If you don't manage to equip vampires like *Don Cruez* (Brujah), who can move on their own, *Patagia* and *Shadow of the Beast* will nicely complement the standard move cards. My favorite, ultimate weapon user, is *Cailean* (Nosferatu Antitribu) who can set the range at the beginning of each round of combat. *Flash* is another favorite of mine -- two cards in one, it lets you choose between maneuver or press (or possibly both!). Now there's a great variety of ranged weapons among which to choose, from the *Deer Rifle* with its 2 maneuvers each combat, to the *Assault Rifle* with sheer power; combined with strike-adders, this last one's a real terror. Weapons like the *Bomb* and the

RPG Launcher aren't bad, but their narrow use makes playing them a delicate task. Be careful, and count your fingers after each use.

Using 'Em Again

You'll want to get the most out of your weaponry, and some tricks might help you. Since your weapon user will most likely often be on the front line, cards like *Blood Doll* or *Gird Minions* will let you supply him with the blood he needs; or use *Sermon of Caine* to have another vampire share the burden. If all else fails, *Heidelburg Castle Germany* will allow you to throw your tools of destruction into the hands of a healthier vampire -- and while you're at it, you could use *Black Cat* (a Brujah vampire) as an entry point for your weapons, first equipping her at reduced cost, and then transferring the goods to anyone else via *Heidelburg Castle*. Your Prey is usually easy to get to; but don't forget that, no matter how well armed you are, in order to use your Predator as practice target you have to be able to stop him from going through -- stealth can be an incredibly annoying twitch here. So if your clan is running low on Auspex, crank up the volume of *KRCG News Radio*. Since repeated use of weaponry in combat is highly effective, presses are a must; cards like *Mob Connections or Trap* will do nicely if you don't use a "built-in press" vampire like *Appolonius* (Brujah) or *Marty Lechtansi* (Nosferatu).

Surprises

A Methuselah's old bag o' tricks is never really empty. Cards like *Claws of the Dead* or *Body Arsenal* allow you to really get down to business with one of your melee weapons, while the various "rounds" cards (supplying your guns with different types of ammo) let you push your ranged weapons to their limits. *Psyche!* and *Akram* (a Brujah vampire) start a whole new combat -- which means, in the case of weapons that only inflict damage once per combat, that your vampire has had time to reload. *Backstab* offers you a much welcome first strike, *Taste of Vitae* is regeneration in a can, and *Fame* can wreak havoc -- especially if you place it on your own weapon-heavy vampire: since he'll be in the line of fire more often than not, your Prey may start to sweat blood, sometimes going so far as to defend the *fam*ous vampire to avoid his falling into torpor at a bad moment.

VTES: Disguised Weapon

A few words of wisdom before we let the lead fly. *Disguised Weapon* is **the** card here; beware of the dreaded *Peace Treaty*; and please forget *Zip Gun*.

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Of Course You Realize This Means . . . Wiz War!

by Chad Underkoffler

From far down the long hallway that seemed to run half the length of the complex, the Blue Wizard sneered at the Red Wizard. "Surprised to see me? Didn't take me as long to break out of that walled passage as you thought it would, right?"

"Talk is cheap." The Red Wizard hunkered down defensively. "Hit me with your best shot."

"All right." The Blue Wizard threw down his cards, sending a spell howling down the hallway! "Medusa, 5, Add, 4, Amplify, Amplify!" His laugher rang from the concrete walls. "That's 36 lost turns, sucker!"

The Red Wizard smiled politely. "I think not. Full Reflection." The card lay face up on the table.

The blue Wizard threw his final card down with a flourish. "Anti-Anti! Beat that!"

***Gulp!** The Red Wizard pawed through his remaining cards . . . Nothing! Nothing at all! With a groan, he asked the Blue Wizard, "How many turns was that again?"*

In college, I loved ***Wiz War***. Some of my friends preferred ***Illuminati*** or ***Cosmic Wimpout*** if the weekly RPG game got axed. But for my money, it was always ***Wiz War*** . . . even during the non-RPGing weeknights. No fuss, no muss, no problem. There was no more than a two minute set-up time, and it only took five minutes to teach someone how to play. It all fit in this little brown box: sectors, counters, cards, and even a pad and pencil I tossed in there. And it was **fun**.

Wiz-War is a game for 2 to 4 players (more if multiple game sets are combined) that is played with a gameboard made up of individual playfield sectors; cardboard counters for wizards, treasures, and objects; a single 8-sided die,numbered from 1 to 4; and numerous cards that represent spells, counteractions, and tools. The goal of the game is to either be the first wizard to drop two treasures (other than your own) onto your home square, or be the last wizard standing. In trying to achieve these goals, you must defend your own treasures while bedeviling your foes. It's an easy game to learn, and is great fun -- especially figuring out the twisted logic of what happens when a spell is cast and/or counteracted!

But why was it fun? The nifty counters, the world-wrapping, the funky sectors, the back-stabbing camaraderie in three-handed or more games . . . all these helped make the game to me, but the kicker was the spell cards. You could play combinations of cards to whomp on your opponents, help your buddies, change the terrain, and even defend yourself. Coming up with killer combinations, like the truly scary one in the story above (my friend Mike Hill was the Blue Wizard in that little fiasco, three guesses who the poor sap playing the Red Wizard was), waiting to draw that perfect arrangement of cards to coalesce so that you could crush your foe **and** slap down his attempts to avoid his fate was lots of fun.

And I have to say, untangling the webs of spells and counteractions was vastly amusing. A particularly skillful play would be analyzed, debated, and adjudicated in conversations that were utterly perverse in their verb forms. If I counteract your counteraction, and you play a further counteraction upon *my* counteraction, which happens first? There were a slim handful of occasions where my courses in Symbolic Logic came in handy, I must say. How often do you

get to brag about that in the Real World?

Better yet, my friends and I spent fun evenings coming up with new cards of our own and adding them to our games. Like *Gluestone*, which allowed you to pick up one object without ending your turn. Or *Create Door*, which either created a door in empty space, or replaced a section of wall with a door (which was very handy, especially when your foe walled you off in a little section of the board: walls had 20 hp, doors only had 15 hp. And if you had the Master Key, you were home free anyway.) Or even *Barf* which . . . well, it's better not to go there. We were young, stupid, and punchy from pulling all-nighters. Or something.

But it was fun, I say again, running all the changes on the available cards that you could, matching wits with your opponent. In many ways, this sort of card-based spell-weaving was the basis for my initial interest oh-so-long ago in CCGs. I mean, what is ***Magic: The Gathering*** except ***Wiz War*** without the board and with more cards? Okay, that might be stretching it . . . but there are enjoyable similarities between the two games, for those familiar with both.

Of course, the "collectible" aspects of ***M:tG*** and other sorts of CCGs is what eventually turned me off to them. There were too many cards, and it came down to if you were willing to spend the money on boosters or individual cards to get the good ones. The real fun of ***Wiz War*** was working with the limited set of cards. Getting that number 5 or Full Shield or Power Run was all luck, rather than cold hard cash, and since you knew all the cards, you knew how to deal with them. Even though we added some new ones, it was the regular group of ***Wiz War*** players that determined if a card was good enough to get into the deck. And believe me, several that we came up with didn't pass muster. And I think this is a core point.

We were all interested in enhancing the game and the common deck. We weren't building our own individual decks to beat up on the other guys; we were working together to add enjoyment and interest to our common deck. Heck, at one point, we had seriously considered collecting some cash and having Kinko's duplicate the sectors and counters we had onto cardstock so that we could have a larger playing set, not limited to just 4 players. But, as we were poor college students -- operative word being "poor" -- that never came to pass. But it was all about boosting everybody's enjoyment of the game.

That's really what I think is at stake with a good "beer & pretzels" game: mutual enjoyment. Caring more about a good time than about winning. I mean, look at the astounding goodness of all those Cheapass Games out there now; they're all about fun. And isn't that a lesson we can take with us, from board games back into our CCG groups and our RPG groups? Fun -- especially the mutual fun of the group -- is king.

I still have the old brown box with my (3rd edition?) rules sitting on my shelf. I've been thinking of taking it to my gaming group's next session, and playing a game for nostalgia's sake. But I guess I won't, for you see . . .

. . . one of my buddies in my gaming group has the latest edition.

Wiz War Websites

The publisher: Chessex.
The product pages: Tom Jolly's Wiz War Page
The FAQ
A brief review.
Some amusing cards.

Providence . . . Hero Style!

by Joe Kushner

Art by Dan Smith

The ***Providence*** roleplaying game is an interesting twist to the standard RPG in many ways. The setting is kept almost completely separate from the rules system in the core books, and in supplements like ***The Ecology,*** the statistics are moved to an index in the back and don't appear in the main text at all. This means that it's easy to use ***Providence*** with other game systems without losing the flavor of the setting.

For those gamers who are interesting in converting characters from ***Providence*** to ***Hero*** or ***Fuzion,*** the following ideas will help keep the flavor of the ***Providence*** game world while providing system advice to the fans of the other games. This article assumes that the reader is at least familiar with the ***Hero*** system, or ***Fuzion,*** and is using the ***Providence Main Rule Book*** for conversion purposes. For those only using the ***Providence Main World Book,*** no conversions are necessary,since that book keeps gaming stats to a minimum, anyway.

Stats

Providence uses 0 as its average stat. ***Hero*** uses 10, while ***Fuzion*** has a range of 1-4, depending upon the task involved. This can make things a little difficult when making conversions. A good rule of thumb would be that for ***Hero,*** multiply the number of the stat by 3 and add the base 10.

For instance, a ***Providence*** character with a Strength of 3 would have a ***Hero*** Strength of 19. GMs should adjust this to reflect the character's background and personality. For instance, if the character is not a powerhouse, the Strength can be lowered to 18. If the character is extremely strong however, GMs should raise it to 20. This is because ***Hero*** uses increments of three and five for STR to determine damage, and smart players always maximize their stat levels -- it's rare to see a ***Hero*** character with 21 STR.

For ***Fuzion,*** GMs have two options. If running a higher level game, simply multiply the number by three and add one. This gives someone who has a Strength of 3 in ***Providence*** a Strength of 10 in ***Fuzion.*** For those who want lower-level games, multiply the number by two and add one. As a final option, GMs can convert the strength to ***Hero,*** and then depending upon the result, divide that number by three or five. This is the normal conversion process presented in ***Champions: the New Millennium.***

As a last note, these conversions are only for characters who do not have their stats altered by a super ability. For those abilities, see the section on converting powers.

Basic Stat Conversion

Providence	***Hero***	***Fuzion***

Strength	STR	STR
Constitution	CON	CON
Coordination	DEX	REF/DEX
Willpower	EGO	WILL
Psyche	PRE	PRE
Intelligence	INT	INT
Appearance	COM	Not Used
Charisma	PRE	PRE
Perception	Secondary Stat	Not Used
Aura	Not Used	Not Used

Secondary Characteristics

Body	***Body X 1.5***	***Secondary Stat***
True Body	Not Used	Not Used
Endurance	End	End
Wird	End	End

In ***Fuzion,*** GMs may wish to add Perception or Aura to the game. If this is done, don't forget to add more character points so that the players don't have to sacrifice other stats. Perception in ***Providence*** is equal to a standard Intelligence test in the ***Hero*** system, unless the player has increased the character's perception. In this case, for each component of Perception above zero in ***Providence,*** increase the character's Perception roll by +1 in ***Hero.***

For those stats that are secondary, GMs should use the system's rules to decide what the stats are instead of doing a conversion. In addition, for those GMs wishing to make Wird special, he can require the players buy an END Reserve that they can only use to fuel Wird spells and powers. As an additional limitation for -1/4, GMs can rule that the END Reserve cannot make any recovery while being used. The character must stop using the power in question and take an action to recover. This would include post rec after phase 12.

Providence Traits

Abnormal Appearance: This translates in Distinctive Features in ***Hero***, and ***Fuzion***.

Absolute Sense of Direction: This is the Talent Bump of Direction in ***Hero***, and Direction Sense in ***Fuzion***.

Ambidexterity: This is the term used in both ***Hero*** and ***Fuzion***.

Bad Flyer: This would be considered a physical limitation for ***Champions*** worth 15 points, Frequently, Greatly. In ***Fuzion*** this would be a physical limitation worth 10 points, Frequently, Strong, and Major.

Behaviour: The list of Behaviours on p. 47 is an excellent resource for new ***Hero*** or ***Fuzion*** players. They translate straight into Psychological Limitations and Complications.

Caste Status -- Pure: This would be considered the Perk Member of the Aristocracy in ***Hero***, and Membership (in the Pure) for ***Fuzion*** with a Very High Impact modifier.

Caste Status -- Blessed or Gifted: This would be Member of the Lower Nobility for ***Hero***, and Membership with a High Impact modifier for ***Fuzion***.

Caste Status -- Fortuned or Redeemed: This is more of a roleplaying element than a cost element. It costs nothing in

Hero or ***Fuzion***.

Caste Status -- Fallen: This is a disadvantage worth 10 Points as a Distinctive Feature, No Wings, Concealable with Major Effort, is noticed and recognizable. If the game has a Caste War, the value will raise to 15 points, and the GM should remove "is noticed" and replace it with causes major reaction or prejudice. The Point value and explanations are the same for ***Fuzion***. (See pg. 119 of CNW under Social Complications.)

Caste Status -- Exiled: This is a disadvantage worth 15 Points as Reputation, Exile, Almost Always, 14 or less. The same point value for the ***Fuzion*** game system.

Combat Reflexes: This can be done a few different ways in ***Hero***. The first is the Talent Fast Draw. The second is from Dark Champions p. 31, Extra DEX "Only Works to Act First in a Phase" for a -1/2 limitation. In ***Fuzion***, this can be done as Combat Sense.

Contact: This is a Perk in both ***Hero*** and ***Fuzion,*** and the cost will depend on how powerful the contact is, how often the contact can be called up, and the degree of success that such contacts will bring.

Deep Secret: This can be a Psychological Disadvantage/Complication in ***Hero***/***Fuzion***, or it can be a Mystery Disadvantage that only the Game Master knows about.

Double Jointed: This goes by the same name in ***Hero*** and ***Fuzion***.

Enemy: This is a Hunted in ***Hero*** and an Enemy in ***Fuzion***.

Enhanced Sense -- Sight, Hearing or Smell: This is bought as Enhanced Senses in both ***Hero*** and ***Fuzion*** for the sense in question. Those with very high Enhanced Senses will have more bonuses to their Perception roll.

Good Flyer: To achieve this effect, consider the individual to have levels with Flight. Most would have at least +2 levels with Flight for doing special moves and outclassing their opponents.

Heavy-Boned: This would be a case of buying up the Body Stat.

High/Low Pain Threshold: In ***Hero***, this can be simulated by buying extra CON, "Only to prevent being stunned" for a -1/2 limitation. The player may also wish to buy the Resistance Talent. For Low Pain Threshold, this can be a Vulnerability, x2 from PRE attacks that are based on the threat of pain. For ***Fuzion***, this can be the High Pain Threshold Talent. Use the Vulnerability in ***Fuzion*** as well.

Impaired Sense: This would be a physical limitation whose point total would depend on how serve the limitation is.

Light Boned: In ***Hero*** and ***Fuzion***, this would require the individual to sell back some Body.

Light Sleep: This is the Light Sleep advantage in ***Hero*** and ***Fuzion***.

Literate/Illiterate: In both ***Hero*** and ***Fuzion*** this is done through the skill languages. It is not a standard skill in the ***Providence*** campaign and must be purchased as normal.

Military/Police Rank: This is a Fringe Benefit in ***Hero*** that will vary depending on the rank the character wants. Most individuals would have the standard 2-point Local Police Powers, while a few might have three points with Federal/National Police Powers. For ***Fuzion***, this can be Membership, Military, with the point cost depending on how high-ranked the character wishes to be, and what role he wishes to play.

Missing Limb: This is the same in both ***Hero*** and ***Fuzion.*** The point total will vary depending on the limb missing, and how much the character is affected by the loss. For example, an individual missing both hands in ***Hero*** gains 25 points. If he has the ability to summon magical hands however, this would be reduced to 10 or even 5 points depending on the difficulty in summoning the hands.

One Eye: In Champions, this is worth 5 character points and is a Physical Limitation. This is a Physiological Limitation in ***Fuzion*** worth 15 option points.

Phobia: This is a Psychological Complication in ***Fuzion*** whose worth will vary with the intensity of the Phobia. In ***Hero***, this is a psychological limitation.

Photographic Memory: This can be taken as the Talent Eidetic Memory in ***Hero*** or ***Fuzion***.

Poverty: This is the same in ***Hero*** and ***Fuzion***. The amount of points depends on the amount of Poverty taken. For example, in ***Hero***, one can be Destitute for 10 points, or merely poor for 5 points.

Reputation: This is the same title in ***Hero*** and ***Fuzion***. The amount of points depends on how often the character is recognized.

Secret ID: This goes by the same title in ***Hero*** and ***Fuzion***.

Social Responsibility: In ***Hero***, this is best if bought as a Hunted who is Watching the character to make sure that he is doing what he is supposed to. In ***Fuzion***, this is a Responsibility. The DM and player must decide what type of Responsibility this is and assign the points for it. For those in a military or police force, the Vow responsibility is an ideal model.

Speech Impediment: In ***Hero***, this would be a Physical Limitation worth 5 to 10 points. This is a Physiological Limitation in ***Fuzion*** worth varying amounts depending on the degree of the Speech Impediment. For example, someone who only has a stutter gets 5 option points.

Wealthy: This is a benefit that will vary depending on the level of wealth desired. In ***Hero***, this can be one of three ranges, Well Off, Wealthy, or Filthy Rich. In ***Fuzion***, it's one Point a level.

Wird Sensitive: This is bought as a Detect under the Enhanced Senses power group. The ability of the individual to detect Wird will determine the final cost. In ***Hero***, for someone who has to focus on the Wird to detect it, the cost would be a standard 3 points with a normal PER Roll taking half a phase. For another person whose Wird sense was stronger, it would cost a minimum of 5 points.

Detect Wird as a Sense: For someone whose ability to sense Wird was that of a master, it could cost 20 points.

Detect Wird as a Sense with Discriminatory Sense and 360 Degree Sensing: This individual would be able to sense Wird all about him and what type of Wird was being used without using an action. In ***Fuzion***, the cost would be 1 Power Point to be Wird Sensitive with a normal PER Roll and 1/per action, or 2 Power Points as a Sense, with the option to add both Discriminatory Sense and 360 Degree Sensing for an additional 3 points for a total of 4 points. The standard Wird Sense is Sense Wird, Ranged, 360 Degrees and Discriminatory.

Providence . . . Hero Style!

Providence Skills

Providence Skills are easy to convert to ***Hero*** and ***Fuzion*** because they so frequently go by the identical name. For example, Stealth is Stealth in all three systems. To convert the numerical levels, the ***Providence*** Main Rule Book p. 65 has a listing of what the numbers mean. That table is repeated here with a comparison to ***Hero*** and ***Fuzion***.

Providence	***Hero***	***Fuzion***
1 Amateur	8 Familiarity	1-2 Everyday
2 Journeyman		3-4 Competent
3 Professional	11 Professional	5-6 Heroic
4 Expert		7-8 Incredible
5 Master		9-10 Legendary
6 Grand Master	15 Super Human	9-10 Legendary

The ***Hero*** levels are based on the normal 1 point with a professional skill, to the standard 11 for 2 points, and to 15 for skills that have a Base roll which includes a stat at the normal human maximum that has also been bought up. The above are rough guidelines only, especially for the ***Hero*** system where a high stat may throw off the level of the skill in question.

Most of the section on Combat Manoeuvres for ***Providence*** can handled by the standard combat maneuvers in ***Hero***. For example, Combat Manoeuvres Dodge would be a normal Dodge in both ***Hero*** and ***Fuzion***. For those individuals who have martial arts with Combat Manoeuvres, these should be bought as Martial Arts maneuvers.

Providence Powers and Spells

For both sections here, the important thing is the Special Effect (SFX) of the powers. Each power is bought on a Tier level. These levels should correspond to 5-15 active points for ***Hero***, and 1-3 power point for ***Fuzion***. The exact point levels will vary with what GMs wants from their group. If they are playing a high fantasy, cosmic level game, then 15 points is the way to go. If not, then 10 is a rough average. Deciding what the SFX of the powers is especially easy as the ***Providence*** Power system is Based on Power Groups. For example, for the Sound-Based group, the list of powers is Sound Armour, Sound Blast, Sound Control, Sound Suppression. In a ***Hero*** game, GMs should allow characters to put most of these effects into an Elemental Control (EC), or a Multi-Power (MP). For ***Fuzion***, the characters lose the benefit of the EC, but still have the MP option.

In ***Providence***, any power bought outside the Power Group costs more. GMs can simulate this by forbidding the players to put anything outside the power group into an EC or MP. Some powers may be difficult for new players of ***Hero*** to translate, but the secret is in looking at the game effect of the power and finding the right advantages and disadvantages to put it into use. For example, Increase Density would be Density Increase, Usable by Others, while Decrease Density could be a Drain on STR, CON, or BODY. If GMs are feeling particularly evil, they may allow the players to buy the +2 advantage and have it affect *all* physical stats. This would limit the character to very low levels of Drain. On the positive side, some of the powers have great special effects which can add to the depth and feeling that makes ***Providence*** different from the standard superhero settings. For example, Body of Earth would make a character harder to damage as well as stronger. This could be bought as a small EC as follows:

EC Body of Earth
+6 STR
Armour 2rPD/2rED

For spells, the Distinction is an important part of the SFX. This should be reinforced to get the most from ***Providence's*** tone, and to reflect the different arts of magic. In game terms however, the spells are simply powers with different names. An important thing to remember is that in ***Providence***, Spells are powered by Wird. To simulate this, each spell caster must by an END Reserve with the limitation Can Only Receive Rec while resting for -1/4. Two rarely-used power modifiers in the ***Hero*** System are Variable Special Affect, and Variable Advantage. While this is a bit more difficult to use, it can provide a character with many different spells while allowing them all to have the same

base. To get the feeling of different abilities and different spell levels, GMs can allow the limitation only on a certain number of dice.

For example, say you want to create characters who can control fire to a fairly decent extent. By buying Variable Advantage, they can have a blast of flame, or an explosion of flame. This covers the standard spells like Fireball, and Bolt of Flame. In addition, as they gain in experience, you can buy up their fire attack. While the attack is still the same, the SFX can change depending upon how many dice they attack with. After all, there is no need to use the most powerful of fire spells, Immolation, if a simple Bolt of Fire will do the trick. You can keep an index card with the various names of their spells and how much dice of damage that each attack does at which levels.

In addition, if the same characters have the lesser Variable Special Affect, they can also have this ability with say, two or three elemental attacks. i.e. fire, ice, and water. If they have the full Variable Special Affect ability, they can have most of the spells in the category of their power. If they have an Energy Blast or a Killing Attack, they'll have all the spells such as Acid, Fire, Wind, Water, Sonic, or anything else they can think of.

To simulate some of the ***Providence*** feel, GMs should look over the Casting Time, as well as the Range and Duration of the spells. This would allow the players to customize the spells to the ***Hero*** system with a minimum of fuss. Some commonly used limitations should be Requires Extra Time, Continuing Charges, and Power Must be used at Full Force. The last limitation is worth -1/4 limitation and must be taken with all spells to reflect the nature of spells on ***Providence***. To reflect the spell levels of ***Providence***, GMs can add the limitation "Must have at least 20 points worth of spells" to higher level spells for a -1/4 limitation. This means most spells will have at least a -3/4 modifier to their final cost.

Another power that may be difficult for GMs to convert are stats that are modified by the power, Modify Characteristic (p. 119 of ***Providence Main Rule Book***). GMs should treat this like a power. The character will still have normal characteristics in most areas, but his modified characteristic will be superhuman. Some GMs who wish to prevent characters from abusing this power, may force the players to take some of the following limitations:

Does Not Affect Secondary Characteristics (-1/2)
For Lifting Purposes Only (-3/4)
Only For CV Value/Dex (-1/2)
Only to Go First/Dex (-1/2)
Only to Prevent Being Stunned (-1/2)

Otherwise treat this as a normal power. i.e. a Tier 1 STR enhancement may raise an individual's STR 5-15 points in ***Hero***, or 1-3 points in ***Fuzion***.

To round out the information for the ***Hero*** system, GMs will find the following ***Hero*** books very helpful:

Champions or ***Hero*** 4th Edition. Either one of these books is necessary to play ***Hero*** using ***Providence***. For those who want the statistics of medieval weapons and armour, this information can be found on p. 200, 202, 203, and 204. For those GMs who are using a ***Hero*** campaign, the special limitations for weapons are also on this page.

Ultimate Martial Artists. This book has more martial art maneuvers that can be added to the game. In addition, it also has specialized martial art weapons, as well as advice on how to construct your own martial arts.

Ultimate Super Mage. This book has dozens of spells and can be the ideal companion to a GM running a Super campaign with magic. For those interested in an older, out of print book that covers this ground, ***Mystic Masters*** is another excellent resource, if you can find it.

Fantasy Hero. For those running a more standard fantasy campaign, this book is a must have. It has more weapons, armour, package deals, and information that will add depth and options to the standard campaign. The section on spells is also more in keeping with a heroic campaign over ***Ultimate Super Mage.***

Hero Bestiary. This book is a great source for animals and monsters. It can serve as a book of examples to new GMs

who can change the names of races, and creatures; it can also be used as is.

by K. David Ladage

Have you ever noticed that two Hurloon Minotaurs cannot kill each other without magical intervention? Or that two Stone Throwing Devils will always slaughter each other without either having the chance to get the upper hand? Or that every plane of Dominia is exactly alike? Have you ever wondered why winning a duel of ***Magic: The Gathering*** has no effect on the next duel?

In this variation, these things might not be true. Things can get a little odd and the "Planes of Dominia" are as varied as the cards themselves.

These rules are written for small tournaments or leagues, but most of the rules and additions are independent enough to be used alone. So pick up some cards, build your deck and prepare yourself for *war*!

Not to Be Taken Lightly

This is not a single evening's entertainment!

Due to the nature of these rules, each round could take several hours to complete. In fact, the rules were originally designed for each round to take one week. This means that very large groups can be hard to accommodate. It's recommended that the league have no more than 15 players.

For example: On Saturday everyone gets together, the "challenge cards" are filled out (see below) and the challenges are announced. The players have until Friday to build their decks, schedule and complete their matches. The following Saturday everyone gets together to see the results and fill out the "challenge cards" for the next round.

The Guardian of Dominia

First step in holding a "War of Dominia" League is to select the "Guardian of Dominia" (or G.O.D.). The G.O.D. is the rules judge and arbitrator. He establishes the ground rules, sets up the league and for obvious reasons doesn't participate.

Some questions the G.O.D. will have to answer before beginning league play are:

* Is the card mix closed ("sealed") or open ("bring-your-own")?
* What cards are restricted? What cards are banned?
* What card sets and expansions are legal?
* Are sideboards legal?
* Are proxies legal?
* Are the ante rules (or any variation on the ante rules) being used?
* What rulings and special "house rules" will be used?
* Is the "Radical Planar Constants" chart (below) being used?

Mapping the Multiverse

Before play begins, the G.O.D. will need to map out the multi-verse . . . but don't panic! This is not as difficult as it sounds. The map should be drawn on hex paper with the hexes large enough to hold several pieces of information.

Step 1: Compare the number of players with the chart below to get the size of map needed for the league. The chart is based on the fact that there must be at least seven hexes available for each player.

Players	Map Size
2	4x4 (16 hexes)
3	5x5 (25 hexes)
4-5	6x6 (36 hexes)
6-7	7x7 (49 hexes)
8-9	8x8 (64 hexes)
10-11	9x9 (81 hexes)
12-14	10x10 (100 hexes)
15-17	11x11 (121 hexes)
18-20	12x12 (144 hexes)

Step 2: Label the map so that each hex has an "address." For example: a 12x12 map could have the letters A-L along the side and the numbers 1-12 along the top. The addresses would then run A-1 through L-12.

Step 3: Each hex on the map represents one "plane" in the multi-verse of Dominia. Roll 1d6 on the chart below for each plane to determine its "terrain." Mark or color-code them with the resulting terrain codes.

Roll	Terrain Code	Color
[1]	Forests (F)	Green
[2]	Islands (I)	Blue
[3]	Mountains (M)	Red
[4]	Plains (P)	White
[5]	Swamps (S)	Black
[6]	Special (X)	Special

Step 4: In random order, each player chooses a plane. This is the player's "home plane" and counts as the first of his "controlled planes." These should be marked as such. No two home planes may be adjacent.

Step 5: In random order, each player chooses an additional controlled plane. This plane must be adjacent to one the player already controls. If no adjacent planes are available, then the player may choose any uncontrolled plane. Repeat this step until each player has seven controlled planes.

Step 6: Remove the terrain marking from any uncontrolled planes that remain. These planes become Voids (V) and should be marked as such. A Void may never be controlled.

The "Map of Dominia" is complete!

A couple of suggestions: Glass beads are available in many colors. If each player selects a different color, these can be used to mark controlled planes. Small personal items (such as lead miniatures) make excellent markers for home planes. Using these, the only information that needs to be marked on the map are the terrain codes.

Confiscate

The War of Dominia

Now that the battle lines have been drawn players can get on with the war. Rounds begin with the declaration of challenges. Each player fills out a challenge card with the following information:

* Name
* The name of the player being challenged
* The address of the challenged plane

The G.O.D. gathers and shuffles the challenge cards. The G.O.D. draws them one at a time and checks to ensure that each challenge is legal. A challenge is legal if:

* The attacking player controls at least one plane adjacent to the challenged plane.
* Neither player is involved in another challenge this round.

After every card is drawn and checked, any player not involved in a challenge fills out another card. Players that cannot make a legal challenge do not have to fill out a card. The cards are gathered, shuffled and checked as before. Repeat this process until all players are paired up or no legal challenges remain.

When all legal challenges have been exhausted, "long distance challenges" are made. The players fill out challenge cards, this time only writing their name. The cards are gathered, shuffled and drawn as before. The player whose card is drawn first becomes the attacker, challenging the player whose card is drawn second and so on. The defenders of the long distance challenges choose which of their controlled planes is the challenged plane. They may not choose their home plane unless it is the only plane they control.

If a single player remains unpaired, he receives a bye for that round.

The Decks of Dominia

Deck construction rules in a "War of Dominia" League are not quite the same as the standard "Tournament Legal" specifications. The general rules of deck construction are listed below. Any rulings of the G.O.D. supersede these guidelines.

* The minimum size of a player's deck is 125 cards minus 5 for each plane the player controls. This has a lower limit of 40 cards. For example: Andy controls 9 planes so his minimum deck size is (125 - 45) 80 cards. Beth controls 18 planes and so her minimum deck size is (125 - 90) 35 cards -- this is below the lower limit so her minimum is adjusted to 40 cards. There is no maximum deck size. The more planes you control, the smaller (and more powerful, if you're doing it right) your deck!

* A player may use any color or combination of colors in his deck provided he controls at least one plane of the associated terrain adjacent to the challenged plane. Additionally, the defending player may use the color associated with the terrain of the challenged plane. For example: Andy is being challenged in the mountains and controls two adjacent planes (forests and islands). Andy's deck could be any combination of red, green or blue. Beth challenged Andy and controls three planes adjacent to Andy's mountains (forests, islands and swamps). Beth's deck could be any combination of green, blue or black. Beth could not, however, include red in her deck, because Andy still controls the mountains she is challenging.

* A player may only include artifacts and/or non-basic lands in his deck if he controls at least one plane of the terrain type Special adjacent to the challenged plane. Additionally, the defending player may include these cards if the

challenged plane is of the terrain type Special.

* A player defending his home plane ignores the above restrictions. He has a minimum deck size of 40 cards and may use any card not banned by the G.O.D.

* The attacker in a long distance challenge may use any color in his deck, but may not use artifacts or non-basic lands.

Keep in mind that requirements for decks are decided by the challenges they serve. Therefore, decks cannot be constructed until challenges have been presented.

The Duels of Dominia

Archivist

A duel in a "War of Dominia" League is played much the same as a standard duel of ***Magic: The Gathering.*** The steps for completing a challenge are listed below, but these are only suggestions. Any rulings of the G.O.D. supersede these guidelines.

[1] Calculate the starting life values for each player.
[2] Generate the Planar Constant for the duel.
[3] Play the duel.
[4] Repeat steps 2 and 3 until the challenge is settled.
[5] Report the results to the G.O.D.

[1] Calculate Starting Life for Each Player

A player starts a duel with 3 life for each plane he controls. A bonus of 5 life is granted to the player who won the last duel of the current challenge. No player may start a duel with less than 10 life or more than 50.

A player defending his home plane ignores this rule and starts with 50 life.

[2] Generate the Planar Constant for the Duel

A Planar Constant is a rule that is in effect for the duration of a duel. This rule cannot be ignored, turned off, canceled or affected in any way.

To apply this rule, each player rolls 1d6. These dice are combined into a d66 with the attacker being the "tens" place and the defender being the "ones" place. The resulting two-digit number (11-66) is compared with the "Planar Constant Chart" corresponding to the terrain of the challenged plane.

[3] Play the Duel

Play the duel as normal, taking into account the variable of starting life and any Planar Constants. If sideboards are allowed, cards may be swapped out after the Planar Constant is set for that duel.

During any given duel, no player may accumulate a life total more than twice his starting life value. A player starting with 30 life can successfully cast a 90-point monster "Stream of Life," but he will not go over his limit of 60 life.

Optional: Once a player reaches his life limit, each point of excess life will remove one poison counter he has accumulated. If the player has accumulated no poison counters, then the excess life is lost.

[4] Repeat Steps 2 and 3 Until the Challenge is Settled

The challenge is settled when a player has won two duels. A new Planar Constant is generated for each duel. Do not forget the bonus of 5 starting life for the player that won the last duel.

[5] Report the Results to the G.O.D.

The results of the challenge are written on the challenge card. Each player signs the card and returns it to the G.O.D. The winner of the challenge takes control of the challenged plane. The G.O.D. tallies the results and the next round begins.

When a player loses control of his home plane, he is out of the tournament. All other planes he controlled become Voids. The tournament ends when only one player remains.

Planar Constant Charts

[F] Forests

11-36 -- No Planar Constant.
41-42 -- All Green creatures gain +1/+1.
43-44 -- All Green creatures gain Protection from Black.
45-46 -- All Green creatures gain Protection from Blue.
51 -- All Green creatures gain Trample.
52 -- All Black creatures lose -2/-0.
53 -- All Blue creatures lose -2/-0.
54 -- All Red creatures lose -1/-0.
55 -- All White creatures lose -1/-0.
56 -- All players may place two lands into play per turn.
61 -- At the beginning of his turn, each player rolls 1d6. On a 1-3, the player gains a second untap phase just before cleanup. On a 4-6, there is no effect.
62 -- At the beginning of his turn, each player rolls 1d6. On a 1-3, the player gains a second upkeep phase just before cleanup. On a 4-6, there is no effect.
63 -- At the beginning of his turn, each player rolls 1d6. On a 1-3, the player skips his upkeep phase this turn. On a 4-6, there is no effect.
64 -- Roll on the Mountains chart.
65 -- Roll on the Plains chart.
66 -- Roll on the Special chart.

[I] Islands

11-36 -- No Planar Constant.
41-42 -- All Blue creatures gain +1/+1.
43-44 -- All Blue creatures gain Protection from Green.
45-46 -- All Blue creatures gain Protection from Red.
51 -- All Blue creatures gain Flying.
52 -- All Green creatures lose -2/-0.
53 -- All Red creatures lose -2/-0.
54 -- All Black creatures lose -1/-0.
55 -- All White creatures lose -1/-0.
56 -- A player may counter any spell by spending 1 life.
61 -- Any time a player casts an enchantment, roll 1d6. On a 1-3, the spell is countered. On a 4-6, the spell is cast normally.
62 -- Any time a player casts a sorcery spell, roll 1d6. On a 1-3, the spell is countered. On a 4-6, the spell is cast normally.

63 -- Any time a player casts a spell, roll 1d6. On a 1-3, the spell is countered. On a 4-6, the spell is cast normally.
64 -- Roll on the Plains chart.
65 -- Roll on the Swamps chart.
66 -- Roll on the Special chart.

[M] Mountains

11-36 -- No Planar Constant.
41-42 -- All Red creatures gain +1/+1.
43-44 -- All Red creatures gain Protection from Blue.
45-46 -- All Red creatures gain Protection from White.
51 -- All Red creatures gain Rampage: 1.
52 -- All Blue creatures lose -2/-0.
53 -- All White creatures lose -2/-0.
54 -- All Black creatures lose -1/-0.
55 -- All Green creatures lose -1/-0.
56 -- All lands come into play tapped.
61 -- During the untap phase, roll 1d6 separately for each land. On a 1-3, the land does not untap. On a 4-6, the land untaps as normal.
62 -- During the untap phase, roll 1d6 separately for each creature. On a 1-3, the creature does not untap. On a 4-6 the creature untaps as normal.
63 -- At the beginning of his turn, each player rolls 1d6. On a 1-3, the player skips his untap phase. On a 4-6, the turn proceeds as normal.
64 -- Roll on the Forests chart.
65 -- Roll on the Swamps chart.
66 -- Roll on the Special chart.

[P] Plains

11-36 -- No Planar Constant
41-42 -- All White creatures gain +1/+1.
43-44 -- All White creatures gain Protection from Black.
45-46 -- All White creatures gain Protection from Red.
51 -- All White creatures gain Banding.
52 -- All Black creatures lose -2/-0.
53 -- All Red creatures lose -2/-0.
54 -- All Blue creatures lose -1/-0.
55 -- All Green creatures lose -1/-0.
56 -- Players may redirect damage done to creatures they control to themselves.
61 -- Players roll 1d6 during their upkeep. On a 1-3, the player gains 1 life. On a 4-6, there is no effect.
62 -- Players roll 1d6 during each player's upkeep. On a 1-3, the player gains 1 life. On a 4-6, there is no effect.
63 -- Players gain 1 life during each player's upkeep.
64 -- Roll on the Forests chart.
65 -- Roll on the Islands chart.
66 -- Roll on the Special chart.

[S] Swamps

11-36 -- No Planar Constant.
41-42 -- All Black creatures gain +1/+1.
43-44 -- All Black creatures gain Protection from Green.
45-46 -- All Black creatures gain Protection from White.
51 -- All Black creatures gain First Strike.

52 -- All Green creatures lose -2/-0.
53 -- All White creatures lose -2/-0.
54 -- All Blue creatures lose -1/-0.
55 -- All Red creatures lose -1/-0.
56 -- All players may redirect damage done to themselves to creatures that they control. No creature may be dealt more damage that it has toughness in this way.
61 -- Players roll 1d6 during their upkeep. On a 1-3, the player loses 1 life. On a 4-6, there is no effect.
62 -- Players roll 1d6 during each player's upkeep. On a 1-3, the player loses 1 life. On a 4-6, there is no effect.
63 -- Players lose 1 life during each player's upkeep.
64 -- Roll on the Islands chart.
65 -- Roll on the Mountains chart.
66 -- Roll on the Special chart.

[X] Special

11-12 -- Change the order of the phases to discard, main, draw, upkeep, untap, cleanup.
13-14 -- Replace the discard phase with a second draw phase.
15 -- During the discard phase players must discard 1 card or lose 1 life.
16 -- At the beginning of the duel, roll 1d6. Players may skip their turn to gain this much life for the remainder of the duel.
21 -- Players may spend 1 life to regenerate any creature they control.
22 -- Reverse the definitions of First Strike and Trample.
23 -- Reverse the definitions of Rampage and Flanking.
24 -- Reverse the definitions of Flying and Banding.
25 -- Reverse the definitions of Landwalk and Landhome.
26 -- Reverse the definitions of Power and Toughness.
31-33 -- At the beginning of the duel, roll 2d6. Players must discard all cards in excess of this amount during the discard phase.
34-36 -- Remove from the game all cards discarded from a players hand.
41 -- At the beginning of the duel, roll 1d6. On a 1-3, add 3 generic mana to the cost of all artifacts. On a 4-6, subtract 3 generic mana from the cost of all artifacts. No artifact may cost less than 0 mana.
42 -- At the beginning of the duel, roll 1d6. On a 1-3, add 1 life to the cost of all artifacts. On a 4-6, add 2 life to the cost of all artifacts.
43 -- At the beginning of the duel, roll 1d6. Players may sacrifice an artifact for this many generic mana for the remainder of the duel.
44 -- At the beginning of the duel, roll 1d6. Players may sacrifice an artifact for this many life for the remainder of the duel.
45 -- Artifacts take on the color of all mana used to cast them.
46 -- All creatures in play lose their color and become artifact creatures.
51-52 -- At the beginning of the duel, roll 1d6. Players may sacrifice a land for this many life for the remainder of the duel.
53-54 -- At the beginning of the duel, roll 1d6. Players may sacrifice a land for this many generic mana for the remainder of the duel.
55 -- Players must pay 1 life to put a land into play.
56 -- During cleanup, all lands become tapped.
61 -- Whenever damage is dealt (combat, spells, fast effects, etc.) Roll Xd6 where "X" is the number of damage points that would normally result. Calculate the actual damage from the dice as follows. 1: 0 damage, 2-3: 1 damage, 4-6: 2 damage.
62-64 -- Whenever damage is dealt (combat, spells, fast effects, etc.) Roll Xd6 where "X" is the number of damage points that would normally result. Calculate the actual damage from the dice as follows. 1-2: 0 damage, 3-4: 1 damage, 5-6: 2 damage.
65 -- Whenever damage is dealt (combat, spells, fast effects, etc.) Roll Xd6 where "X" is the number of damage points that would normally result. Calculate the actual damage from the dice as follows. 1-3: 0 damage, 4-5: 1 damage, 6: 2

damage.
66 -- Roll on the Radical chart.

Radical

11 -- Whenever a creature enters play, place 1d6-1 -0/-1 counters on it.
12 -- Whenever a creature enters play, place 1d6-1 -1/-0 counters on it.
13 -- Whenever a creature enters play, place 1d6-1 -1/-1 counters on it.
14 -- Whenever a creature enters play, place 1d6-1 +0/+1 counters on it.
15 -- Whenever a creature enters play, place 1d6-1 +1/+0 counters on it.
16 -- Whenever a creature enters play, place 1d6-1 +1/+1 counters on it.
21 -- During their upkeep, players gain one Node token. Players may sacrifice a Node token to add one generic mana to their mana pool.
22 -- During their upkeep, players gain one Node token. Players may sacrifice two Node tokens to add one mana of any color to their mana pool.
23 -- During their upkeep, players gain one Node token. Players may sacrifice a Node token to add one generic mana to their mana pool or two Node tokens to add one mana of any color to their mana pool.
24 -- During their upkeep, players gain one Heart token. Players may sacrifice a Heart token to prevent one damage to any creature.
25 -- During their upkeep, players gain one Heart token. Players may sacrifice two Heart tokens to prevent one damage to any player.
26 -- During their upkeep, players gain one Heart token. A player may sacrifice a Heart token to prevent one damage to any creature or two Heart tokens to prevent 1 damage to any player.
31 -- The value of X in any X-spell (such as "Fireball") is 0. No mana needs to be spent towards the value of X. No mana can be spent to alter the value of X.
32 -- At the beginning of the duel, roll 1d6. The value of X in any X-spell (such as "Fireball") cannot be greater than this amount.
33 -- At the beginning of the duel, roll 2d6. The value of X in any X-spell (such as "Fireball") cannot be greater than this amount.
34 -- At the beginning of the duel, roll 2d6. The value of X in any X-spell (such as "Fireball") cannot be less than this amount.
35 -- At the beginning of the duel, roll 3d6. The value of X in any X-spell (such as "Fireball") cannot be less than this amount.
36 -- The value of X in any X-spell (such as "Fireball") is 6. No mana needs to be spent towards the value of X. No mana can be spent to alter the value of X.
41 -- Players may cast Sorceries any time they may normally use fast effects.
42 -- Players may cast Enchantments any time they may normally use fast effects.
43 -- Players may cast Summons any time they may normally use fast effects.
44 -- Double the casting cost of all Instants.
45 -- Double the casting cost of all Interrupts.
46 -- Double the casting cost of all Artifacts.
51 -- In addition to being a basic land, all Forests are treated as 2/2 Green creatures that cannot attack. These creatures are not walls and thus cannot be the target of spells or effects that only target walls.
52 -- In addition to being a basic land, all Islands are treated as 2/2 Blue creatures that cannot attack. These creatures are not walls and thus cannot be the target of spells or effects that only target walls.
53 -- In addition to being a basic land, all Mountains are treated as 2/2 Red creatures that cannot attack. These creatures are not walls and thus cannot be the target of spells or effects that only target walls.
54 -- In addition to being a basic land, all Plains are treated as 2/2 White creatures that cannot attack. These creatures are not walls and thus cannot be the target of spells or effects that only target walls.
55 -- In addition to being a basic land, all Swamps are treated as 2/2 Black creatures that cannot attack. These creatures are not walls and thus cannot be the target of spells or effects that only target walls.
56 -- In addition to being a basic land, all basic lands are treated as 2/2 Artifact creatures that cannot attack. These creatures are not walls and thus cannot be the target of spells or effects that only target walls.

61 -- Roll twice on the Forests chart.
62 -- Roll twice on the Islands chart.
63 -- Roll twice on the Mountains chart.
64 -- Roll twice on the Plains chart.
65 -- Roll twice on the Swamps chart.
66 -- Roll twice on the Special chart.

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Spice up your Robo Rally

by David Morgan-Mar

Art by Dan Smith

Robo Rally (Wizards of the Coast) is a rollicking board game with plenty of player interaction. The simultaneous movement of each players' robotic representative, governed by five player-programmed movement cards each turn, often leads to robots pushing each other off their intended courses and careening into the varied board elements. Some elements, such as conveyer belts, merely pull robots further off course, while others such as lasers and pits can damage or even instantly kill your poor robot.

With geomorphic boards, some 25 or so different board elements, and a slew of option cards, ***Robo Rally*** is already a varied and somewhat complex game. But one can never have too much of a good thing! The basic robot movement mechanic can be applied to a variety of other scenarios beyond the standard "flag race" game, board elements can be modified, and other changes can be made to make the game as enjoyable for 2-3 players as it is for a larger number.

Variant Game Objectives

Double Flag Race

You can use the extra flag markers from the ***Armed and Dangerous*** expansion (or simply make your own) to increase the length of the race. This works especially well with players grouped into teams of robots or either of the team options for small numbers of players presented below. In such a race, robots must touch both the flags numbered 1 before moving on to the number 2 flags, but the order in which flags of the same number is touched does not matter. This can result in robots taking extremely varied routes across the boards as they strive for the optimal order in which to touch the flags.

Another option is to allow robots to touch either of the number 1 flags before moving on to the number 2 flags. Each robot only has to touch half the flags to win, and different robots may choose different flags, depending on what route seems best to the player.

Fisticuffs in the Factory

Forget the flags . . . go for the kill! Every robot for itself can degenerate into uneven "gang-up" scenarios, so try this option, adapted from a popular ***Magic: the Gathering*** group variant. Each robot will have a target robot (for convenience, controlled by the player on its player's left) and be the target of another robot (the player on the right). Whenever a robot is eliminated, no matter who was responsible, the player targeting that robot is awarded a point. That player now targets the next robot around the table to the left, and if it is eliminated next, scores another point. This scoring method ensures players try to kill other robots in a strict sequence, and try to prevent the untimely deaths of robots targeted by other players. The winner is the player with the most points, not necessarily the last robot left alive. If a tie-break becomes necessary, the last robot alive can be awarded a half point.

You can play this with either the traditional three lives, which can take some time, or a more cut-throat version in which there are no archive copies. Since eliminated players are forced to sit out for the remainder of the game, playing a few cut-throat games is preferable to a single long-winded one.

Scavenger Hunt

Scatter a few tokens around the factory, marked in such a way that you can distinguish relative point values. Poker chips make good markers. Robots pick up the tokens by entering the same square and score the points by carrying them to an archive site. If a robot is destroyed or powers down, it drops all the tokens it is currently carrying in the last square it occupied. Other robots can push a powered-down robot out of the way to pick up dropped tokens. The winner is the one scoring the most points. This works best with an even spread of point values for the tokens, say from 5 to 10 points, avoiding the possibility that a robot can guarantee a win by picking up the only 100-point token.

RoboBall

Be prepared for a long afternoon's gaming with this one. Assign the robots into two teams, starting at either end of a rectangular factory set-up (assume an initial archive site of any square on that end of the factory). Place a "ball" marker in the middle of the factory and let the teams try to pick it up and carry it to the opposite end of the factory. Assume that once a robot touches a loose ball, it has possession of it until it dies or powers down, at which point the ball becomes free in the last empty square it occupied. Soccer fans can assume robots push the ball around instead of picking it up. This works best if you have access to multiple copies of the same boards and can make the factory symmetrical. Score to 3 points or more, depending how long the pizza money lasts.

Variant Board Elements

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Flag Conveyers

Normally flags may not be placed on conveyer belts. The race can be made considerably trickier by violating this rule. Flags on conveyer belts follow the normal conveyer belt motion, and can also be pushed by pushers in the appropriate phases. Flags are not destroyed by crushers or lasers, and if a flag ever falls off a conveyer belt, it should be replaced at its original starting position. This is to avoid the flag becoming a static object, potentially with gouts of flame bathing it every second phase.

If that sort of thing takes your fancy, of course, allow flags to be placed in flamers, lasers, on opening pits, or anywhere else potentially dangerous and watch the robots approach them very, very carefully indeed.

Scrambling Radiation

Introduced in the ***Radioactive*** expansion, radiation normally damages robots, and radioactive waste damages and mutates them (represented by the drawing of option cards). Unfortunately, this can encourage martyrdom, so that the next archive copy of a robot appears loaded with options and becomes virtually unstoppable. For a more subtle effect, based on the assumption that radiation will scramble circuitry and interfere with a robot's programming, try the following variant:

Radiation: At the end of each phase, any robot in a radiation square shuffles its program cards down one slot (towards the phase 1 slot) and places the phase 1 card into the phase 5 slot. This happens whether or not any registers are locked. (So a clever player can change the contents of locked registers through cunning manipulation.) At the end of each turn, any robot in a radiation square takes 1 point of damage.

Radioactive Waste: This operates in the same way as radiation, except it causes 2 points of damage at the end of the turn. Or make it nasty and cause a point of damage every phase.

The effect of this is that a robot spending an entire turn in radiation executes their program in (original) order 1,3,5,2,4. Any robot which spends some phases in radiation may end up executing the same card in two different phases, and never executing another. Players can use this to their advantage, executing the same valuable Move-3 card twice, for example, while avoiding a useless turn. However, when robots got pushed into or out of radiation, their entire phase sequencing can get messed up, resulting in mayhem the likes of which have never been seen on the factory floor before!

Laser Lunacy

Turn your factory into a mirror maze by placing matchsticks diagonally across a few selected squares. Robots can see each other and fire lasers around corners using these mirrors. Trace lines of sight as if both sides of a mirror are reflective. Assume that squares with mirrors in them cannot be moved into, or make the mirrors mobile and let robots push them around. Mirrors on conveyer belts and gears can also move around, creating all sorts of havoc.

It is not clear from the official rules whether laser fire is teleported by portals, or simply passes straight through the portal square. Try it both ways.

Variants for Few Players

Robo Rally works better when more robots are on the board. When you can only muster two or three people, playing teams of two or even three robots each is a good way to increase the on-board interaction. The team concept can be applied to any game objective -- the question is how does the team work?

Separate Robots

The simplest choice is to treat each robot as an individual, with robots on the same team merely controlled by the same player. Deal separate hands of program cards and track damage and options individually. It is usually best to have as many starting archive locations as there are members of each team, and for one robot of each team to start at each location. Note that robot team-mates can accidentally shoot each other!

When robots are on the same team, it may be possible for either robot to touch a flag. So you can send one robot to flag 1, while your other robot heads for flag 2. As soon as the first robot touches flag 1, the second can touch flag 2, and then they can head off for flags 3 and 4.

Shared Program Hands

More interesting is to program all your robots from a common pool of program cards. A starting hand of 12 cards for two robots (or 18 for three) works well. With so many cards, it is usually easy to program one of your robots to make pretty much an ideal move. However, this leaves you with only seven less-than-optimal cards to program your other robot. Of course you can try to make both of your robots' programs as good as possible, but you often find yourself wanting to scavenge a card you've already earmarked for your other robot.

Since damage reduces your number of program cards, this variant requires a degree of damage sharing between robots. Record the damage suffered by each robot separately. A point of damage to either robot results in the loss of a card. When two points of damage have been taken and you are down to ten cards, the next point of damage -- to either robot -- will lock a register on that robot. If a robot's archive copy is activated, the copy comes on with two points of damage, any number of which may lock registers depending on how damaged the other team member is. Powering down and healing damage at archive sites only affects the damage assigned to the robot involved.

Shared Programs

In this variant you only get a single, normal-sized hand of program cards, and all your robots execute exactly the same program. This requires some clever manipulation, since often the move that sends one robot towards a goal sends another into danger. You will find that running into walls becomes a useful tactic. Damage is shared on a global level. Damage to either robot reduces your hand, and damage beyond four points locks registers that affect all robots. Bringing an archive copy into play (as will happen frequently) clears the global damage except for the mandatory two remaining points. Powering down affects all robots at once, so you can't use this as a method to keep one robot safe while another executes a program.

Other Ideas

Not really in the category of variants, these are just a few tips on increasing the fun in your ***Robo Rally*** games. One of the best things you can do to this end is to paint your miniature robot figures. It's amazing how many people still play with bare metal gray robots. For about the cost of one of the board-only expansion sets you can buy a beginner's set of acrylic miniature paints and a brush. Give your robots a thinned down white undercoat and then pick out some of the features in bright colors and a couple of hours later you will have a much more appealing game. If you are not keen to try your hand, see if a friend or someone at your local gaming club can do the job for a small fee.

More enthusiastic modelers may relish the idea of enhancing the boards themselves. Start by gluing the boards to half-inch thick pieces of wood, cut to size. Then drill out the pits and leave gaping holes for your robots to fall into. The multi-level boards can be cut apart and mounted on different levels. Stick on some vertical walls. This level of detail is not too hard for an experienced gaming modeler. And if you happen to work for Industrial Light and Magic, please feel free to install working miniature conveyer belts and lasers, as long as you invite me over for a game when you're done!

by Matthew Rossi

Art by Dan Smith

Would you want to be a polar bear in Texas during the summer, free to do nothing but stare with thinly veiled contempt at the corpulent humans around your tiny wading pool?
Free the bear.
Revelations I: Night Music, p. 104

This is a short adventure for the ***In Nomine*** game, intended for use with two to four players, possibly beginning a campaign. This story ranges from Texas to Rhode Island, and will be easiest to involve players who A) either care themselves about animals or who play Angels who would, or B) are Servitors of Jordi, who will then ask them to get involved, in that delightful way Archangels have of asking for things. This game could also be played by Soldiers of God or Saints with little variation, other than adjusting the level of the opposition.

Background

This all started with the San Antonio Zoo.

Jordi, having had enough of the cruelties inherent in the polar bear exhibit, asked a favored servant of his to free it. Rior'n Gar, or Ranger nowadays, was more than happy to oblige his Archangel, and within days of the request, he'd managed to steal a refrigerated truck, kidnap a veterinarian, and talk a group of buddies he'd made from all over the U.S. into assisting him with the Great Bear Robbery, as he'd begun to refer to it. (Feel free to run this if you'd like. If not, it will just be assumed that the players met Ranger at that time, and were along for the ride.)

After successfully stealing the bear from the zoo, Ranger then had to run a gauntlet of various police agencies in order to get the bear to Austin, whereupon he managed to give the bear to Soldiers of God in the direct service of Jordi, who planned to smuggle it back north in a few days. Feeling rather grateful, he then took the various celestials who'd helped him with his caper out for a solid three days of partying (those that were up for it) and otherwise expressed his gratitude. Then he was off, to do Jordi's bidding again.

This time, however, things didn't go nearly as well. Ranger was sent to Rhode Island, a state teeming with far more celestial activity than it needs, to free a family of wolves from the Roger Williams Park Zoo. Jordi was concerned with rumors that the local zookeepers were tormenting the animals, and wanted to stop it. Ranger was just up for another wild ride.

That was the last time anyone heard from him. In the past two weeks, Jordi has tried to find him, but as yet cannot. His Heart still exists, but has gone cold and unfocused, and the Archangel is angry. Jordi wants his servant back, Jordi wants those wolves freed, and Jordi wants to know who had the nerve to tamper with either of those orders.

Enter the players again: at this point, they already know and like Ranger, so it shouldn't be that hard to get them involved. Servitors of Jordi will, of course, be asked to help their Superior out. Servitors of other Archangels will be a

little tricker, of course . . . Yves and Novalis won't have a problem with their servants aiding Jordi, and as almost no other Archangels are hostile towards the Archangel of Animals, it's not hard to justify almost any Angelic help on the grounds of "attempting to sway Jordi to my way of thinking."

What Really Happened to Ranger

Ranger made the mistake of waltzing into Rhode Island without scouting out the area first. Currently, the entire state is in the middle of a Celestial War between three factions. These factions are:

The Children of Narcolepsy. A group of demons who serve Fleurity, the Children are a recent dot on the map. They hold the west side of Providence, but most of their power comes from the burgeoning drug corridor along Rt. 95, rolling right through the heart of the state. Central Falls and Falls River, MA are also favorite places to stop and regain some Essence while also doing some business with their mortal connections.

The Triad. Three Word-Bound angels, working in concert to maintain the status quo. Providence was originally named for God himself, and various demons would find it an amusing slap in the face to drag the environment down to their level. The Triad is determined to prevent that. They like to work behind the scenes, controlling the local politicians, heads of various agencies, and even a few organized crime figures.

Typhonioi. These demons come from various masters, but their current leader is Arandal, a Baron of Dark Humor. Most of the Typhonioi prefer vessels that are hideously deformed by human standards, and they take their name from an old, probably dead monster of legend.

Ranger had no way of knowing, when he got to the zoo, that there were so many Celestials in Rhode Island: Neither the Children of Narcolepsy nor the Typhonioi know anything about the other, and the Triad is only peripherally aware of either group. Also, none of them are particularly close to Jordi. When Ranger arrived at the zoo, he spotted Mareth, a Balseraph in service to Valfeor. And unfortunately for him, he got a six on his Check Digit roll, immediately determining that Mareth was a Balseraph. Ranger attacked, and no doubt would have killed Mareth, had not the zoo's security staff, recently Oathtaken Soldiers of Hell bound to Vapula, interfered. Confronted with seven Soldiers of Hell and a Balseraph, Ranger was convinced that the entire zoo was an Infernal Tether (it's not, but you can forgive him for making the mistake), and he tried to escape without killing the Soldiers, fearing the disturbance that would make in the Symphony.

He didn't make it. The combined efforts of the Soldiers, Mareth, and his Calabite buddy Harissa, managed to beat Ranger into unconsciousness. (Harissa was attracted to the fight by the noise just hurting the Soldiers made in the Symphony.) Then Mareth asked Arandal, an old friend of his, for the Dog Collar, an artifact that the Typhonioi often used to punish recalcitrant demons by cutting them temporarily off from the Symphony. Arandal liked the joke.

Ranger is currently trapped in the body of a dog, and is only able to access 5 forces (3 Corporeal, 2 Ethereal) but he is not truly a Remnant. If the players can find him, they can free him from the Collar, allowing him to regain access to his true, celestial nature. Which will mean that a pissed-off Malakite will be gunning for Mareth and Harissa . . .

The Road to Rhody

Prelude -- The Great Bear Robbery

Several techniques are possible here: recommended is an *in media res* approach, basically just slapping the players down inside the cab of the truck along with Ranger or in back with the bear and Dr. Maria Estancia, the vet Ranger "persuaded" to come along for the ride.

The truck is ten minutes south of Austin when several Texas Rangers catch up with them. They'll immediately begin ordering it to pull over, firing warning

shots, and if that doesn't being them results, aiming for the tires. (Use the Soldier of Hell stats at the end of this adventure, minus their second Celestial Force.)

Ranger is up for suggestions. His plan is to step on the gas as hard as he can and hope to out-drive the cops. (Truth be told, he's kind of enjoying this.) He'll only insist that the players try not to hurt the policemen. ("They're just doing their jobs as best they can figure out. Not their fault their brains've been rotted out of their heads by TV.")

Assuming the players come up with a non-lethal way to escape the police, Ranger will eventually stop the truck along a secluded street in the area of St. Edwards University. Unless the players can somehow help, he'll totally forget to make sure that Dr. Estancia can't make a commotion, which will summon a security car making its rounds. (One way to prevent this is to convince Dr. Estancia, who loves animals, that this is best for the bear. Make the players roleplay that out.) Assuming someone reminds Ranger or takes the initiative, he'll unload the bear and attempt to convince it to come with him up the sidewalk and into a nearby house. However, the bear is hot, cranky, motion sick and not in the mood, and will attempt to escape unless (yet again) the players intercede in some way.

Once the bear is convinced to play along, Ranger will lead it up the sidewalk and through the front door of a large gray house. There's a sign on the wall next to the door that reads "Morrison Animal Shelter." Inside are waiting Evelyn and Steve Washington, a friendly African-American couple in their sixties. Both of them are Soldiers working directly for Jordi, with connections to half a dozen animal rights organizations. They'll explain that they have contacts who can smuggle the bear out of Texas and back to the Arctic. For now, they've got the backyard kennel set up as a makeshift habitat, cooled to freezing and emptied of all other animal life.

Ranger, exhausted and jubilant, will then offer to take the players out on the town. GM's who own ***Night Music*** can run a series of encounters in Austin, or just skip ahead to Jordi contacting the players after Ranger's disappearance.

When the players arrive in Rhode Island (Since they're probably angels, it is assumed that this isn't that big a problem for them. If it is, Jordi will get them there somehow.) they'll probably want to go directly to the zoo. Once they get there, if any Kyriotate attempts to take an animal vessel, inform them that there are no free animals of any kind in the park . . . a very unnatural state of affairs. The zoo's animals are all terrified of any celestial, as their only experience with them has been with servants of Kobal or Vapula. In short, the zoo is well on its way to becoming an Infernal Tether. While this isn't an easy thing for even Celestials to just notice, they will be able to tell how small, shabby and ill-kept the place is. Also, several of the zoo keepers are armed.

Exploring the zoo will just be more depressing. Each cage is full of animals who look mangy, ill-fed and anxious. Any Servitor of Jordi will hear horror stories from any animal he is capable of questioning. Eventually, after circling the zoo once, they'll spot the Wolf Habitat, tucked away in the back of the place behind a large brass statue of a golden retriever.

The wolves are every bit as ill-fed, tremulous and panicky as the other animals. But, unlike the other animals, the wolves witnessed the fight between Ranger and the Demons and Soldiers. There are various ways to get this

information from them . . . the Ethereal Song of Tongues, or one of the angels being a Malakite of Jordi, or whatever else it takes. Also, the handler of these animals, Davis Wilcott, is a Soldier of Hell who took part in that fight. He will be eying the players, his right arm in a cast and his face beaten up badly, trying to decide who they are and what to do about them.

If the players just attack Wilcott or use Songs indiscriminately, they have a chance of alerting the other six Soldiers of Hell who work in the park, as well as Mareth and Harissa. However, if they can pass themselves off as demons, they can convince him to tell them what happened. (There are a number of other options . . . let them explore them.) If it turns into a melee, the other Soldiers will be there to back up Wilcott in two minutes -- which might be two minutes too late to stop the players from learning what happened.

If the players do convince Wilcott that they're new demons from out of town, he'll happily tell them all he knows about the local celestial scene. He's very aware of the Typhonioi, and has heard a few rumors about the Children of Narcolepsy. He's completely uninformed of things on the angelic side of the street, other than what every Soldier of Hell learns about them. He'll also tell them all about Ranger's humiliation at the demons' hands ("I usually don't get you guys' jokes, but this one . . . it was really funny!") and explain his own role in it.

After learning what happened to Ranger, the players will still have to find him, a task complicated by the fact that Mareth and Harissa let him loose in the park in order to stalk him at their leisure. Searching the park will lead the players to one of three possible locations where Ranger could be, at the GM's choice.

The Temple of Music

On the banks of the fake pond that dominates the center of the park, this pseudo-Grecian temple squats surrounded by a marshy shore. The park was originally designed by Frederick Law Olmstead, and the Temple is just one of many examples of a deviation from his plans. Made out of whitewashed cement, it is crudely wired for sound and lighting. However, despite all that, the Temple is one of the most popular sites in the park, and it is fairly close to the zoo's western entrance. Servitors of Eli might like it, and it is one of the few sites in the park untainted by the Infernal.

Betsy Ross' House

Supposedly connected to the Betsy Ross who sewed the first American flag (The staff of the house itself is fairly unclear as to just *how* they are connected), this house is near to the zoo as well, on the eastern side. There are large bushes and trees surrounding it, making it a good hiding place.

Lafayette's Statue

Commissioned to commemorate the French General's visit to the state during the Revolutionary War, the statue is in the wildest part of the park, where small animals and the occasional wild cat or dog have been known to make themselves at home. The statue isn't particularly well kept. The area is also a know make-out spot for local teenagers.

Finding Ranger

It will probably be easier for the players to find either Mareth or Harissa than it will be for them to find Ranger, who currently is as mundane a dog as ever was. (It is this very problem that has kept Ranger out of the demons' hands these past few weeks.) Mareth, who had been enjoying his little joke of stealing Ranger's identity, is now frustrated that a damn *dog* has been evading him all week, and he's using his Song of Charm on every dog he sees. Harissa, for her part, has been absolutely useless for finding the Malakite . . . she has the Tracking skill, but even transformed, Ranger knows it better. The players may stumble upon them beating the bushes in search of Ranger and attack, especially if they already know their role in his predicament.

However, Ranger hasn't forgotten his objective, either. Despite the haze that's keeping him from using his full abilities, in the base of his doggie brain he knows that he has to free the wolves. Thus, he's been keeping an eye on them . . .

and so he'll probably be there when the players arrive. At first he'll run off, confused and scared by his inability to remember exactly who they are, but he'll definitely decide to keep his eyes on them. They may notice him following them, or perhaps even have gained the information from Wilcott without violence and free him from the Collar then and there. If they do, he'll want to go find Mareth and Harissa, and then free the wolves as he'd originally intended.

To Be Continued?

Afterwards, the players will have several options. Depending on how they acted in the zoo, they may or may not know about the situation in Providence. They will definitely have an angry Malakite on their hands, and he'll be agitating to just set all the zoo animals free and burn the damn thing to the ground. A persuasive PC will probably be able to talk him out of that . . . but there's no way he'll leave without freeing at least the wolves. The players will definitely have the gratitude of Jordi if they save Ranger and free the wolves. From there, the players can either depart or decide to investigate the situation in the city.

NPCS

Davis Wilcott

(Use his stats for the other Soldiers of Hell)

Corporeal Forces -- 2 Strength 3 Agility 5
Ethereal Forces -- 2 Intelligence 6 Precision 2
Celestial Forces -- 2 Will 1 Perception 7
Status -- 1
Skills -- Knowledge (Animal Tending/4, Angels/2), Ranged Weapons/2(.44 Revolver), Small Weapon/3(club)
Weapons -- Club, .44 Revolver (On Belt)

Notes -- Wilcott is a normally pleasant man whose recently had the crap kicked out of him, and who isn't feeling very well. He'll attempt to be nice to the players unless he suspects what they are or they make it too difficult.

Mareth, Balseraph Knight of Theft

Corporeal Forces -- 3 Strength 4 Agility 8
Ethereal Forces -- 3 Intelligence 8 Precision 4
Celestial Forces -- 4 Will 8 Perception 8
Vessel -- Human/3
Skills -- Emote/4, Fast Talk/6, Move Silently/4, Dodge/3
Songs -- Charm (Corporeal/4, Ethereal/4), Entropy (Ethereal/4, Celestial/4)
Attunements -- Balseraph of Theft, Passage, Knight of Kleptos.

Mareth is one of those people who just can't stop trying to out clever himself. His vessel resembles the actor James Spader.

Harissa, Calabite Servitor of Dark Humor

Corporeal Forces -- 5 Strength 10 Agility 10
Ethereal Forces -- 2 Intelligence 3 Precision 5
Celestial Forces -- 3 Will 7 Perception 5
Vessel -- Human/2
Skills -- Fighting/6, Small Weapon/2(specialty), Tracking/4
Songs -- Entropy (Celestial/4), Form (Corporeal/4), Motion (Corporeal/5), Thunder/4
Attunements -- Calabite of Dark Humor, Prank

Discord -- Aura/2, Obsessed/2 (Knock Knock Jokes)

Harissa is bubbly, cute, fun, and completely unlike any other Calabite you've ever met. She's also an annoying air head who just can't stop telling knock knock jokes, and she's a lot stronger than you'd think. Her vessel is five feet tall, with short blond hair and a love for colorful t-shirts.

Ranger (Rior'n Gar), Malakite Master of Animals

Corporeal Forces -- 6 Strength 12 Agility 12
Ethereal Forces -- 3 Intelligence 6 Precision 6
Celestial Forces -- 4 Will 10 Perception 6
Vessel -- Wolf/5
Skills -- Fighting/6, Large Weapon/5(Sword), Small Weapon/5(Knife), Ranged Weapon/3(Longbow), Tracking/5
Songs -- Attraction (Corporeal/6), Form (Corporeal/5, (Ethereal/4), Harmony (Corporeal/4, Celestial/4), Possession/4, Shields (Celestial/6), Thunder/5
Artifact -- Fiery Sword (Currently in Harissa's possession)
Malakite Oaths: (i) Never suffer an evil to live if it's his choice. (ii) Never surrender or allow himself to be captured by the armies of Hell. (iii) Never leave a buddy hanging. (iv) Never leave a job undone. (v) Never forgive an insult. (vi) Never let himself forget his mistakes.

Normally a fun-loving guy (for a Malakite), he is currently trapped in the body of a dog with Corporeal Forces 3 (Strength 6, Agility 6) and Ethereal Forces 2 (Intelligence 2, Precision 6)

Artifact -- The Dog Collar

Probably created by Kobal itself, the Dog Collar is a celestial artifact which affects the wearer. When placed on someone, he must roll a Contest of his Celestial Forces versus the Collar's target number of 10) -- If they lose, they are transformed into a dog, and must use the rules for Remnants, save that their Hearts are not destroyed. (The Heart is still useless for finding the victim, however.) The Collar uses 5 Essence every time it is used, which must be resupplied by a willing celestial in order to use it again. If the Collar is removed, the target changes back, but the victim cannot remove the Collar himself.

by Steve Jackson

Art by Dan Smith

[*Editor's Note:* This article originally appeared in issue #36 (April, 1980) of *Dragon* Magazine. Thanks to T. "Denny" Graver for locating and retyping the text!. Note that the original editor's notes, for some reason, credited Steve Jackson as the creator of the game. In fact, ***Stellar Conquest*** was designed by Metagaming founder Howard Thompson.]

The classic ***Stellar Conquest*** is a great game . . . but it was designed for exactly four players. This scenario is a playable variant for two which avoids the slow "pre-contact" period that occurs if you just drop two players out of the original setup.

*"Ceti Control to scout **Arday**. Come in, **Arday**." The radio operator's voice was weary. He had been repeating that call since his shift began. "Still nothing, sir. They should be in Pherda system by now, but there's no answer."*

*"Well, keep trying, lieutenant. Draw on emergency base power and increase your cone a half-minute. They may be investigating an outer planet." The operator complied and began his chant again, without much hope. There were any number of things which could keep a spaceship from finishing a hop in the expected time. Most of them were fatal. And there was no way for the scoutship -- or anything else -- to transmit or receive an n-space message without a mass of at least planetary size nearby. A Thompson unit that could function in unstressed space was theoretically possible, but in practice . . . no way. Which meant that a ship between stars was totally out of touch. And it looked as though the Republic scout **Arday**, which should have arrived at the blue star Pherda two days ago, would never arrive at all.*

"Well, carry on, lieutenant. Call me if you . . . What's that?" But the lieutenant, blessed with quicker reactions and his own set of earphones, was already in action. A reply was coming in! As the operator adjusted dials, a flickering light burned steady green, and a thin gabble became a whisper, and abruptly, a voice.

*". . . restricted channel. This is a Comarch restricted band. Identify yourself at once." The operator shook his head in puzzlement and started to reply, but the general behind him had already grabbed the mike. "What do you mean, restricted band? Cut the clowning, **Arday**. This is Liparia, commanding Ceti Base, now report."*

The answer came back immediately, like all such messages, transmitted through n-space with no detectable lag.

*"Bootis Control to unauthorized transmitter. Identify yourself at once. There is . . ." The voice broke, and resumed in a less formal tone: "**Ceti** base? Where the hell **are** you?" The general looked at the operator; the operator looked back. Then the general spun, shouting an order over his shoulder: "Keep talking! Whatever you do, don't lose that contact And don't say anything!" The lieutenant was much less disturbed by the contradictory orders than by the fact that, for the first time in his six years of military life, he had seen a general running.*

* * *

". . . this cluster is ours, and we've got a right to it!" "Thank you, sir. And now back to our studio." The interviewer's voice vanished from the vision set, to be replaced by that of a commentator: "To recap, then: The seeds of the current

crisis were sown nearly two hundred years ago, when our colony ships took the Big Jump from Alphacent. We may never know what colossal mistake caused two nearly identical colony expeditions to be sent to the same cluster -- but it happened. Our own fleet left on March 3, 2606, and we made landfall here on Diphda on July 34, 2788. But a year after we left, the colonial fleet of the Comarchy project jumped from Terra for this same cluster -- and, because the ships made a closer breakout, set down two years before we did. They colonized the world of Dubhe IV, and have since planted thriving colonies around the suns of Scorpii and Bootis -- just as we have colonized Ceti and Canis.

"Now, space is big, and certainly we can work something out in time. But right now, both governments -- and both peoples -- are up in arms. There seems to be no doubt that the Comarchs honestly believed that they were setting out for an unclaimed cluster -- and they attach great importance to the fact that they got here first. Of course, our claim was duly registered with Colony Central on Alphacent . . . but until somebody builds a transmitter that can talk to the home worlds from here, we have to work it out between us. Or take the next ship home. Ha-ha.

"After all, we speak the same language, and our governments aren't too dissimilar. And naturally the original colony groups were almost identical. Once all this furor dies down, we should be able to cooperate with the Comarchs in building up our cluster."

* * *

Setup

The sides have very similar opening positions. The Republic of Diphda has a TR-80 (80 million people) at Diphda, a TR-60 (40 million people) at Ceti, and a TR-60 (40 million people) at Canis. No Star Cards are drawn for those stars; there are no other usable worlds at any of them. In addition, the Diphda player may immediately "scout" -- that is, pull Star Cards for -- the stars of Ross, Lalande, Mira, Luyten, Kapetyn, Ophiuchi, Rastaban, Indi, Eridani, Sirius, and Deneb. This information is not given to the Comarchy player. The Republic has already scouted these stars in order to plan for further colonization, but has no people there yet.

The Dubhe Comarchy has a TR-80 (80 million people) at Dubhe, a TR-60 (40 million people) at Scorpii, and a TR-60 (40 million people) at Bootis. The Dubhe player may immediately pull Star Cards for Barnard, Kruger, Mirach, Wolf, Arcturus, Hamal, Polaris, Procyon, Wezen, Vega, and Altair. The Diphda player does not receive this information.

Each player starts with ten scoutships (some, no doubt, being quickly converted cargo ships) located anywhere on his three colonies. Neither player begins the game with Bonus IUs or military force of any kind; they both started with planned, peaceful economies. But when those worlds start cranking out warships . . . look out.

* * *

"Although "arbitration" talks continued until 21.79.4 (early AD 2830), both sides had long since begun to gear for war. The inability of the two governments to agree on either a cooperative arrangement or a simple division of territory has been laid to many causes, but the most probable explanation is simply the feeling of "manifest destiny" discussed in earlier chapters. Simply put, neither the Republic nor the Comarchy was willing to cede its "own" territory -- and most citizen on both sides, from the man-in-the street to Rossaka and the Council, felt that their own group was the rightful owner of the whole Cluster -- and that the others were interlopers, pure and simple. Conflict was inevitable.

*The first shots of the Perseid War were fired on 1.93.9, when an escort-class Republican ship, the **Tara**, fired on a Comarchy scout entering the Sadir system. **S-102** (captained by Harv Tel-Masso, who commanded a dreadnought at the Third Battle of Aurigae (q.v.) and received the Order of Extreme Merit there) aborted its mission and escaped undamaged. Two months later, a Comarchy attack squadron struck Lyrae, destroying two of a group of ten Republican CTs orbiting Lyrae II and forcing the rest to flee. Matters went downhill from there . . .*
*-- Lubayoff, **History of the Perseid Cluster**, d.13/99*

Suggestions For Play

The **Perseid War** scenario invites -- nay, demands! -- a style of play rarely seen in standard games of ***Stellar Conquest*** -- the "General Motors." Both players start out with a tremendous amount of production, and the ability to increase it rapidly. By the second production turn (Year 8) each player should have mapped most of his side of the board, and discovered and colonized at least a couple of NM planets. It is not quite possible to build a Dreadnought on the first production turn; on the second, it's easy. DN fleets will dominate the game, but players will find Escorts and/or Attacks (depending on personal preferences) useful also . . . as cheap distractors, occupation forces, behind-the-lines raiders, and general nuisances.

This is definitely a game of production; you can always roll your enemy back by sheer force of numbers. Most players dream of building a couple of DN groups every turn -- of having *all* the technological developments -- of piling RIU on RIU. It doesn't happen in regular games. In this one, it can and does.

This also tends to be a positional game. (For a much **more** positional variant, try playing without USR development. Forcing ships to stay within 8 hexes of a friendly colony throughout the game will change things radically.)

In general, grab as much territory as you think you can hold on to; try to keep your opponent off balance, and force him to use his ships to defend what he has already. If he beats you to several good worlds and starts building PFSs, you're in trouble. Unless you've been spending your time building up another kind of advantage . . .

* * *

"So we're besieged. So what? The relief force is only a couple of years away, and we can spend the time building up industry. The Commandant knows what he's doing."

*"Well, I still don't like it." A thumb-gesture over the shoulder, jabbing at the strangely glimmering sky. "They tell us that thing's invulnerable. I don't **feel** invulnerable. Twelve Archie ships up there, just waiting. What if we get a saboteur or something?"*

"Not twelve, sixteen. Didn't you see the news? They ran in a bunch of new ones, and some of the old batch left. Last night, it was. Big article in the fax this morning."

"Yeah, I remember reading they'd picked up drive-traces coming this way. More little friends, eh? Great."

"Not so little. A couple of them look like something new. Commandant's office isn't saying anything, but anybody with a scope can see them. Bigger than colony ships, and kind of egg-shaped."

*"Well, that's just great. We may be here a long time. If . . ." A flash and crack interrupted his words. "What's that? Lightning? We never get storms at this time of year! Will you **look** at that!"*

A massive display lit the sky from horizon to horizon. Lightning danced from cloud to cloud and struck the earth in a dozen places at once. An aurora appeared, faint at first, then brighter. The watchers gaped in awe.

"Powers above! Come on. Let's get to a shelter."

"Huh? What for? Lightning?"

"Look! The screen's gone. I bet those new Archies did it!"

"But it's theoretically impossible . . ." A fireball loomed on the horizon.

"And we're going to be theoretically dead if we don't find cover. Those ships are bombarding, and our missile bases are going to be shooting back, and I'm getting out of here. Come on!"

New Technological Developments

None of these devices are necessary to the play of the game, but can add interest to either **Perseid War** or a standard ***Stellar Conquest*** scenario.

Super Missile Base (SMB)

Weapons Systems Sequence, Level 3

The Super Missile Base is the equivalent of a permanently grounded Dreadnought. Each SMB costs 20 IU after research cost has been paid. Predecessor: AMB. Development cost with pred 80, without 110.

Screencracker (SKR)

Weapons Systems Sequence, Level 4

The Screencracker is a warship designed for the single purpose of eliminating Planetary Force Screens. At the beginning of his attack phase, the attacking player may roll one die for each SKR in the same hex with a PFS. (Each SKR may only attack one PFS per turn.) On a roll or 1 or 2, the screen goes down, and other ships may attack the planet that turn. On a 3, 4, 5, or 6, the screen stays up. In either event, the planet's bases may fire on a SKR on any turn it attacks that planet's PFS. A SKR defends as though it were a Dreadnought, but cannot attack ships or planets; its one function is to destroy the PFS. Each SKR costs 100 IU to build after the research cost has been paid. Predecessor: PFS. Development cost with pred 300, without 400.

Sunbeam (SBM)

Weapons Systems Sequence, Level 4

The Sunbeam (inspired by Doc Smith's Lensman series) is a device for harnessing the energy of an entire star into an offensive weapon. Only one Sunbeam device may exist at any one star at a time; it must be built on one of the planets. The Sunbeam is not fired at ships, but at enemy worlds. It may be fired once per turn, at any world.

The beam travels at light speed (1 hex per turn). When the beam is fired , place a counter in a hex adjacent to that star; this represents a "blip" a year long, heading out. Each turn thereafter, the player owning that sunbeam rolls two dice for each "blip" counter on the board. On a total of 2 or 4, that segment of beam goes slightly off course (enough to miss its target) and may be removed from play. On any other total, it moves one hex closer to its target (which must be announced when the beam is fired). A dust cloud stops Sunbeams; nothing else (including the destruction of the device that fired it) will halt a Sunbeam once fired. If it stays on course, it will strike its target.

When a Sunbeam strikes a planet, it kills 10 million population and reduces the planet's habitability as described below. Sunbeams are not affected by a PFS. Sunbeams do not affects ships, which can dodge at greater-than-light speed. A Sunbeam fired at another world in the same system strikes on the same turn (that is, immediately) and does double damage. Each Sunbeam device costs 300 IU to build, once the research cost has been paid. The cost of a device may be spread over 2 or 3 turns (note that this is an exception to the general rule; all other units must be built at once). Cost to develop this device is 400 IU; there is no predecessor. If a colony possessing a Sunbeam is captured or

wiped out, the device is destroyed

.

Terraforming (TRF)

Technical Sequence, Level 4

Terraforming is the art and science of making a world more fit to live on. In order to terraform a world, a colony must already be present -- thus, an unusable or BR-0 world cannot be terraformed. For each 10 IU spent in terraforming, the habitability level of a planet is raised by one. Furthermore, for each 15 million added to a planet's habitability level by terraforming, the planet's **type** improves by one. For instance, if 140 IU are spent on terraforming, an MT-40 planet, it becomes an MT-54. If another 10 IU are spent, it becomes an ST-55. The IU spent to terraform a world do not have to come on the same turn, but they must come in increments of 10.

A planet may not have a type better that TR or a habitability greater than 100.

* * *

The old man turned away from the fax screen, where headlines blared "New Comarch Atrocity!" He spat on the sidewalk. Ten million dead. Six million packed into quickly built colony ships and aimed back towards a Republic that had no room for them. And Comarchy colonists heading for Schedar right now, no doubt.

"Well, at least they let some go. On Wolf we fried the whole damn planet. Killed them all, men, women, and children . . ." He trailed off, suddenly realizing that he had spoken aloud. He glanced about worriedly, but no one was close enough to have heard.

Pulling his coat tighter around him, the old man leaned into the freezing wind and headed back to work.

* * *

Killing People and Destroying Worlds

Those still with us after that catchy title may replace Rules 7.2.8 and 7.2.9 with the following:

Each turn, a conqueror may destroy the population of a conquered colony on the following basis; for each ESC at the planet, 1 million population; for each ATK, 3 million; for each DN, 5 million. SCTs and SKRs cannot attack population; neither, of course, can CTs.

A Sunbeam destroys 10 million population when it strikes. Each lost million population naturally reduces the habitability of that planet by 1 million. For instance: a ST-40 with 27 million population is conquered. A single Dreadnought fires on the population for one turn. The population is reduced to 22. The planet is reduced to an ST-35. Furthermore, for each 15 million population destroyed (in any fashion) over the course of the game, the type of the planet is reduced by one level -- that is, a TR is reduced to an ST, an ST to MT, and MT to a BR. If at any time the habitability of a planet is reduced to zero, its type automatically becomes BR and the planet is useless.

If a colony is wiped out by Sunbeam attack, all human works on the planet (Sunbeam device, IUs, RIUs, or bases) are considered destroyed as well. It is legal to fire on an empty (or almost empty) world to reduce its habitability. For instance, a Sunbeam will reduce the habitability of a world by 10 million, even if fewer than 10 million people were actually present. Even an empty world takes damage.

* * *

Anya deVries was very close to panic. For all her 17 years (and for some time before that) the Republic had been

fighting the Comarchy. War was the normal order of things. All her life she'd wanted to be a pilot; for nearly all her life she'd been trained for just that. And now -- Why were those old fools looking so cheerful? Hadn't they heard the stories? Everyone was saying the war was going to be over soon.

*It just wasn't **fair!***

* * *

Victory Conditions

This scenario can be played with either of two sets of victory conditions:

(1) To the bitter end. Continue until one side is obviously beaten. This is more likely to happen if you are using Screencracker ships; two evenly matched players, each with a number of worlds beneath invulnerable PFS shields can fight for a long time before one gets enough of an upper hand to blockade the other completely.

(2) Time limit. Play either to a given number of years (at least 60) or to a given time of day (3 a.m. is always a good time). Then figure scores according to formula:

Worlds Controlled: For each TR planet, 100 points. For each ST planet, 50 points. For each MT planet, 20 points -- 40 if it is MT-NM. For each BR-NM, 20 point. Other worlds count nothing. It is not necessary to have a colony at the planet -- a ship at that star establishes control.

Population: For each million population on planets or in CTs, 1 point.

Industrial Capacity: For each IU or RIU under a player's control, 5 points.

Technological Development: For each Development a player has, points equal to the IU cost (without pred) necessary to research that development.

Military Strength: For each ship, base, PFS, or SBM a player has (except CTS), points equal to half the IU cost required to build it.

* * *

"Well, its over. No question about it. And we won. " He looked at the bright young aide who had spoken, and shook his head. Gazing at the star map -- at the markers that indicated dead or battered worlds where once there had been green homes for men -- he sighed.

"No, Vlad. I'm afraid not. Nobody won."

A Discworld Adventure for GURPS and Over The Edge

by Michael Cule

Art by Dan Smith

The following five individuals are the first products of the new training system at the Ankh-Morpork Watch. In an effort to do more than simply showing the new recruits how to put their armor on and where the lavatories are, Captain Carrot has managed to wangle funding for a whole eight weeks' training.

This consists mostly of being lectured by the Captain himself on The Law, by the Commissioner on Police work and by Sergeant Colon on paperwork. Oh and marched to and fro a bit by Sergeant Angua. Now, the proud graduates have been gathered together for their first night's proper patrolling. Naturally, this consists of having to do the one job that everybody else wants to get out of.

(NOTE: When setting up this adventure I did not tell the players what system we were using nor what the setting was. I just said, as each one arrived, : "I've got five characters for you to choose from. A wizard. A barbarian. A little girl, A missionary. And a piper. Which one do you want?" And then watched their reactions as they read the character sheets.... Heh. Heh.)

You'll find them written out first in ***Over The Edge*** terms and then in ***GURPS.***

The Patrol

All the characters have been issued with armour worth a couple of points of protection, swords and Watch badges.

Surety Pospher

"The Little Match Girl"

Snatched from the jaws of Death by Death, one Hogswatchnight, she was raised by the collective charity of the Watch (a sentimental bunch) and has decided to repay them by joining the force. Some of them wonder if this is actually a Good Idea. She is almost unbearably cute. She is the epitome of Cute. She has Cute eyes, Cute teeth, even Cute little toes. She thrives on getting her way by manipulating people.

Since she ought, technically, to be dead, she has one useful ability in addition to her Cuteness. She can see ghosts and other supernatural entities. What will happen when someone WHO TALKS LIKE THIS notices is anyone's guess.

Cute Little Girl: 4 dice. Blue eyes, blonde curly hair and a sad little smile which says, "Oh dear, how helpless I am and will all these big strong people help me." She only uses her lisp and tears in dire emergencies. (Cute Little Girl).

Watchman: 2 dice. Just out of Basic Training and sure that she can persuade those nasty little criminals to come along. (Uniform and weapon both too big for her.)

Fringe Power: Sees the Invisible. Always on. (Stares into space at nothing and listens to people other people cannot see.)

Hit Points: 14 (Small)

Secret: She really ought to be dead.

Flaw: She is absolutely useless in combat and liable to go "eeeeek" if anything icky happens.

Important Person: Arnold, her teddy bear.

Surety Pospher

ST 9 (-10 points)
DX 12 (20 points)
IQ 12 (20 points)
HT 12 (20 points)
Base Speed 6 **Move** 5
Basic Damage Thrust 1d-2 Swing 1d-1

Advantages: Appearance: Beautiful (15 points), Charisma +3 (15 points), Literate (10 points), Legal Enforcement Powers: Local (5 points), Sees the Unseen (10 points).

Disadvantages: Delusion: "No one could possibly want to hurt me. I'm cute!" (-10 points), Cowardice (-10 points), Squeamishness (-10 points), Youth: 15 years old (-6 points).

Quirks: Always has her teddy bear with her; Twirls her blonde curls while thinking; Doesn't understand what other girls see in Thrug; Goes "eeekkk!" when alarmed; Practices needlecraft when off duty.

Skills: First Aid (2 points) 13, Broadsword (2 points) 12, Sling (2 points) 11, Needlecraft (2 points) 12, Match-Making (2 points) 12, Criminology (1 point) 11, Psychology (4 points) 12, Acting (2 points) 12, Area Knowledge (Ankh-Morpork) (1 point) 12, Diplomacy (4 points) 12, Fast-Talk (2 points) 12, Merchant (1 point) 11, Detect Lies (4 points) 12, Interrogation (1 point) 11, Shadowing (2 points) 12, Stealth (2 points) 12, Streetwise (2 points) 12.

Equipment: (Light Encumbrance) Heavy Leather Armour (PD 2 DR 2) Broadsword (Cutting 1 dice -1 skill due to low ST) Sling and slingstones. Sewing kit and Teddy bear in shoulder bag.

Thrug the Hublander

Barbarian Hero and Watchman

Thrug is one of the Hub's natural exports: a younger son with ambition and muscles on his muscles. He speaks with an incomprehensible accent (think of Arnie in *Conan*) and has a mental prowess that makes Trolls look like intellectuals . He does not know the meaning of the word fear. Nor "soap," "bath," "tact," or many other, even shorter words.

Why he is in the Watch is a bit of a mystery. It may be a that the Patrician sentenced him to a bit of "Community Service" or that he thinks he is in the Army and can look forward to loot. No one knows and no one has had the courage to ask.

He carries around a copy of *My Life and Times by Cohen The Barbarian As Told To C.M.O.T. Dibbler* and reads bits from the wisdom of his hero.

Very, very slowly.

Quote: "It is goot to shlay your enemies and listen to the lamen . . . lament . . . vat is dis vord here plis?"

Barbarian Hero: 4 dice. He has muscles on his muscles, a sharp sword and refuses to wear trousers, preferring an authentic barbarian loincloth at all times. He does not appear to feel the cold nor has he been known to wash once since he joined the Watch. (Big muscles, strong smell.)

Watchman: 1 die. Has mastered Shouting and Intimidation but has yet to successfully complete a report form legibly (Wears uniform which is too tight for him, above loincloth and fur boots.)

Babe Magnet: 3 dice. Despite (or perhaps because of) the fact that he never washes, Thrug has only to pause at street corners for crowds of otherwise rational women to start flocking to him. They need to be pretty blatant about getting his attention though. Dropping handkerchiefs and fluttering eyelashes aren't going to work with Thrug. (Followed by crowd of women with their mouths open.)

Hit Points: 42. (Unbelievably tough)

Flaw: Of limited intellect. (Cannot read, or indeed think, without moving his lips.)

Secret: Wears String vests given to him by his Auntie. (A terrifying woman he does not dare offend.)

Important Person: Cohen the Barbarian, his Hero.

Thrug The Hublander

ST 15 (60 points)
DX 12 (20 points)
IQ 8 (-15 points)
HT 12 (20 points)
Base Speed 6.0 **Move** 7 (incl Running bonus)
Basic Damage Thrust 1d+1 Swing 2d+1

Advantages: Pheromone Control (15 points. Limitations: Always on and only when he doesn't wash.), Legal Enforcement Powers (Local) 5 points, Semi-Literate (5 points), Toughness 2 (25 points).

Disadvantages: Berserk (-15 points), Odious Personal Habits 2 (-10 points. Never washes. Grunts monosyllabically.), Social Stigma: Barbarian (-15 points).

Quirks: Ashamed of his string vests, Always reading his Hero's Words, Moves his lips while thinking, Never wears trousers only loin-clothes, Never seems to feel the cold.

Skills: Acrobatics (1 point) 10, Jumping (1 point) 12, Running (1 point) 10, Broadsword (2 points) 12, Fast Draw (Broadsword) (1 point) 12, Brawling (2 points) 13, Intimidation (2 points) 8, (But lots and lots of bonuses to this skill . . .).

Equipment: (No encumbrance) Heavy Leather Armour (PD 2 DR 2), Broadsword (2+2 Cut Damage), Copy of *My Life and Times by Cohen the Barbarian as told to C.M.O.T. Dibbler.*

Enlighten the Infidel with Humourous Parables

The Comic Omnian

Enlighten (as he is known for short) is the fruit of the Omnian Church's new missionary style. Once a humble trainee

Fool, his life was changed one night when it was his turn to answer the door at the Guild. His miserable, pitiless and pointless existence had left him with absolutely no protection against someone (the well-know Watchman and missionary, Visit-The-Heathen-With-Explanatory -Pamphlets) who could assure him that there was a point to life (serving Om) and that someone loved him (the aforesaid Om).

Leaving his apprenticeship behind (with only six months to go!) he changed his name to something more Omnian and followed his mentor into the world and into the Watch. He has maintained the skills he learned from the Guild in the service of Om. He tells jokes whenever he preaches in the street (atop an overturned banana crate) although sometimes his memory lets him down as his Guild training was never completed. ("How do we know Om truly exists and loves us, I hear you ask? Well, that reminds me of a funny story, yes a very funny story. There were these two fellas, no, hang on a tick, it was a man and a woman, and they were traveling from Quirm to Psuedopolis. Or it may have been the other way around . . . Anyway . . .")

Fool: 3 dice. He is almost completely trained in jocularity, the proper use of wallpaper paste and custard. (Falls into funny walks occasionally.)

Missionary: 3 dice. He is pretty good at preaching and has got the Omnian texts (at least those used by his sub-cult, the Spinward Reformed Chelonians) down pat, aided by his training in memorising things in the Guild. (Starts conversations with "Hello, did you know Om loves you?")

Watchman: 2 dice. Not too hot on the physical side but again he has learned the Law and Regulations faster than anyone since Captain Carrot. (Wears uniform. Can tell you which ordinance any deed is against.)

Hit Points: 21. (Dead average.)

Flaw: His Guild training also means his sense of humour has been burned away and he cannot tell what is actually funny but has to rely on rote learning.

Secret: His Guild name, Joey Baggypants.

Important Person: Om and after that Constable Visit.

Enlighten the Heathen with Humourous Parables

ST 11 (10 points)
DX 14 (45 points)
IQ 13 (30 points)
HT 10 (0 points)
Base Speed 6.0 **Move** 5
Basic Damage Thrust 1d-1 Swing 1d+1

Advantages: Clerical Investment (5 points), Legal Enforcement Powers (5 points), Literacy (10 points).

Disadvantages: Bad Reputation (-2 Reaction: "Look out! It's a missionary!") (-10 points), Compulsive Behaviour (Preaching) (-10 points), No Sense of Humor (-10 points), Sense of Duty: To Om and The Church (-10 points).

Quirks: Keeps forgetting the tag line of jokes, Ashamed of his Clown name, Always uses a banana box when preaching in the streets, Reveres Visit-The-Heathen-With-Explanatory-Leaflets, Starts conversations with, "Hello, do you know Om loves you?"

Skills: Bard (4 points) 14, Juggling (2 points) 14, Performance (3 points) 14, Broadsword (1 point) 13, Fast Draw: Sword (1 point) 14, Sling (1 point) 12, Brawling (2 points) 15, First Aid (1 point) 13, Law (8 points) 15, Criminology (1 point) 12, Acting (4 points) 14, Administration (2 points) 13, Area Knowledge: Ankh-Morpork (2 points) 14, Diplomacy (1 point) 11, Fast-Talk (1 point) 12, Sleight of Hand (4 points) 14, Ventriloquism (2 points) 12.

Equipment: (Light Encumbrance) Heavy Leather Armour (PD 2 DR 2), Broadsword (Cutting 1+2) Sling and slingstones, First Aid kit, Wedge of Omnian Leaflets.

Big Malcolm MacDonald

The Gigantic Gnome

Malcolm is something of an outcast among his own people. Being of enormous size (almost six inches tall) and considerable strength he has difficulty getting into the spaces that other gnomes regard as suitable for making a snug home. Remarks about "huge greet lummoxes eatin' us oot of hoose and hame" were also made pointedly by his relatives. So he had to find a new life for himself out in the human world. He now lives in an old doll's house (luxury accommodations by gnome standards) in the attic of Psuedopolis Yard and is eager to make his way in the world.

Unlike some gnomes (Wee Mad Arthur is a name that comes to mind) he is not mindlessly aggressive: in fact he is a quiet, studious and easy-going type who has never felt the need among his own people to prove anything about his ability to knock heads together. Happily for him the reputation of gnomes like Wee Mad Arthur has made his fellow trainees wary of him. When his temper is aroused, however, he is quite capable of rushing at things and people much bigger than him and cutting them off at the ankle.

Street Fighter: 4 dice. He can use his size and considerable strength (even compared to much larger humanoids) to great advantage. ("Noo, laddie, let's settle this peacable-like. Ye'll no be wanting me to be getting angry.")

Watchman: 2 dice. His basic training was the best overall in his group and his superiors have already marked him down for possible promotion. (Wears uniform and carries gnome sized shillelagh on duty.)

Piper: 3 dice. He is an enthusiast for his people's native instrument and the reason his doll's house is up in the attic is his enthusiasm for playing the pipes at all hours. It has a thousand and one uses apart from rallying the gnomish clans and terrifying the enemy. Some even allege it can be used to make music. (Carries his bagpipes at all times).

Hit Points: 28 (Wiry)

Secret: His unrequited love for the chieftain's daughter back home.

Flaw: He is only six inches tall and ignorant persons may not take him seriously.

Important Person: His bagpipes.

Big Malcolm MacDonald

ST 10 (0 points)
DX 12 (20 points)
IQ 12 (20 points)
HT 10 (0 points)
Base Speed 6.5 (Incl running) **Move** 4
Basic Damage Thrust 1d-2 Swing 1d

Advantages: Racial: +6 Fatigue (+18 points), +2 PD (50 points); Legal Enforcement Powers: Local (5 points), Literacy (10 points).

Disadvantages: Racial: Inconvenient Size (-15 points), Reduced Move 2 (-10 points), Short Arms (-10 points); Self Defence Pacifist (-15 points).

Quirks: Mild Paranoia (Racial), Has unrequited love for girl back home, Touchy about his size, Carries his bagpipes at all times.

Skills: Acrobatics (4 points) 12, Criminology (2 points) 12, Running (1 point) 8, Brawling (4 points) 14, First Aid (2 points) 13, Shortsword (For use with shillelagh) (4 points) 13, Law (4 points) 12, Intimidation (1 point) 11, Bagpipes (4 points) 12.

Equipment: (Light Encumbrance) Heavy Leather Armour (PD 2 DR 2), Shillelagh (treat as baton) 1d-2 or 1d crushing, Bagpipes.

Theodore Bigfin B.F., B.M.

The Forensic Wizard

Recently recruited from the graduating classes at U.U., Theodore needs something to keep at bay the collecting agents ("thugs") of the people he unwisely went to in order to finance his time at the University, He did not get good enough grades to get tenure at U.U. Nor did he have the contacts to get work at some court. Nor (obviously) the money to struggle through getting his own private practice set up. So the idea of joining the Watch and surrounding himself with lots of heavily muscled and armoured companions to keep the debt collectors at bay seemed a good one.

Now, after two months of Basic Training and being shouted at by Sergeants (who can Shout even better than the Archchancellor) he is not so sure. He thought he was going to be stuck in a nice warm lab at the Yard, but Captain Carrot seems to like even his back-room boys to have some experience with street police-work. If he can survive the probationary period he may never leave the Yard ever, ever again. Especially in winter.

Wizard: 3 dice. A third rank wizard with a good grasp of basic theory and practice and a long hard slog to make it to fourth. (Wears pointy hat and robes, carries staff.)

Watchman: 2 dice. He's better at the theoretical stuff and paperwork than any sort of violence. (Wears a copper badge on his robes.)

Educated: 3 dice. He knows a lot of general Stuff about anything that was written in books. The other recruits call him "Professor" because he can tell you the exact dates of the Ankh-Morpork Civil War or when Pseudopolis was founded and by whom. (Says things like: "Actually, it Morg the Lesser who murdered King Buffy. People often make that mistake.")

Hit Points: 10 (A weed.)

Secret: Owes money to Crysophase the Troll.

Flaw: Has the social graces of . . . well, of a wizard.

Important Person: Himself.

Magic Pool: 3 (and 3 more uses of magic stored in his staff).

Theodore Bigfin

ST 10 (0 points)
DX 12 (20 points)
IQ 13 (30 points)
HT 10 (0 points)
Base Speed 5.0 **Move** 5
Basic Damage Thrust 1d-2 Swing 1d

Advantages: Legal Enforcement Powers: Local (5 points), Literacy (10 points), Magery 3 (35 points).

Disadvantages: Absent Mindedness (-15 points), Enemy: Crysophase's Thugs on 6-. (-10 points), Odious Personal Habits (Various Wizardly bits of selfishness and slobbishness worth -3 reaction) (-15 points), Secret: Serious Embarrassment: His Debt (-5 points).

Quirks: Reads scholarly journals while walking, Eats fruit noisily, Curious about sex while not wanting to get involved himself, Doesn't plan ahead too well, Proud of having made his own Staff.

Skills: Broadsword (1 point) 11, Spellthrowing: Fireball (1 point) 12, History (1 point) 11, Literature (1 point) 11, Research (1 point) 12, Thaumatology (1 point) 14.

Spells: (All 1 point except as otherwise shown) Sense Emotion 14, Sense Foes 14, Truthsayer 14, Enchant 13, Staff 14, Create Fire 14, Fireball 14, Ignite Fire 14, Shape Fire 14, Seek Food 14, Lend Health 14, Lend Strength 14, Minor Healing 14, Major Healing 13, Recover Strength (2 points) 15, Complex Illusion 14, Illusion Disguise 14, Perfect Illusion 14, Simple Illusion 14, Aura 14, Detect Magic 14, Seeker 14, Trace 14, Continual Light 14, Darkness 14, Flash 14, Light 14, Counterspell 14, Dispel Magic 14, Magic Resistance 14, Scryguard 14,Daze 14, Foolishness 14, Sleep 14, Mass Sleep 14, Apportation 14, Haste 14, Slow Fall 14, Seek Plant 14, Mystic Mist 14, Shield 14, Sound 14, Seek Water 14.

Equipment: (No encumbrance) Broadsword (1+1 cutting), Wizard's Staff (16 points of energy), wizard's robes, dufflecoat, bag full of books.

Sidebar: Adapting Over the Edge to Discworld

You can use ***OTE*** (or Over The Elephants as I called this variant) just about straight for Discworld adventures. It needs almost no adaptation except to say:

1) The maximum number of dice should be 8. Granny Weatherwax is an eight-die witch, Mustrum Ridicully is an eight-die wizard and Cohen the Barbarian is an eight-die Barbarian Hero.

2) Be fairly generous about allowing people to increase their abilities. It doesn't suit the world to require years of study to achieve high rank. Allow people to spend experience dice to buy new and improved abilities when it fits the story.

3) There are some things (and even people) on the Discworld who there is no point in giving stats to. CAN YOU GUESS WHO I MEAN?

4) Oh, and on magic . . . Here's the handout the wizard should get.

So, You're a Discworld Wizard and Want to Cast a Spell . . .

. . . And you expect me to have a complete magic system worked out with spell lists and everything? Get real! Here's how it is going to work if you want to cast a spell.

1) First Name That Spell!

If you want to cast a spell you had better have a snappy name for it, suitable to the Discworld. Discworld spells go (mostly) [Inventor's Name] [Adjective] [Effect]. And a bit of alliteration always helps.

Example: The sergeant wants you to cast a spell to see if someone is telling the truth. Thinking you had better do something to impress her you say "Yes, I think this is the perfect occasion for Verdain's Verdant Veridicator!"

2) Tell Me What You Want to Make the Spell Do

Describe the effect. Don't be too ambitious or you'll get into trouble at the next stage.

Example: You turn to me, your smiling GM and say: "I'd like the spell to make someone glow green if they tell a lie under its influence."

3) I Decide What Level the Spell Is

There are eight (of course) levels of spells from lighting cigars with flames from your fingertips (Level One) to painting the sky pink (Level Eight) and the GM will decide what level is appropriate to your spell. To say that the GM can be influenced by being offered bribes of food or physical affection from beautiful women is merely to state the obvious.

If the spell is of a level higher than your current wizard level (= number of dice in the Wizard trait) then you suffer a penalty die for every spell level above your current Wizard level.

4) You Roll the Dice in Total Ignorance Of . . .

. . . what you need to get. Which the GM will have made up when he assigned the level. If you are casting a spell on someone else then they will resist with some appropriate trait or with 2 dice in any case.

In the case of the Verdant Veridicator, you would definitely have to overcome the target's resistance if they didn't want to tell you the truth.

As an optional rule to encourage creativity, you can say that any attempt to use the same spell in the same day is at a penalty die.

5) You Cross Off One of Your Magic Shots for the Day

You can refresh your magic pool by:

Waiting. It will return to full each dawn.

Meditating. This can involve either Yoga or for U.U. grads eating a Big Meal.

Tantric Sex Practices also work. But as a U.U. grad it is far safer to stick to Big Meals.

Watch Academy VI: Hogswatchnight

The Adventure

What Is Really Going On (Part One)

A Fiendish Cult has managed to bind Hideous Creatures from the Dungeon Dimensions into the forms of Burfies (TM), an annoying but highly desirable soft toy that has won its way into the hearts of the young of Ankh Morpork. On Hogswatch Eve they are to be distributed to the unsuspecting mothers and fathers of Ankh-Morpork and then wake at midnight to perform a blood sacrifice which will open the Gate to their Even More Hideous Masters! Unless Fate or Someone Intervenes . . .

Scene 1) It Was Hogswatch Eve at the Watchhouse . . .

. . . And the cold bare walls were bright, with garlands of paper sausages and the smell of mulled wine and grilling meat products which drift across the snow covered courtyard to where five figures stand, slowly getting colder as they wait for the command "At Ease."

Fifteen minutes ago, the Academy graduates were stood to attention by Corporal Nobbs prior to being sent off on patrol for the first time, which would ensure that everyone else can stay in the Watchhouse for the Hogswatch Eve Party (or Piss Up, as Nobby habitually refers to it.) They have stood there since, at attention, gradually being covered with snow.

(A chance here for the players to introduce and establish their characters and perhaps to get themselves into trouble right at the start.)

They see a figure crossing the courtyard. It strides purposefully in through the gate, across the courtyard towards the Watchhouse. And stops and strides towards them as it spots them. It is Sergeant Angua. (A person to be polite to. A were . . . Well, you know what people say . . .)

"What are you doing here? . . . Uh huh. I see. Wait here . . ."

She enters the Watchhouse and a short while later there is a howl of pain that the sharp eared may identify as Corporal Nobbs in distress. And then the great wobbly figure of Sergeant Fred Colon lurches out of the doorway and comes to rest a short distance in front of them. He has been drinking deeply of the spiced punch.

"Recrutssshhh, shhtandart TEASE! Stan easy." Blink. Blink. Hiccup. "You are heahby ordered to proceeeed on patrol. You will take ther widderships patrol route. You are to proceed inna ordly manna out and along ummm . . . Lowa Brorway. Crossa Brass Bridge. ROUND the Palace. Up Uppa Brorway. Long Street of Cunning Artiti . . . Artifi . . . Them. Yeah. Goosegate. Five Ways. Treacle Mine Road. Back across Pons Bridge and home. You cry the hours, right? 'Five o'clock an all's well!' You deal with any breaches ovva laws. You help the populacetion about their lawful watchumaycallums. And I don't wantchya coming back here for help, cos we're all inna . . . innadisp. Not well. Right! Patrol SHUN! Patrrollllll (Wait for it, wait for it.) DISSSSS . . . MISS!"

And he turns and lurches back into the Watch-house.

2) 2 Scenes and a Small Red Herring

The first three things they encounter on their patrol are as follows.

Hwll the dwarf, the Discworld's greatest playwright, sitting weeping into his beer at the stage door of the theatre of Lord Wynkin's Men in Lower Broadway. He is distressed that his latest masterpiece (*What You Want, or, Damned If I Know*) has been pirated and reworked into the crass commercial success called *Rose Red and the Seven Gnomes,* which is packing in children of all ages at this Hogswatch season. He is particularly distressed by the facts that a comic wallpapering scene has been added and the male lead taken by a Llamedossian harp-player who is inexplicably

popular among young women. (This is nothing to do with the plot but can be used to include all sorts of pantomime jokes if the referee knows any.)

At the Brass Bridge they meet Sol Dibbler, nephew and stooge to the more famous Cut Me Own Throat Dibbler who is out in the snow keeping the family sausage-in-a-bun franchise active. He has four dice of Salesman (C.M.O.T. has eight, naturally.) and may try to persuade the Watchmen to buy some of his wares. If asked about where his uncle is, he is unwilling to be too specific. (This is the red herring: Throat Dibbler is busy in a workshop on the Street of The Cunning Artificers trying to create forged Burfies. Inexperienced Watchmen may jump to the conclusion, later on, that any sort of suspicious merchandise in Ankh-Morpork must involve the Dibbler clan and spend time trying to chase him down.)

At the gates of the Palace they may peer in (before being moved along by the snobs of the Palace Guard) and see that on the portico there is a Hogswatch party for poor children going on. In the rather tall Hogfather they may recognise their own Captain Carrot. In his elfish assistant, who juggles surprisingly well, the more observant will identify the Patrician.

2A) A Random Wandering Encounter

At some point around here the Little Match Girl should notice the following scene. Put it in where there is a lull in the action. It's only here as a set-up for something later.

She sees a couple of people appear in the street. One is dressed like someone playing Hogfather but with a lot more barechest and charisma than the average anxious parent. He has vine leaves and small sausages wound in his hair and carries a large torch. Beside him is a miserable looking old git in his night shirt. They do not leave footprints as they go past.

3) A Cry for Help and a Puzzle

As they are making their way around the Palace they will hear a cry.

"Help! Help! Theft! MURDER!"

It comes from a small, well dressed but slightly hysterical man who is standing outside Grimbly's department store in the Maul. The Maul is just about the best and most expensive retail location in the city and Grimbly's is the oldest and most respectable department store. And the man outside is Mr. Grimbly himself. His chief characteristics are 1) Respectability 2) Wealth and 3) Greed. His current state of mind is somewhat distraught because . . .

Someone Has Just Murdered His Hogfather (Oh, and His Elf)

He sobs as he describes finding the bodies and then trembles as he describes the horde of parents and children who are waiting and growing increasingly impatient outside the Grotto.

Outside the store workmen are hanging up a large sign. "YEA! WE HAVE BURFIES!" The part of the waiting crowd that has spilled out into the street cheers as the sign goes up.

Burfies (as everyone in Ankh-Morpork knows) are the heavily advertised children's toy which is supposedly wanted by every child in the city. A miracle of technology, they are supposed to be incredibly lifelike. Children who aren't getting a Burfy this year are certain to make their parents' lives a misery. (Permission is hereby given to update the object of this satire to whatever piece of anthropomorphic merchandising is being hyped at the time this adventure is actually being run.)

The Watch has two problems. To prevent a riot and to solve the murders.

3A) The Scene of the Crime and a Clue

The store owner leads the Watchmen through the "backstage" bits of the store to the Grotto which stands between the loading bays at the back of the store and the toy department. Outside can be heard the muttering of the impatient crowd.

Both the Hogfather and his assistant have been killed at close range by a single shot from a small hand held pistol grip crossbow. The miniature quarrels are quite distinctive. Both were shot by someone standing at the rear entrance to the grotto , the one leading to the loading bays. Although the weapon is a typical Assassin's device, the lack of an official receipt makes it unlikely to be a Guild hit.

Grimbly will grow hysterical and insist that some must take the place of the Hogfather. A look through the drawn curtains at the crowd outside should convince the Watchmen of the truth of this.

Close examination of the two corpses will reveal one thing they have in common. They both wear dirty purple night-shirts under their festive garb. This is A Clue.

3B) Preventing the Riot

Above all, the Watchmen want to prevent the situation at the Department store from getting out of hand. This will not be easy. For when the first child to sit on the Hogfather's lap asks for a Burfy, the store owner will inform whoever is playing the assistant that they can be found in the third loading bay at the back.

When he gets there, there is no such thing. A riot is almost certain to ensue unless someone does something creative. The roar of disappointed children and parents shouting "WHAT DO YOU MEAN THERE ARE NO BURFIES?" is likely to turn into a nasty bit of looting.

(Recruiting Captain Carrot to play the Hogfather is one way of being creative. He makes a terrifying figure, crying "HO! HO! HO! In the Name of the Law! Happy Hogswatch!")

Three leads can be pursued:

The Hogfather and his assistant were recruited from an organisation called Festive Frolickers at 13 The Scours.

The Burfies were ordered from TeeTeeEm Products at 15 The Scours.

If pressed Mr. Grimbly will admit that there is one other major department store in the city. "The upstart bastard Drimbel! He'll have stolen my Burfies! Go get him officers! And get my Burfies back!"

4) At The Scours

Both organisations operate from the same rambling warehouse in a broken down part of town. The person who answers the door is stooped over, short-sighted and dressed in a purple nightshirt. He is the Chief Mad Cultist. With him are a bunch of lesser Mad Cultists who are waiting for the midnight hour to start their Fiendish Ritual. He will be most disturbed at any news of stolen Burfies and will demand explanations. He will also consider drugging and sacrificing any Watchmen who he suspects of being virgins. (True of the Little Match Girl and the Wizard.) Virgins will do at a pinch to open the cosmic pathways and let his hideous masters into the world.

(TeeTeeEm is naturally a contraction of TTMWNMTK.)

5) At Drimbels (on the Street of Merchants)

Outside a similar sign is going up. A similar crowd waits expectantly. The Watchmen will arrive just in time to hear a cry of pain from the Grotto. Inside they will see a man in black street clothes (Yes, a Man In Black), carrying a

wizard's staff. He has just shot both the Hogfather and his assistant and will then run back to the loading bays and jump onto a flying carpet loaded high with crates full of Burfies. He will (if not stopped) fly out of the loading bay and then off in a Turnwise Hubward direction. (Actually towards Unseen University.)

What is Really Going On (Part Two)

The One who has interfered with the evil plans of the Fiendish Cultists is Mervyn Studley, Reader in Forbidden Writings at Unseen U. A sixth level wizard, he believes as sole permitted student of certain of the nastier volumes in the library that it is his duty to protect the Discworld from Things That Man Was Not Meant To Know. He may even be right. He is killing off the Evil Cultists and plans to return the Burfies to their native plane before midnight. He will not tolerate any interference.

Mervyn Studley

6th Level Wizard: 6 dice. Mervyn is an expert on transdimensional incantations and casts a mean fireball or sleep spell as well. (Carries wizard's staff.)

Things That Man Was Not Meant To Know Type Knowledge: 3 dice. He has spent too much time reading books from the Restricted Section. He knows far too much about stuff even most wizards find disturbing. (Has facial tic and wide staring eyes.)

Whim of Steel: 3 dice. He has a mind of unusual strength and has proven to be able to maintain his mental stability in the face of some Very Nasty Things. (Never admits he's wrong.)

Assassins Skills: 3 dice. He has picked up some useful techniques for ending the life of Evil Cultists with the minimum of fuss from some indiscreet friends in the Assassins' Guild. (Wears black a lot. Carries Pistol crossbow.)

Whim of Steel (Downside): He's quite incapable of admitting that he needs help from other people or even of trusting them for a minute.

In GURPS Terms

Studley has whatever Assassin skills he needs at 15 (And the appropriate Unusual Background for having both Wizard and Assassin training. It's a long story, believe me) and whatever spell skills he needs at level 16. His pistol-grip mini-crossbow does 1d+1 impaling and he has the unpleasant habit of shooting it through the right eye of his victim which almost does away with the need for the obscure herbal poison he smears on the tips. He has Strong Will which almost compensates for the mental instability that his high level of TTMWNMTK Type Knowledge is causing. He's not actually Paranoid but is untrusting, harsh and pig- headed.

If They Try to Stop the Man In Black from Leaving . . .

If they attack the flying carpet there will be a major spillage of Burfies. Studley will fly away and leave them to deal with it. If they jump aboard the carpet he will use a sleep spell to knock them out and leave their bodies atop a building.

6) From Here On In . . .

The events are less structured. The Watchmen must discover What Is Really Going On and prevent both major riots and the destruction of Reality As We Know It.

The Following Scenes may be useful:

Getting the Guilds Involved

Getting the Assassins and Thieves Guilds involved will nicely complicate matters. Major acts of inhumation and expropriation have happened without their permission. They will have to be kept sweet.

At the Archchancellor's Party

The Hogswatcheve Party at U.U. is full of the Great And Good of Ankh-Morpork society. The Great Hall has a tree and all the traditional food and festivities. (The Dean is making an ass of himself but there's nothing new in that.) A properly polite approach to the Archchancellor will recruit a posse of the Disc's most powerful wizards to lead the way through the peculiar geometry of U.U.'s corridors to the room of the Reader in Forbidden Writings.

At Studley's Rooms

Knocking on the door gets no reply other than a shout of "Go Away!". Knocking it down is a Bad Idea but almost inevitable under the circumstances. Within you will find a huge pentacle with the Burfies piled high in it. From another protective circle Studley is busy opening a dimensional gate to return them from whence they came. The floor in the larger pentacle is already bending downwards as a pit opens up into the Pit. Sensible people will stop moving too quickly at this moment . . .

The Archchancellor will halt and ask people to step *quietly* and *gently* back into the corridor while he has a word with Reader Studley. He will reemerge to say, in a voice that is almost subdued, that the Reader has been taking necessary action on behalf of the Lore and to encourage the Watchmen to go and mop up any inconvenient loose ends. (Like further supplies of Burfies and the Mad Cultists.) He will also go and bribe, intimidate or sweet talk any other Guilds that are making a fuss.

Sidebar: Burfies

Burfies are cute-looking furry little humanoids who turn out to have lots and lots of teeth and a hungry disposition. They like to eat warm, fresh flesh . . . From a combat point of view they are swarms of creatures.

OTE: Each swarm has up to eight dice with 5 hit points per dice. Each time you do five points of damage to the swarm enough Burfies have died to reduce the dice rating by one.

GURPS: See B143. A swarm of Burfies does 1d+2 cutting damage. It takes 10 points to disperse a swarm.

7) One Last Scene After It Is All Over

As (hopefully) they stagger back towards the Watchhouse, completing their patrol in the early hours of Hogswatch Day they pass by the intersection called Five Ways. A window flies open above a moneylender's shop and the man who the Little Match Girl saw earlier, wandering about in his night-shirt, sticks his head out of the window. He is still in his night shirt . . .

"Hey, you there! Can you tell me what day this is? . . . What Hogswatch Day? Oh, the spirits have done it all in one night! Oh, joy! Tell me is the pig still in the window of the butcher's two streets down? Is it? Hey, hey, no! Come back here . . ."

Sidebar: Things Players Say: Reports from the Playtest

I ran this twice with two groups of players over Christmas 1998. The best scene from the first run was the wizard using his staff to spurt magical snow to accompany Captain Carrot's entrance as the Hogfather. ("The sad thing is," said Daniel who played the wizard, "that he won't see the symbolism of the white stuff spurting from the end of his staff.")

The best bit in the second run was the Little Match Girl's acquiring a Small God to inhabit her teddy bear. Arnold God Of Teddy Bears Who Looks After Little Girls could well be a highly marketable deity. ("He's only a one dice god. I'm more powerful than he is . . .")

Grimbly: You're the Watch?
The Barbarian: Jah!
The Wizard: And he's the Grandfather Clock.

About the Gnome at the Archchancellor's Party: He leaps from table to table hunting the wild sausage.

I charge the door.
How much?
A knockdown price.

Enlighten: Do you know Om loves you?
Surety: Yes, but I love Arnold.

by John Kovalic

Murphy's Rules

Murphy's Rules

Bruno! by Dan Smith

by Scott D. Haring

Peter Adkison, CEO of Wizards of the Coast

Wizards of the Coast had the biggest news story of the GAMA Trade Show, announcing the formation of a new Miniatures Division, and the hiring of Bob Watts (formerly FASA/Ral Partha, and Heartbreaker Hobbies before that) to run the operation. "He was the best person outside Games Workshop," Wizards CEO Peter Adkison said. "It was so important to find someone like Bob Watts . . . the decision to start a miniatures division depended on it.

Adkison said the primary focus of the new division would be to support the roleplaying line, and that means ***AD&D*** miniatures. "We think the time has come to do it in-house," he said. Stepping up to Games Workshop-esque high-dollar, big-boxes-of-miniatures-type games is also a possibility, but one Adkison said they were not going to jump into right away.

Adkison sat down with *Pyramid* editor Scott Haring at the GAMA Trade Show in Las Vegas last month. Here's what else he had to say:

Pyramid: What's new on the card side? ***Pokemon*** was a big hit -- are you looking for the next big hit, or are you going to ride what you have for a while?

Adkison: I think it's important to stay focused. Right now, we're doing very well with our trading card games. ***Magic: The Gathering*** sales are up this year over last, and last year they were up over the previous year, so ***Magic: The Gathering*** is going really, really strong for us, and we're very happy about that. ***Legend of the Five Rings*** is doing extremely well, and ***Pokemon*** is, of course, the new big hit. Right now, I think we want to focus on these products, especially with ***Pokemon*** being so overwhelming in terms of its popularity, we want to make sure we do a really, really good job with it. We are looking down the road, but there are no other trading card game product announcements that are imminent.

Pyramid: Are you looking at bringing out more ***Pokemon*** cards down the line, or are the 120 cards in the original set going to be it?

Adkison: There will definitely be more ***Pokemon*** expansions. We're much more interested in licensing than we used to be, because we've seen the power of licensing in terms of bringing new people into the trading card games category, and that ends up building ***Magic*** in the long run.

Pyramid: The story about how you guys found ***Pokemon*** is that there was a huge spike in your ***Magic*** sales in Japan, and when you investigated, you discovered this other game and saw that it was serving as an introduction to ***Magic.***

Adkison: That's true. We had something like a 45% to 50% transfer rate of ***Pokemon*** players to ***Magic*** in Japan, and

yeah -- ***Magic*** sales just went through the roof in Japan, even though it was a mature market for us. ***Magic*** had been released in Japan in 1994, and here it is four years later and we're seeing this huge spike. It's because of ***Pokemon.*** We're very excited about ***Pokemon,*** not just because it's a great property, but also what it's able to do for our ***Magic*** business in the U.S.

Pyramid: And now you're expanding into China.

Adkison: ***Magic: The Gathering*** will be launched in China this year, in modern Chinese. We're making a pretty dramatic change from traditional way we launch ***Magic*** in a new country, in that we redesigned the whole game for China, using the Chinese mythologies and the legend of the Three Kingdoms, which is a very important part of Chinese history. So instead of having five colors, it's going to have these three kingdoms. We also have a very strong endorsement from the Chinese government to help us spread ***Magic*** through the schools. Whereas some places here in the States, ***Magic*** is occasionally banned from a school or something like that, in China, ***Magic*** is recognized by the government as an official "non-Olympic" sport, a "mental" sport, and that endorsement will allow us to get into the schools. The government is helping us train ***Magic*** teams in 50 universities this year.

Pyramid: How does distribution work? Do you sell to game stores in China? Or do you sell directly to the government and they distribute it?

Adkison: First off, we set up our own office in Beijing, and we'll be selling through regional distributors. Of course, a region in China can be very, very large. We'll work through commercial distributors of hobby-type products; they have hobbies and sports distribution channels where games like mah-jongg are sold. It will look a little bit different, but every country has their form of hobby distribution. We'll work it out.

Pyramid: Who got to go to China? Did you promote from within? Did you hold a lottery?

Adkison: We got very fortunate early on, in that a lot of our success in Asia is due to a guy named Jackson Tse. Jackson is Chinese in origin and he also has a very strong entrepreneurial background; he had a tennis racket company in China. He knows how the system works, he has all the connections, and he has really built our Asian Pacific business. The person who deserves the credit for this is Jackson, because of his passion for the Chinese market.

Pyramid: In a brief announcement, Wizards canceled ***Unglued II*** recently. The announcement said something about a "decision to reduce the number of ***Magic*** products in any given year." Can you elaborate? Was the product not coming together?

Adkison: ***Unglued II*** is there, and I wouldn't say "canceled" as much as "postponed." I'm pretty sure we'll do ***Unglued II*** eventually, just not this year. This is a case where we really listened to a lot of our customer feedback -- one of the most common complaints about ***Magic*** from customers is that we just come out with too many products. It's something we've known for quite a while, and we've looked for opportunities to do (something about it). I'll be honest, there's economic reasons to publish lots of expansions; it's more money. But I think you can credit the success of ***Pokemon*** for helping us with this decision. ***Pokemon*** is doing really well, we're not going to have trouble beating our (sales projection) numbers this year, why don't we take this as an opportunity to scale back a little bit on the pressures we're putting on the ***Magic*** brand by having so many cards come out. And that's the real reason for it.

Pyramid: You also recently implemented a new program for the collectors, involving foil premium cards. How is that going?

Adkison: That has been absolutely wonderful. We have resisted for several years the idea of doing foil cards for whatever reason, and we hesitated at it, because we were worried that . . . we recognized that the collectors would like it, but we were worried about offending the players. But we did it in such a way that none of the foil cards are unique from a design point of view, they're just foil. So the competitive player who is not interested in collecting the cards feels no need to go out and buy these expensive premium cards, but the collectors love it because they get to collect them. At first we thought we'd be happy if it was a "win-neutral" -- a win for the collectors and neutral for the competitive players. It's actually turned out to be a "win-win," because what happens to competitive players when they happen to stumble across a premium card is, they'll go trade it for three or four non-premium cards. So it turns out to

be a win-win for them, too. We're very happy with the way it turned out.

Pyramid: The first product to feature foil cards is . . .

Adkison: Our most recent expansion, ***Urza's Legacy.***

Pyramid: Will ***Classic Sixth*** also have the foil? How about ***Portal***?

Adkison: You know, I'm embarrassed to admit, I just honestly don't know. It's a question that's come up before at this show, and I need to find out. I don't know which expansions we're doing foil cards in and which ones we're not, and even if I did, I also don't know which ones we can say.

Pyramid: Any plans yet for ***Dungeons & Dragons*** characters in a ***Magic*** supplement, or for the seemingly-inevitable ***Magic*** roleplaying game?

Adkison: First of all, I doubt seriously you'll ever find ***Dungeons & Dragons*** characters in ***Magic: The Gathering.*** And I doubt seriously you'll ever find ***Magic: The Gathering*** characters in the ***Dungeons & Dragons*** core property. Now, you might find a separate property, like a ***Magic: The Gathering-Dungeons & Dragons*** crossover property, like a roleplaying game set in Dominaria. We certainly discuss it a lot, and it will probably happen someday, but it's not a priority for us right now. It's just a matter of what are our priorities, in what order, and eventually we'll get to it.

Pyramid: There was a lot of speculation that a crossover RPG was going to be the first thing out of the gate you guys did after the merger.

Adkison: Actually, when I went into it, before I really understood the TSR situation, I thought it would become our highest priority, but as I worked with the TSR situation, I think there are other priorities (we should be) working on. We'll get to it. But right now, I think the introductory products are more important, and of course we're looking very seriously at doing a new edition of the game as well.

Pyramid: Any time frame on ***AD&D 3rd Edition***?

Adkison: No. We haven't committed to it yet.

Pyramid: What's up with ***SAGA***?

Adkison: ***SAGA*** is primarily for our superhero setting. ***Dragonlance*** is now being supported for both ***SAGA*** and ***AD&D,*** so it's a hybrid. We're very comfortable with that approach.

Pyramid: Was the idea behind switching ***Dragonlance*** to ***SAGA*** that to introduce a new system, you had to tie it to an extremely well-established game world to get people to give it a look?

Adkison: That was the original strategy. That happened before the acquisition, and I've been a little outspoken, but I've made it no secret that I think that strategy was flawed. I think it was a mistake to have taken ***Dragonlance*** off of ***Dungeons & Dragons*** and put it on ***SAGA.*** It alienated a lot of ***Dragonlance*** fans. But now that we've done it, introduced new people to ***Dragonlance*** under ***SAGA,*** what do we do? I think it's reasonable just to print ***Dragonlance*** material with both ***D&D*** and ***SAGA*** stats in it. I don't think there's anything wrong with that. We can do that.

Pyramid: How is the initial reaction to the ***Marvel SAGA*** material?

Adkison: That actually went over really well. There was a lot of debate about which system to use for that, too. And I think we picked the right system for that. The ***SAGA*** system works great for superheroes. We're pretty happy with it.

Pyramid: Any plans to use ***SAGA*** for anything else? Something original, or something new on the licensing horizon?

Adkison: No, nothing we can really announce at this time. We're not going to be very aggressive in doing new campaign settings for a while. Our focus is to build what we have. A lot of opportunities for TSR right now have to do

with staying focused on a smaller number of brands, as opposed to diluting our energy over a whole bunch of different lines, and really focusing on making the few lines that we do support as good as possible, and also exploring a lot of the interactive and electronic options for those products. So you'll see a lot of electronic products coming up for TSR, through our active licensing partners. ***Baldur's Gate,*** for example.

Pyramid: Going back to the cards -- are your other card games (***Netrunner, BattleTech, Vampire: The Eternal Struggle***) finished?

Adkison: No, actually no. We have a list of trading card games we call our line of "classic" trading card games, which are really good games we like and want to support, but they're not big enough to justify doing regular expansions. But when people talk about supporting trading card games, let's face it, the customer only cares about one kind of support -- and that's new cards. That's what they really want. What we plan to do is introduce new cards in small numbers -- 40, 50 cards, really mini-expansions, for each of these classic trading card games, and that will include ***Netrunner, V:TES, Spellfire,*** and ***BattleTech.*** We're going to be doing new cards for all those games. We're very excited about that. This is going to be great news for fans of those product lines. ***Vampire*** fans won't have seen new ***V:TES*** cards for two or three years.

Pyramid: Let's talk about vertical integration. The rumor is you've bought the southern California Game Keeper retail chain, in order to turn them into Wizards Game Centers. Is that true?

Adkison: I can't comment on any acquisition rumors.

Pyramid: So it's not a done deal, if it's a deal at all?

Adkison: I can't comment on that.

Pyramid: So there's nothing you can say . . . but the Game Centers in Seattle have been very successful, and you'd perhaps, like to at some point move the concept across the country.

Adkison: That's true. We opened five stores last year. All of them are profitable, doing really, really well for us, and we'd like to open more stores. We plan to open more stores. And the focus of these will be to open them in really good malls, in nice locations in those malls -- 50-yard-line locations -- and the goal of these is primarily recruitment, bringing new people into gaming. By opening them in high traffic areas, especially in malls where you get the mall rats . . . we believe there are another 10 million people out there who are gamers, they just don't know it. Our goal is to open the recruiting centers, pull these kids in off the mall floor, sit their ass down and teach them how to be a gamer. We're not idiots -- we realize that some retailer somewhere is going to be hurt by this, but for the most part, we think that this can be a complement to existing retail, because most existing retailers are not in malls. They're in neighborhood community centers, and they focus primarily on repeat business of gamers who are already in their shop. Most of them don't do a lot to recruit new players. By being only in malls, in places where retailers aren't typically at, we can attract a new market. It seems that this is working in the Seattle area. We do not believe that we have cannibalized Seattle sales to a significant degree by opening five more stores there. We think the biggest opportunity to grow the adventure gaming industry is to improve the overall retailing of our product, and there's just not enough stores out there that carry gaming product and highlight them and demo them and run events around them, and that's what we're doing to try to grow the business.

Pyramid: When you were first opening these Game Centers, you told me that you were going to try a number of different paradigms, fine-tune the concept and figure out what works best. What is the best combination of store features?

Adkison: That combination is a store that is about 2,500 square feet, located in a really nice mall, in a nice location in that mall, a location that combines hobby game retailing, a pretty deep selection with broad market games and electronic games that help bring people into it, and also have a place to play with a lot of regular events -- tournaments, leagues, demo games, pickup games, plus a Local Area Network (LAN) where people can play LAN games. What doesn't it include? The future Game Centers will not include arcades, will not include the virtual reality ***BattleTech*** pods, will not include a restaurant . . . we consider the original Game Center to have been a great success

in helping us figure out exactly what works and what doesn't, and the other five stores have all been variations on what we thought worked, and that's kind of where it's shaken out.

Pyramid: Do you see this as a concept that can be taken national by anybody, or are you specifically looking to take it national yourselves?

Adkison: We want to do both. We think that this is so critically important that we're not going to sit on our laurels and hope other people do it. So we plan on opening a lot of stores along this line. But at the same time, we are working very hard with traditional retailers to help them implement similar types of programs. We're very vocal about describing just what these programs are that we're doing. There are no secrets to this. We would love it if all independent retailers adopted as much of this program (as they can) and give us feedback on what works for them and what doesn't work for them, and together we can all build better stores.

Pyramid: How's Origins and GenCon shaping up this year? Is Andon's move back to Seattle making things easier, now that they're under the umbrella of the Wizards Special Events department?

Adkison: This has been a great move for us. Andon has an amazingly good staff and is a great convention management department, but we've always had some difficulties integrating the Andon people into the rest of the company. Now, with the changes that are going on, under Susan Scheid's leadership, it's going to become more like one department that does both. And this is going to make GenCon and Origins more efficiently run, and we're anticipating that both of those shows will improve, like they improved every year previously we were involved.

Pyramid: The only thing we haven't talked about is computer games. Are you guys still content to license out of house? Are there any plans to maybe someday start your own division for that, too?

Adkison: Actually, we are slowly ramping up an interactive group. We're doing it cautiously, there's a lot of perils in the interactive category. But Hasbro certainly demonstrated that if you build an interactive group around really strong brands, that could be a very successful strategy in the interactive market. We're looking very seriously at doing electronic products based around our brands, like ***Magic: The Gathering*** and ***Dungeons & Dragons.*** So we recently recruited Bill Dugan from Interplay to head up this group for us -- he was the producer for the ***Redneck Rampage*** series of products . . . (laughs) not that that says anything about the products we're going to produce, other than they'll be good, quality productions. The initial focus is going to be more on tool-type products like the ***AD&D Core Rules CD-ROM 2.0*** that did so well for us last year. I have to admit, I think the most exciting product we're coming out with this year is the *Dragon Magazine* product, the first 250 issues of *Dragon Magazine* on CD-ROM. I mean, that's just amazing, it's just mega-cool.

Pyramid: Have you settled the rights problems with the writers on that product? Or are there no rights problems, and the writers are just up in arms over nothing?

Adkison: I *knew* I shouldn't have said anything about that . . . We believe that the concerns that a small handful of writers have expressed with us on this issue is completely groundless. And I love the artists and the authors, and I think I've always had a really good reputation for treating them fairly and we've done a lot of good things for them, but if somebody comes up and asks you to pay them money for something you don't owe them money for, it kind of grates against you the wrong way. So I have to say we're not real inclined to just go off and give these fine people some extra money when we believe we have these rights. We've done a lot of legal research on it, and the law and the case studies all support our position.

Pyramid: Has SFWA (the Science Fiction Writers of America) gotten involved?

Adkison: I'm not going to comment on whatever negotiation processes are underway to try to work this out.

Pyramid: Lastly would be the Internet and online stuff . . . I did see in the last *Dragon* an ad for the ***D&D MUD,*** and I typed in the URL and got kicked to your main page. It's not ready yet? When will it be ready?

Adkison: I'm not exactly sure. We did just recently hire Bill Dugan to head up our Interactive Games Group, and I

think right now everything is kind of in a state of flux while he works on a new plan for where we're going in all these categories, all the different types of electronic products that we do. I can't really comment on any specific one.

Pyramid: Do you sell products direct over the Internet?

Adkison: Oh, absolutely.

Pyramid: So even a company with your kind of distribution, it never hurts to find another way to sell the product?

Adkison: Our long-term vision for distribution is what we call a hybrid distribution system, where we will sell to distributors and retailers and consumers, all at terms that are appropriate for those tiers of the distribution chain. We don't see distribution as an absolute -- you have to do it this way or that way. We think that in many places, a distributor is a really good idea. A huge proportion of our business is done through distributors. But we also love e-commerce, and we think if there are consumers out there who would rather shop on the net, we should be there for them. I think the Internet -- and the stock market certainly agrees -- is going to radically change the paradigm for how products are sold in the world. To sit back and fight against these fundamental economic forces is short-sighted.

Pyramid: How about Internet sites like Amazon.com, Egghead.com, barnesandnoble.com? Do you sell on those?

Adkison: You won't find a full selection of products, anything close to as full a selection of products as you'll find in our own store. At a lot of the Internet resellers, like Amazon.com, you will find various Wizards of the Coast products, a lot of the TSR novels, a lot of ***Dragonlance*** novels, and so on.

Pyramid: Any changes planned in the book department? What you're doing now seems to be working.

Adkison: It works great. The book department has been one of those real nice gems at TSR, even dating back to before the acquisition, TSR always got high marks for its book publishing division. It's done well for many, many years, and it continues to do extremely well for us. We recruited Mary Kirchoff to come back in and lead it -- she was the person who built the division back in the '80s, and with her back at the helm, it's just done absolutely marvelous for us.

Pyramid: How's *Dragon* doing? It seems to be down, both in circulation and in advertising.

Adkison: That's kind of old news. *Dragon Magazine* took a dive many years ago, down to a much lower circulation rate, and we're slowly rebuilding it. In terms of advertising, we're actually getting more advertising than *Dragon* was getting pre-acquisition, because we're able to leverage with all six of our magazines (*Dragon, Dungeon, Duelist, Amazing Stories, Duelist Sideboard, Polyhedron*) for some great economies.

Pyramid: One last question: When you guys bought TSR, did you get the ***Buck Rogers*** license? Was that part of the deal?

Adkison: Uh, no.

Pyramid: Was it a dealbreaker that you *wouldn't* buy the company if it included the ***Buck Rogers*** license?

Adkison: Well, you know, we were very disappointed that that was not going to be part of the deal, but we negotiated a different pricing strategy (that didn't include it).

by Rodney Orpheus

Art by Dan Smith

Death Rally is a ***Car Wars*** variant for those who want to see their tournament characters live a little bit longer than one combat. It is basically a series of linked road battles under various different conditions, inspired by the fact that European highways have no speed limits -- well, some do, but nobody worries very much about it.

A Death Rally campaign works best with a referee, but if you're playing with a friendly group you can do without -- any player not directly involved in a combat can referee for the duration of that combat. Each team starts with six characters, with 60 skill points each, no more than 40 points in any one skill. You can assign these characters to vehicles in any way you like, with non-racing characters forming the support crew -- all repairs and system installation must be done by your team, so make sure some of your characters have Mechanic skill (Paramedic skill can come in handy, too). In a multi-rally campaign, between races teams can replace dead or unwanted team members with new 60-point characters up to their maximum allowance of six team members. Characters always start with 0 prestige.

The team's starting budget is a one-time $100,000 loan. This loan will have to be paid back out of sponsorship and prize money at a rate of $25,000 at the end of each Death Rally. If you can't make the repayments you can try to keep on driving, but you will get threatening visits from shady men in dark suits with very expensive jewelry and weaponry. Teams that have defaulted on loan payments tend to find lots of unfortunate accidents befalling their vehicles and crew members -- destruction of clones is a common warning measure.

The team budget must pay for the team vehicles plus all spares and ammo. Food, lodging, and power plant recharges are free. If your team runs out of money at any time during the rally, tough luck -- you drive with whatever you have left. In cases of real hardship, a team can sell something to raise cash -- selling a weapon in order to buy tires has been known to happen.

Normally each rally team runs two vehicles, each of which can have a maximum of two crew members. The vehicles you start with are the only ones allowed during the course of the race -- you can't buy another vehicle halfway through, though you can modify a vehicle's weaponry, accessories, and armor placing between stages. You also can't replace the team members during the race; if a team member is killed, a clone replacement can be activated for the beginning of the next stage, or you can bring in one of your support crew. Skill and prestige points are awarded to surviving participants at the end of each stage.

Since clones take time to grow, they must all be ordered and paid for before the rally begins. Each clone costs the standard $10,000 to grow. Gold Cross operates special facilities at Death Rallies -- any dead character can have his memories read into his clone immediately at a cost of $5,000. The clone character keeps all the skill and prestige points he has earned to date, minus whatever prestige he lost for dying -- teams should encourage their crews to die bravely!

A Death Rally is run on a time basis. All vehicles start the first stage at the same time. At the beginning of the other

stages, each car starts at a time determined by its time finishing the previous stages. This means that vehicles only come into contact with each other if one car is about to be overtaken by cars behind it during a stage. A car that leads the race from start to finish can come through without a scratch, though this does not happen very often, as you can imagine. Failing to finish a stage for any reason incurs a time penalty. The rally is won by the first car over the finish line, regardless of kills -- i.e. the car with the lowest total time over all stages added together. The total prize money is $10,000 times the number of stages, split three ways: 50% of it goes to the winning vehicle, with 30% for second place and 20% for third place. Yes, that's right, it's almost impossible to actually earn money even by winning a Death Rally, which makes corporate sponsorship a necessity. In a long-running multi-rally campaign, keeping money flowing from the sponsors will be a primary cause of worry for team managers -- remember, sponsors like to see their cars in action, and flamboyant drivers can pull in big bucks in corporate investment. Cautious driving does not get nearly as much exposure, and consequently less advertising revenue. If you want your team to survive and thrive, you will have to drive offensively!

Running the Game

A Death Rally can be run with or without a referee. If you are playing without a referee, any player not participating in the current combat can act as temporary referee.

Choose the rally scenario: normal highway, desert, arctic, etc. Then decide how many stages the race will be run over -- if in doubt, roll 2d6. Several of the most popular European Death Rallies are described at the end of this article. Each player then allocates skill points to his characters and chooses his vehicles and accessories, not forgetting to leave some money in his budget for new tires, ammo, and armor (and maybe weapons and power plants as well).

At the start of each stage, the teams are informed of the length and conditions of the stage. Length can be decided randomly -- 2d6 x 10 miles is good; conditions are chosen using the Death Rally tables below. Roll 1d6 on the Road Condition Table, and 1d6 on the appropriate Weather Table. Modifiers may be added to these rolls for particular events; if you are running a desert rally, for example, the Road Condition roll will have a modifier of at least +1 (no autobahns in the Sahara!), and you should roll on the Desert Weather Table. Note that the conditions of the road and weather also affect the Driving Hazard roll each driver will make later.

Now that they know the driving conditions they're going to be racing under, each player writes down (secretly) the speed that his vehicles will drive at during the stage. When all players have done this, reveal all the speeds and work out the Estimated Time of Arrival of each car, assuming that all will finish without problems. ETA is the number of miles in the stage divided by the speed the car is traveling at. Also calculate the "non-finisher" time for the stage by adding up the ETAs of all vehicles and dividing it by the number of vehicles (to get the average ETA), then double this. In other words, if a car doesn't manage to finish a stage, it is assumed to have taken double the average time for that stage.

Each player now rolls once on the Driving Hazard Table for each car in his team. This table is similar to the one in ***Convoy***; unlike ***Convoy,*** drivers roll only at the beginning of each stage of the rally, regardless of what length the stage is. For each vehicle, roll 2d6, modified as follows: subtract the HC of the vehicle, then -1 for each level of driving skill the driver has, -1 if the vehicle is carrying a navigator (can be a gunner or passenger) or Portable Earth Station, +1 for every 5 mph over 55 that the vehicle will travel at, plus whatever modifiers apply from road and weather conditions.

If a car is immobilized as a result of a Driving Hazard roll, it cannot enter combat during this stage -- count it as a non-finisher and set its time for the stage accordingly. After all rolls have been made, calculate which cars will meet during the course of this stage.

In the first stage, the only cars involved in combat will be those who pick the same starting speed. At the end of each stage, make a note of the position of each car: who's leading, who's running second, etc. In succeeding stages, you can determine combats from looking at the positions and ETAs. Add each car's total time from all the stages so far to their ETA for this stage and see if anyone will be attempting to overtake anyone else. For example, if one car was running 3rd at the end of the previous stage, and his new ETA will put him up to 2nd place at the end of this stage, he will

obviously have to attempt to overtake the car currently holding 2nd place. These two cars must then enter combat during the stage. If more than one car is challenging for the same position, assume that they all attempt to overtake simultaneously; in other words if the ETA of the car in fourth position shows it also moving up to overtake the current number 2, run the combat with 4 attempting to overtake 3 attempting to overtake 2. This is not quite realistic, but makes for more exciting gameplay, so what the hey . . .

Now lay out your road sections, or whatever you're using -- the type of road section you choose depends on the Road Condition roll made earlier; the Ozark Arena map can be fun if you're running a back road or off-road stage. Otherwise lay out two straight road sections, and for each succeeding road section roll 1D6: on a 1-5 it's a straight, 6 it's a curve. The cars involved in the combat begin with 20" between them, traveling at the speed they chose at the beginning of the stage. Cars that survive the combat and are still (reasonably) drivable finish with the ETA calculated earlier. Cars that are not drivable at the end of combat are considered non-finishers (they get towed in) and take the corresponding penalty time. If the leading car manages to put 24" between it and the car following, assume that he's accelerated away. The player in the following car now has a choice: he can either choose to run another combat from scratch (he's caught up again down the road) or he can choose to slow down and finish the stage one minute later than the car in front. Any crew accelerating away from combat while their weapons can still fire will lose a point of prestige each (cowards!)

Special Rules and Tactics

Autobahns are well-maintained European super-highways designed for extremely fast driving conditions. To keep them that way, all dropped weapons are illegal on autobahns. Anti-pollution laws also mean that gas-burning autos are illegal on European roads (though this is frequently violated in unofficial competitions organized by the rebel British AutoDuelling Association -- BADASS).

Death Rally vehicles tend to be designed for speed and flexibility: speed, because getting over the finish line first is what it's all about, and flexibility, since most races are run over greatly varying terrain. Try to design a vehicle that can be reconfigured quickly and easily. Keep in mind the type of conditions that you're likely to encounter -- most races have both highway and off-road sections, so bring tires for both. Spoilers and airdams are vital, and the choice between fitting a front airdam or off-road suspension can be the difference between winning or losing. Since all cars will be traveling fast, accurate weaponry is a must -- hi-res computers, cyberlinks and laser guidance are the order of the day (though dust clouds and sandstorms can make lasers next to useless in desert stages) The restriction on dropped weapons on autobahns means many teams switch rear weapons between stages on the continent.

Don't forget the more exotic accessories either. Supercharger capacitors are useful for overtaking on the autobahn. Radar is essential for low-visibility conditions. If a rally has night stages, think seriously about Light Intensifier Goggles or Infrared. And an Ejector Seat can literally be a lifesaver.

Ammo loading, weapon, armor, and accessory repair and replacement must be done between stages by your team, using the standard mechanic rules. You can buy new parts if you have enough cash, but you still have to install them

yourself. Remember that this takes time: assume normally each character has about 12 hours work time between stages -- characters not assigned to vehicles can work 16 hours.

Tactically, there's one main rule -- drive fast! If you get left behind early in the race, it can be hard to catch up with the field without doing serious damage to your car. Teams running two cars in a race often designate one car as a "leader" and the other as an "enforcer." The leader is designed to get to the front of the pack and stay there, while the enforcer is a heavily armed car whose job is to hang back and take out possible challengers.

Skill and Prestige Points

All combats during a Death Rally will be filmed and broadcast throughout Europe, and via satellite relay around the world -- recently Death Rallies have become very popular in South America, and we have even begun to see Brazilian and Argentinean teams entering European races. At the end of each stage prestige points are awarded as in the normal rules, as are skill points. Additionally, the driver leading the rally at the end of the stage gets an extra point of prestige and an extra point of driving skill (or cycling skill if it's a cycle stage etc.). Note that it's quite possible for a crew to finish a stage behind the leader, but with much higher prestige if they've done well in a firefight -- the crowd loves to see blood!

Given the popularity of Death Rallying, and the huge amount of sustained coverage it gets, it's a magnet for big corporate sponsorship; and of course sponsorship is directly related to fame. Unlike the US, where prestige is clearly associated with individual drivers, in Death Rallies team names (such as Volkspanzer for example) are often as well-known as driver names, and can earn sponsorship accordingly. At the end of any Death Rally count up the total number of prestige points of the surviving characters in each team and multiply it by $5,000 -- that's the team's earning from sponsorship associated with the race -- yes, this is where the real money is. It's quite possible for a team never to win a race yet still earn lots of cash by capturing the public's imagination with daring driving and shooting.

Death Rally Tables

Note: DH=Driving Hazard Table modifier.

If you're playing with a referee, he may set the length and condition of stages in any way he desires, and is not bound by the tables. He can also bring in outside hazards, such as local autoduellists attempting to gain some prestige for themselves by gatecrashing the race (especially common in the Italian section of the Trans-Europe Excess), or fans on foot attempting to slow down an unpopular driver -- make up your own encounters or use the optional Random Encounter Table.

Road Condition Table (1d6)

2 or less: Autobahn 3 lanes DH-1
3: Good Road 3 lanes DH+0
4: Bad Road 3 lanes + debris DH+1
5: Back Road 2 lanes + debris DH+2
6 or more: Off-Road +D1 hazard DH+3

Temperate Weather Table (1d6)

3 or less: Good DH+0
4: Light Rain +D1, Visibility -2 DH+1
5: Heavy Rain +D2, Visibility -3 DH+2
6: Fog +D2, Visibility -3 DH+3

Arctic Weather Table (1d6)

2 or less: Good DH+0
3: Light Snow +D2, Visibility -2 DH+2
4: Heavy Snow +D3, Visibility -3 DH+3
5: Ice +D4 DH+4
6: Blizzard +D4, Visibility -4 DH+5

(Note: Snow tires are available in all types and sizes, and reduce Arctic modifiers by 2. Vehicle HC drops by one. Cost is 150% more than a standard tire of same type)

Desert Weather Table (1d6)

3 or less: Good DH+0
4: Heat Haze Visibility -2 DH+1
5: Dust Cloud +D1, Visibility -3 DH+2
6: Sandstorm +D3, Visibility -4 DH+4

Driving Hazard Table (2d6)

Modifiers: subtract the HC of the vehicle, then -1 for each level of driving skill the driver has, -1 if the vehicle is carrying a navigator (can be a gunner or passenger), +1 for every 5 mph over 55 that the vehicle will travel at, plus whatever DH modifiers apply from road and weather conditions.

0-9: No problems
10-11: Struck small obstacle. 1D6 damage to one randomly chosen tire.
12-13: Struck obstacle. Choose two tires randomly, take 1D6 damage to each.
14-15: Made "panic stop" to avoid large obstacle. 1D6 damage to each tire.
16-17: Ran over large obstacle. 1D6 damage to each tire and 1D6 damage to underbody armor.
18: Vehicle skidded off road and struck tree of 20DP. Take full ram damage to front. Add 15 minutes to ETA.
19: Vehicle left road and rolled. Take full damage. If car is still drivable, add 30 minutes to ETA.
20 or more: Vehicle left road, rolled and burned. Take full damage. If car is still drivable, add 30 minutes to ETA.

European Death Rally Events

Paris-Dakar: The original Death Rally. Route varies depending on the progress of the Oil War, but usually runs through European Union "protectorate" states Algeria, Libya, Chad, Niger, Mali, and Senegal. Grueling, with the added spice of frequent terrorist and guerrilla attacks. 10 stages minimum, road condition roll +2, desert weather. Teams may choose to enter two cars, or one car and two cycles.

Munich-Stockholm: A real test of driving ability. Four stages of superb quality German autobahn (no road condition roll needed, weather temperate), one intermediate stage in Denmark (normal road condition roll, temperate), then three Swedish stages under arctic weather conditions (road condition roll +1). The German stages rarely see speeds of below 100 mph, but don't forget to bring tire chains for later! This event sponsored by Thundercat (one free T-Cat power plant for each team entering the race).

Dublin-Athens: Popularly known as the Trans-Europe Excess -- if you like blood, you'll like this one. Fifteen very assorted stages (normal road condition roll, temperate), one in each of the member states of the European Union. Teams may enter as many cars and cycles as they wish, as long they have people to crew them. Unlike other Death Rallies, salvaging is allowed, and many low-budget teams finance their entries in this manner, lending the race a somewhat "Amateur Night" atmosphere. (Stopping to salvage a wreck adds a minimum 15 minutes to your ETA -- see standard ***Car Wars*** Mechanic repair rules for exact salvage times.) Patriotic fervor runs high in the TEE, and it is not unknown for enthusiastic fans to join in to help their heroes in the middle of a combat. So don't try to overtake the British Champion until you're well across the English Channel.

Bombard RAC Death Rally: Organized by the Royal Autoduelling Club of Great Britain, this small but varied competition attracts many first-time drivers as well as the big boys. Run across the North of England from Harrogate to Carlisle, its five short stages usually see some excellent combats. Sponsored by Bombard Life Assurance, so each team member is given one free clone and free programming. (Road condition roll +2, temperate weather. Each stage is only 1D6 miles in length, fourth stage takes place at night.)

Death de France: The major cycle competition of the season, this runs clockwise around France via Paris, Cambrai, Reims, Strasbourg, Lyon, Nice, Marseilles, Narbonne, Toulouse, Bordeaux, Rennes, Rouen, Paris. The famous Yellow Jersey is awarded to the leader of each stage, giving him an extra prestige point and a new set of Improved Body Armor each time. Twelve stages, each normal road condition roll, temperate weather; except for stages 4 and 5, which are back roads, arctic weather (the French Alps); and stages 6 and 7, which are off-road, desert weather, 1d6 miles long (they're held on the beach in the Riviera). Bring lots of clones.

Random Encounters

Should you want to spice up a Death Rally campaign, you can add random encounters. To see if vehicle will be involved in one of these, roll 2d6 at every stage and add 1 for every full 5 points of prestige the crew of the vehicle have, plus another 1 if they are currently leading the race. On a total of 13 or more, they will encounter something unexpected (roll another 2d6 on the Random Encounter Table). If the random encounter involves combat, run the encounter at the same time as any other combat that should occur during the stage -- which can make for some fast and furious multi-way duels!

Death Rally Random Encounter Table (2d6)

2: A local bandit gang decide to earn some money from the Rally. Six bikers (each is Cyclist +1, Gunner +1, Handgunner +1, wearing Improved Body Armor and carrying a LAW, an SMG and a tear gas grenade each -- these guys are pros). They are riding $40,000 worth of bikes and come up behind your vehicle -- entering combat 20" behind you, initially going 20 mph faster. They will try to immobilize the vehicle but allow the racers to live if they surrender. Should they win the combat they will kidnap the racers (regardless of whether they are alive or dead). They will offer to ransom them back to the team -- a live character is worth $1,000 x his number of prestige points. A dead body is worth half that -- you may need it for programming a clone. A live character not ransomed becomes a dead character -- the team can activate a clone if they have it already programmed. Any clone activated because a character was not ransomed loses 5 prestige points -- the team's lack of commitment reflects badly on the character.

3: A local ace autoduellist decides to get some press by taking you on. He's a Driver +2, Gunner +1, wearing body armor and driving a Division 30 duelling car with a ram plate. He enters the combat 24" ahead of the leading vehicle, going the wrong way! He starts at 55 mph and will accelerate 5 mph per turn and try to ram any car in front of him, firing as he comes. He'll keep firing until one of the vehicles in the combat is immobilized, then he'll stop and strut around for the cameras (if he's still alive). Oh, did I mention that each side of the road is lined with 200 DP concrete barriers and there's no way off the road?

4: Ten opposing fans decide you're doing too well. They set up a barricade (2d6 random barrier counters -- chains, oil drums, obstacles, whatever) and hide behind it armed with a random assortment of hand weapons (4d6 grenades, 1d6 LAWs, 2d6 VLAWs, and 1d6 SMGs -- these are serious fans!) All have basic Handgunner skill and are wearing body armor. They will start firing when the vehicle is within 8". The side of the road is completely littered with debris, and is a +D1 hazard. Should the vehicle turn around and go back, consider it a non-finisher for this stage and deduct 5 prestige points from each racer (you ran away from pedestrians?!?!).

5: A bunch of punk kid autoduellists decide you're not so hot after all and enter combat to prove it. They are each Driver, Gunner, Handgunner, have a shotgun and 4 grenades each, and have 3 Division 10 vehicles between them (use as many punks as can fit in the cars). They enter combat in a line abreast 20" behind you, going at 20 mph faster than your current speed. They are pumped up on various illegal pharmaceuticals and will fight to the death.

6: An unknown saboteur has placed a limpet mine under your vehicle! If you're in a combat during this stage it goes off at the beginning of combat. Otherwise just calculate 1D6+1 damage to your underbody armor at the end of the stage.

7: A TV station does a special report on your team -- give each character on your team an extra point of prestige.

8: One of the celebrity actresses from "Roadwatch" takes a shine to your driver -- gossip shows add 5 prestige points to his rating.

9: A sponsor offers the team a bonus if they can generate some excitement to go with their big advertising slot -- any character finishing this stage with more prestige points than he started it with earns the team $10,000 cash.

10: One of your sponsors is very pleased with the coverage your team is getting and awards you an instant bonus of $1,000 x the total prestige earned by the team in this race so far.

11: 20 drunken fans invade the road. They are unarmed and spread out across the road blocking it completely. The road is in a narrow cleft, so you can't go around them. You can choose to stop or shoot. If you stop, they will mob the car, rip off souvenirs, and ask for autographs -- making you a non-finisher for this stage, but gaining you a point of prestige. Should you start shooting they will panic and run around in random directions at 12.5 mph, changing direction every turn. When they run off the road they disappear into the hills. If you get through the fans by shooting, add one point of driving skill to the driver, one point of gunnery skill for each character manning a vehicular weapon, and one point of Handgunner skill for each character using hand weapons; however for every fan you kill, lose one point of prestige (your fan club won't be happy).

12: A terrorist assault team have decided to use the Death Rally as a way of getting some free publicity for their cause. The assault team is well-trained and equipped -- all are Handgunner +1, wearing body armor and carrying an SMG, 2 VLAWs, and 2 grenades each. They have set up an ambush at a gully -- there's no way to go off the road. Three are on each side of the gully, one group manning a tripod MG and the other a tripod RR; they are 12" in front of the leading car (the ambush is well-hidden), and will open fire immediately. The assault team is well dug in and camouflaged, -3 to hit on top of the usual modifiers. They are a suicide squad and will fight to the death. For each terrorist you kill gain an extra prestige point -- everyone likes to see the bad guys get it.

by Scott D. Haring

Pyramid Interview: Scott Palter

Feared dead and buried by its many fans, West End Games has made quite a comeback the last few months, culminating with their announcement the last day of the GAMA Trade Show that they had sealed the deal to do an all-new ***DC Universe*** roleplaying game.

The new West End is affiliated with a French company called Yeti. A recent press release explains, "WEG / Yeti is a brand new corporation which will produce new fun stuff. WEG / Creative Design Group is a bankrupt corporation liquidating inventory to pay off its debts under court supervision. Separate assets, separate check books, separate bank accounts. Continuity from a creative standpoint." Yeti is described as a company that "has produced over 50 choose-your-own-ending books published in France by Hachette. Originally a graphic design house that still works on books, cartoons, and multimedia, their decision to become a game publisher last year led them invariably to the doors of West End Games."

We caught up with West End Games President Scott Palter at the GAMA Trade Show (the day before the ***DC Universe*** announcement), and this is what he had to say.

Pyramid: Let's talk about the new West End Games. You have a partner, a French company?

Palter: Yes, the exact legalities are still being worked out, but basically we are in a partnership with Yeti, which is a French company that does roleplaying and cards.

Pyramid: Are any of their products currently available in America, or are they strictly French-language, in France?

Palter: French language, in France. They haven't even (tried to crack the American market) in a proper way yet. That's part of what they're looking to us for.

Pyramid: Are you going to be bringing their products over to America in addition to creating new games?

Palter: Yes. Not every product of theirs will come here, not every product of ours will go there. Part of what we're trying to do is, to pick what will work in what are two different but still similar gaming cultures.

Pyramid: Your first new product is a card game?

Palter: It's a card game called ***Zoon.*** It's a very simple strategy card game. You get a 33-card deck: two 16-card armies and one card of rules. You line them up in two rows of eight, you play them against each other until one side or

the other is eliminated. Each army has their own cute little special features, and we're coming out with four armies at a time, roughly quarterly.

Pyramid: So the cards don't mix and match?

Palter: You can create multi-race armies if you want. But if you're buying Deck A, it is these 33 cards. If you buy Deck B, it has these (other) 33 cards in it. We are not touching the collectible market.

Pyramid: So there is some strategy in deck building and deck tuning, but it's not a collectible game.

Palter: Think ***Cosmic Encounter*** and the expansion sets. Each expansion had different things, but if you bought Expansion #6, every Expansion #6 is the same.

Pyramid: And that's the first product from the "new West End" . . .

Palter: Yes, that will come out roughly the fourth week of May.

Pyramid: And what else is on the drawing board?

Palter: For late June or early July, you'll have ***Paranoia, Third Edition,*** followed roughly eight weeks later by a new ***Paranoia*** book, ***Bug Sector.*** There's also going to be another major roleplaying line, but we can't announce it yet. (This turned out to be the aforementioned ***DC Universe*** game.)

Pyramid: ***Paranoia*** was the property of the old West End, right? How did you free it up?

Palter: We have purchased, through the bankruptcy court, the intellectual property, certain specific license contracts, and the trademark.

Pyramid: So it's all been signed off on by the courts.

Palter: Again, it's still within a certain appeals period, but so far the secured creditor, who's the only one paying any attention, has signed off on the deal.

Pyramid: I heard that there were some glitches in the bankruptcy proceedings because of some confusion over financial transactions between West End and its parent company (shoe importer Bucci Retail Group). Anything to that?

Palter: It's a completely correct misreading of what happened. First, the Chapter 7 rumor was not a rumor. We had one attorney for the shoe bankruptcy and the game bankruptcy. The U.S. Trustee, after six months, changed her mind and decided that there was a conflict of interest. So we acquired a second attorney. The second attorney got into what amounted to a spitting contest with the U.S. Trustee's Office, they threw us into Chapter 7 for a week, and at the request of our attorney and the only secured creditor, we were taken out. Part of the reasoning of the Trustee's Office for why there should be separate attorneys was that there were multiple, very large dollar transactions between the shoe company and the game company which we disclosed to the court. Our argument for why it wasn't a problem is that the vast bulk of the money, for the last year -- which is the contestability period -- went shoes to game. The shoe creditors have signed off on it, treated it as a zero asset, and dropped all their claims to it. So by our logic, as the game company would have to refund hundreds of thousands of dollars, and the shoe company's creditors had agreed they didn't have to, there was no conflict. The court didn't agree, and wants a further review of it. They've appointed a separate set of accountants that will audit the books. I welcome it; I've got nothing to hide. We're the ones who alerted the courts to it. I may have done a lot of stupid things; I may have done a lot of foolish things; but I didn't do anything illegal.

Pyramid: Can you describe the relationship between West End and Bucci?

Palter: We had about 11 companies that owned pieces of each other. Trust me, you don't want to know the corporate structure.

Pyramid: So ***Paranoia*** has been rescued from the old West End . . .

Palter: ***Paranoia*** has been purchased; the original designers (Greg Costikyan, Dan Gelberg, and Eric Goldberg) are still contesting that.

Pyramid: But you plan to have it out this summer?

Palter: Let's put it this way: There is yet to be a hearing on their claim. I don't think there's any validity to their claim. Per the court, we can continue to act on this, subject to further review. The worst that may happen is that if what I regard as bizarre legal theory holds any water, we may have to give them back further money. But it's all being done with notice to Eric and Greg and to their attorneys.

Pyramid: You're moving forward with ***Paranoia.*** How many of the other old West End properties would you like to rescue and bring back out?

Palter: We did not move any of what people think of as our licenses. ***Star Wars, Xena, Indiana Jones,*** all of that stays in the old company. The only so-called licensed product (we're bringing over is ***Paranoia***) -- and I think only industry insiders know that ***Paranoia*** was a license from three outside designers, two of whom happened to have been working for the company at the time, one of whom it also happens was president of the company at the time. We are pursuing with the new company several brand new licenses. The legal mess of trying to move one of those license contracts . . . trust me, you don't want to know.

Pyramid: So, going down the list of famous great West End products, from ***Star Wars*** to ***Xena*** to ***Shatterzone*** . . .

Palter: No, ***Shatterzone*** moved. It was not a license, it was an internal. ***Torg*** moved, it was not a license, it was an internal.

Pyramid: ***Ghostbusters.***

Palter: ***Ghostbusters*** -- we don't own the license, it reverted to Columbia some years ago. ***Bloodshadows*** moved. Everything else in terms of roleplaying stayed put, but the systems -- ***D6, Masterbook, Torg,*** etc. -- moved.

Pyramid: Will you be doing new ***Torg, Bloodshadows,*** or ***Shatterzone*** stuff?

Palter: We have no intention of doing ***Bloodshadows*** or ***Shatterzone.*** We have spoken to some people about licensing it out, because there are a few fans out there who want to do it. We will do a ***Torg Second Edition*** for GenCon for the year 2000, a 10th anniversary. The main reason for continuing to do that one and not the other two: When he dived down a rabbit hole last summer, with our whole 40-some-odd dollars in the bank, we did a frantic Internet sale. Previous to that sale, our sales were 90% ***Star Wars*** and ***Xena.*** We were *amazed* at how much ***Torg*** selling there was, and we discovered that it still had a fan base that we thought was big. We did not find the same for ***Bloodshadows*** or ***Shatterzone,*** regardless of how deep we cut (the price). I've been told by several of my ex-employees that I'm living in a dream world on ***Torg,*** that it was the same 300 people filling in their collections. Maybe. I've been wrong before. However, we own a ton of it, I have a duty to the creditors to try to help sell it off; if you don't freakin' advertise new (product), there's no way anyone's going to buy it. We've had eight months since there's been a West End ad anywhere; this is the first convention we've attended since GAMA last year. Without public visibility, without new product, without ***Torg*** demos, without anything, you can basically throw the remaining inventory in a dumpster and the creditors will get nothing. That might be convenient, but it's not morally correct.

Pyramid: Do you see the new West End as primarily still a roleplaying game? How many different genres are you going to try to get into?

Palter: We were never a miniatures company. We did ***Star Wars*** miniatures because it was something our players wanted. If we ever had a license of that size, I could see doing miniatures because the players like having little figures. But if you look at how we handled ***Star Wars,*** he never handled it as a true miniatures line; it's not our forte. Boardgames, we have one project we will probably do, which is ***Kings & Things.*** The main reason we're going to be

doing it is because our French -- whether you want to call them affiliate, partner, I don't want to trip over the legalities until the last comma is in place, but our French associates -- are going to be printing it in French. Given that, with a few black-plate changes, we can create a few thousand copies in English.

Pyramid: ***Junta***? You guys still own that?

Palter: Yes, we're still *selling* that.

Pyramid: It's in print?

Palter: It's been in print for two years. Now try to get a distributor to take it. We currently have about 1,500 copies; we currently sell about five a month. The only reason we hold on to the license is that the foreign language editions pay the minimum.

Pyramid: Have you had any trouble convincing the distributors and retailers to come back to you?

Palter: Actually, they've been very supportive. Far more than we probably deserve. And all I can say is, "thank you thank you thank you."

Pyramid: Maybe they will start buying some ***Junta.***

Palter: The problem with ***Junta*** is that the whole industry is so against backlist that they don't understand it anymore. This is an industry geared to a comic book mentality of clear the shelves out every month. And that works if you're trying to sell a certain sort of popular, of-the-moment stuff. No one in the industry -- I shouldn't say no one, (but) very few left -- seem to remember how to sell perennials.

Pyramid: What's the solution to that? Can individual manufacturers take on the mission of education? Is that something GAMA needs to do more of?

Palter: I don't think the solution is either one. I think the solution is selling directly to those retailers who've been told it's out of print, which back us into a corner we'll do, and selling over the web, which is where four out of the five go. It's unfortunate, but it's a fact. ***Magic*** has done wonderful things for our industry, but it's very much increased the whole frontlist emphasis. And it's not just in terms of mentalities, it's in terms of the capital it absorbs. It's a cycle -- a ***Magic,*** one of the Decipher space games releases a new thing -- it soaks up so much of the retail and the distributor dollars, there just isn't an energy focused there for the rest of it. And to be blunt, if it was my money on the line, I wouldn't do anything differently than they would. We have to find ways to work around their economic realities, because the reality is that the cash term runs the other way.

Pyramid: Despite those realities, obviously you're still optimistic about a future in the adventure game business. You could have run off and gotten a day job somewhere, but you stuck around and are doing some very difficult things to get back into the business.

Palter: I believe the consumer's still there. I believe that the Internet sales we've had these last eight months prove it. We did nothing for advertising, we have a website that isn't on any search engine and you have to work hard to find, and on top of that, some place in Florida has westendgames.com, so we're .net. Despite it, we're still alive, more than half due to web sales. So there is a way around it. And it's not to denigrate what the distributors do, I'd rather go back to the way it was four years ago, but none of us have that option.

by Shane Ivey

Art by Dan Smith

It is a staple of modern investigative roleplaying, and the bane of overtaxed gamemasters everywhere: the spontaneous request for a background report. (I will pause here for the GMs out there to utter a reflexive groan of irritation.) It sounds so easy as a player: "Hmmm, this guy is acting suspicious. Let's run a background report on him." The gamemaster, of course, is then stuck with the challenge of faking a complete history for a character who may have been invented not 30 seconds before.

If you have prepared the character ahead of time, no doubt you will be ready for such impertinence with a handout detailing what the authorities know about the individual, crafted so as to offer hints and possible false leads for the players to reason through. And for important characters this is a necessity: even a minor detail can be turned by crafty players into a completely new plotline. But relatively minor characters rarely get this kind of attention from the Game Master. And players can usually tell. If you deliver a complete background report handout for Villainous Victor, and you answer the same question with monosyllabic muttering about Nobody Ned, the sense of mystery will be diminished by that slight degree.

If, as is often the case, you have been caught with a background investigation request from out of left field, this is a tool to make your life a little easier. Get your dice, get a pencil, and prepare to spend the next 90 seconds preparing an answer to those pesky players' demands!

Preliminary Reports and Full Reports

A background investigation will delve into a variety of facets of a subject's life. Some of those facets are more easily explored and reported than others. Legal records, criminal records, and credit ratings are all routinely recorded in local or national computer databases, easily accessible with the proper clearance or contacts. Other facets of a subject's background, such as personal behavior, work history, and medical history, can often only be obtained by conducting careful interviews of people known to the subject and following the "trail" that is developed from each new set of facts. For convenience, these different levels of investigation are categorized here as preliminary reports and full background reports.

Preliminary reports typically require only a search of computer databases or a few minor phone calls to compile, and may be completed in 1d6 hours -- or in a manner of minutes if the player characters have solid investigative resources and access to the right databases. Preliminary reports include:

* Criminal Background
* Civil Legal Background
* Credit Rating

Full background reports require more in-depth investigation, often requiring detailed reviews of records or interviews of individuals who know the subject. Note that some information may not be available to a standard background investigation: most background investigations will not have the authority to request medical records, for instance. Full reports take at least 2d3 days to obtain, and sometimes more. Full reports include:

* Tax Records
* Medical Records
* Professional Standing
* Academic Standing
* Personal Background

Form and Scope

Start each background investigation report with the "basics" of the character: include the character's full name, date of birth, and place of birth. (There are no charts for the basics -- you're on your own here.) If the character's place of birth is unusual, add a sentence clarifying the character's situation. Then write the "meat" of the report, the items described below. Where it is feasible, each "item" of the background investigation report should be written as one sentence. This will enable you to compile a complete report in a single clear paragraph for the players to review.

It will quickly become apparent that these tables are somewhat cursory. This is intentional. They reflect American terminology and characters, primarily because the author is American and is much less familiar with the various trends and legal patterns of other countries. International game masters will hopefully be able to adapt the information easily to their own settings. These tables also do not reflect the wide demographic variety of even the United States, but instead offer a single simple chart to use for any character. It should not be difficult to alter the results slightly if you are hurriedly developing characters whose background ought to include more or less likelihood of a particular incident or circumstance.

Finally, note that a background investigation can leave a lot of holes and unanswered questions. Particularly if the players leave it to non-player characters to conduct the BI for them, it is entirely possible that a fact was misinterpreted or even missed altogether, leading to a dangerously inaccurate report. Use this fact to allow yourself some flexibility as the gamemaster. If you roll an item here which later contradicts what you need to do with the character, go ahead and allow the contradiction. When the players conduct a more thorough investigation of the facts you can allow them to "figure out" exactly what they got wrong, and blame it on the NPCs they enlisted to do the grunt work for them.

After all, the rules are for the little guys -- er, the players.

Criminal Background

Past Convictions (1d100)

01-50 None
51-85 1d3 minor violations
86-90 1d8 minor violations
91-94 1d3 misdemeanors
95-97 1d8 violations + 1d3 misdemeanors
98-99 1 felony + 2d4-2 misdemeanors
00 1d6 felonies + 2d4-2 misdemeanors

For felonies, roll 1d100:
01-90 indicates a local felony;
91-00 indicates a federal felony.

Sample Violations (1d4)

1 Speeding
2 Parking
3 Loitering

4 Disorderly Conduct

Sample Misdemeanors (1d6)

1 Vandalism
2 Petty Theft
3 Disturbing the Peace
4 Drug Possession (marijuana)
5 Driving While Intoxicated
6 Trespassing

Sample Local Felonies (1d12)

1 Conspiracy (with others to commit a felony)
2 Drug Possession (cocaine, heroin, PCP, LSD, or methamphetamines)
3 Drug Distribution
4 Fraud
5 Burglary
6 Grand Larceny
7 Armed Robbery
8 Extortion
9 Assault
10 Kidnapping
11 Manslaughter
12 Murder

Sample Federal Felonies (1d10)

1 Tax Fraud
2 Smuggling
3 Transportation of a Fugitive
4 Transportation of Drugs
5 Transportation of Firearms
6 Transportation of Stolen Property
7 Bank Robbery
8 Assault on a Federal Officer
9 Interference with the Mail
10 Misrepresentation as a Federal Officer

Civil Legal Background (1d100)

Roll 1d3 times per ten years. For each incident roll 1d100: 01-50 indicates the character was plaintiff; 51-00 indicates the character was defendant.

01-50 None
51-75 Divorce
76-88 Divorce + Custody Dispute
89-93 Contract Violation
94 Civil Rights Violation
95 Assault
96 Battery
97 Fraud

98 Trespass
99 False Imprisonment
00 Wrongful Death

Credit Rating (1d100)

01-25 Perfect.
26-75 Good: moderate debts, no more than minor problems in the past.
76-90 Poor: high debts, multiple delinquencies or defaults.
91-00 Bankrupt: 1d6 years ago.

Tax Record (1d100)

01-75 Clean Record: payments have been timely and accurate.
76-95 Fair: 1d3 minor incidents (serious delay or discrepancies).
96-00 Poor: Suspicion or conviction of tax fraud, possibly resulting in fines and/or jail time.

Medical Record (1d100)

01-50 No major injuries.
51-00 1d4 major temporary conditions or injuries.

Constitution (3d6)

03-06 Major chronic health problems.
07-09 Minor chronic health problems (asthma, heavy smoking, Gulf War Syndrome, etc.).
10-18 No significant health problems.

Sample Major Chronic Problems (1d8)

1 Diabetes
2 Substance Abuse
3 Nerve damage
4 Sexually Transmitted Disease
5 Severe allergies or asthma
6 Spine damage or deformity
7 Hemophilia
8 Cancer or leukemia

Professional Record (1d100)

Roll once per ten years or fraction thereof:

01-30 Excellent: one job, excellent performance.
31-80 Good: adequate performance at one job or excellent performance at 1d3+1 jobs.
81-90 Poor: problematic performance at 1d4 jobs.
91-00 Very poor: problematic performance at 1d3+3 jobs.

Educational Record

Each game system has a different method to determine a character's education. This chart will allow some rough fleshing-out of the numbers generated by your game.

Formal problems (1d100)

01-70 None
71-90 Academic probation
91-95 Disciplinary problems
96-00 Suspension: Academic probation and/or disciplinary problems

Personal Background

For each ten years roll 1d3 locations of past residence according to the character's role and background.

Location (1d100)

01-90 United States
91-95 A Territory of the United States
96-00 Another nation

Personality (1d100)

01-35 Friendly and well-liked
36-70 Moderately Friendly
71-85 Quiet and distant
86-95 Sullen
96-99 Belligerent
00 Frightening

Dependability (1d100)

01-40 Very dependable
41-90 Usually dependable
91-00 Not dependable

Ethics (1d100)

01-30 Scrupulous
31-90 Average
91-00 Always breaks the rules

Conclusion

Player 1 (the Professor): "He says his name is Ned, does he? I don't like him."

Player 2 (the Cop): "Let's run a background check on him. Just to be sure." (Both players eye the gamemaster smugly.) Gamemaster (after 60 seconds of furious dice-rolling and note-taking): "You get a preliminary report back in a few minutes from your friend in the Company. Ned Nobody, age 45, businessman. His record is pretty clean; he had a couple of loitering tickets in college and a parking ticket four years ago, then a drunk-and-disorderly violation right after that. He's been in court a few times: plaintiff in a contract dispute eleven years ago; defendant in an assault lawsuit (no criminal charges were pressed) two years ago, then his wife divorced him. Fair credit rating, but he's been

listed delinquent on his mortgage payments twice, and his credit cards are charged up pretty high. Your friend wants to know if you need a full background or not."

Player 1 (writing furiously): "Wait! How do you spell 'loitering'?"

Player 2: "Sheesh. With that much background, this guy *must* be somebody important. Better run that full check."

Gamemaster (smugly): "No problem."

by Phil Masters

Art by andi jones, Scott Reeves and Dan Smith

GURPS Who's Who is a slightly unusual project. It will consist of (at least) two volumes (with volume 2 due out later this year), each detailing 52 historical characters in ***GURPS*** terms. Each individual figure gets two pages, with a description in game terms, biographical notes, and ideas for using them in play. These characters can be used as NPCs (or even PCs) in historical, semi-historical, and time travel games, or as models for fictional game characters. The book contains lots of material on possible alternate histories, along with weird and illuminated stuff, but it's still at heart a historical sourcebook; each character has been intensively researched, and only individuals who were reasonably well-documented -- who could be handled as much more fact than fiction -- were selected for inclusion.

The How of It

Given that the book ranges across history, from Akhenaten, the heretic pharaoh of ancient Egypt, to H.P. Lovecraft, the twentieth-century dreamer of weird dreams, there's an extremely large amount of research implied here. A single author could have written this book, given *plenty* of time and patience, but this wasn't really practical. Instead, Steve Jackson Games took a different approach; they appointed me as editor/compiler, and issued an invitation to potentially interested parties to create entries. This was a kind of competition, a way for new writers to show what they could do and old ***GURPS*** hands to amuse themselves by exercising their historical interests, and a nice way of putting the energy and knowledge of ***GURPS*** fans across the globe to good use. (I received -- and used -- submissions from North and South America, more than one European country, Australia, and New Zealand.) The Internet enabled us to run this reasonably smoothly and to a tight schedule.

The results were interesting, and rather impressive. I must admit that I assumed that I'd end up using one submission from each of 52 different people, covering some pet historical interest -- maybe two or three from some real fanatics. Indeed, some excellent submissions were on these lines, and given more time, I probably could have assembled a book with 52 authors. However, we didn't need to wait as long as that would have taken for volume 1, as some insanely energetic contributors came through with multiple submissions. ***GURPS*** fans, it turns out, include some people who must really enjoy reading biographies . . .

For the record, the first submission came in a couple of weeks after the first announcements went out; the character in question was Renaissance astronomer Tycho Brahe, complete with pet elk and prosthetic silver nose. This, incidentally, gave us our first example of one of the project's recurrent minor themes; how to fit ***GURPS*** game mechanics to the stuff that comes out of the history books. How *do* you handle a silver prosthetic nose? We found solutions to these questions, sometimes after some debate in the playtest groups. (Never mind the silver nose, the issue

of Queen Elizabeth I's IQ stat saw some fascinating, and fortunately not *excessively* heated, quotation and counter-quotation from sources.)

Putting Stuff (and People) Together

As editor-compiler, my job was of course to assemble the book, tidy up the submissions (cutting some of them to length sometimes involved having to hack away some details that I'd *love* to have left), write the introduction, first "overview" chapter, and appendices, and generally give it some unity. As I worked on this, one minor point about the format of the book became more obvious.

As I said, it mostly consists of 52 two-page spreads from a number of people. That's 52 *separate* entries -- and yet, some of these people will have known each other -- or could have met, anyway. While I'm sure that ***GURPS*** GMs are smart enough to spot these potential interactions, the format of the book -- which generally works very well -- didn't permit them to be emphasized. Well, this article is an overview of the project, so perhaps it's the best place to point out a few interesting options.

Alexander's Tuition

The first possibility for meetings between characters from the book -- and one of the most obvious -- takes place in Ancient Greece. It's unlikely that either Alexander the Great or the philosopher Aristotle met the rather older cavalry officer and author, Xenophon, although it wouldn't be very hard to imagine him and Aristotle colliding, especially as Xenophon did have a passing interest in philosophy -- and his stories of Persia could in turn have been passed on to the younger man. Because Alexander and Aristotle knew each other well, with Aristotle being employed as Alexander's tutor. Indeed, the boyhood of the future conqueror would be a fascinating topic for time travelers to study, and they could take in some meetings with the founder of Western thought.

Then, leaving aside the married life of the Byzantine rulers Justinian and Theodora -- who were included in the book as a matched pair -- the next potential cross-links come in the Middle Ages.

Too Many Olafs?

One possible confusion that may be worth a warning; Leif Eriksson, discoverer of Vinland, met King Olaf Tryggvason of Norway, who was endeavoring to convert his lands to Christianity. This was *not* the same Olaf in whose court Harald Hardradi was raised; rather, they were cousins. They *both* worked to spread the religion; Norway evidently took a fair amount of converting.

Although Leif and Harald only overlap by five years, a long-running ***GURPS Vikings*** campaign could certainly take in meetings with both. For a bonus, after Harald's death in 1066, younger PCs could even travel east to emulate his career in Byzantium's Varangian Guard -- in the service of Emperor Alexius I, who also appears in this book. This could make these Last Vikings (or Saxon refugees) witnesses to the First Crusade.

Other medieval characters appearing in this book would be unlikely to collide, although really determined travelers could run into Ibn Battuta and Geoffrey Chaucer, somewhere around the Mediterranean, or could witness the roles played by both Chaucer and Joan of Arc in England's interventions in European politics. (Though that would require a campaign covering 20 or 30 years.) Still, things get more complicated with the Renaissance.

Paracelsus the Plot Device

Several of the book's 15th- and 16th-century European characters have overlapping lifespans and lived within a few hundred miles of each other (or less), but few provide such an easy mechanism for making connections as Paracelsus, whose early travels are not all known -- but who certainly went a *long* way in the search for knowledge. A particularly obvious plot would involve the young student of alchemy and medicine seeking out the aging genius Leonardo da Vinci in Italy or France. PCs could become involved if the old man asked the youth for some service in exchange for

tuition in anatomy -- or if the cocky young Paracelsus gave Leonardo some information that demanded investigation. Later, Paracelsus could become involved in, say, the more *secret* machinations of the young Catherine di Medici, who might have found herself in a tricky enough position at the French court to need the aid of an expert in outre arts.

Meetings With Remarkable People

The Court of Gloriana

One of the running jokes between some of us who worked on this book was that it could easily have turned into ***GURPS Court of Queen Elizabeth I***. In the end, only three characters from that setting appear in the book, but there could easily have been many more (and there'll probably be some in volume 2). As her biography notes, Elizabeth had a knack for picking good advisors, and also a taste for the arts. She sometimes employed the services of both John Dee and William Shakespeare, directly or indirectly, and doubtless exchanged at least passing conversation with both; it would be no great stretch to have both somewhere around the court on the same day (and some of Dee's ideas and reputation apparently influenced Shakespeare's work). Though Shakespeare's fortunes rose as Dee's fell, a tongue-in-cheek swashbuckling game could feature both the scholar-cryptographer and the enigmatic playwright -- and if, to borrow an idea from one of Ken Hite's past columns, some of Shakespeare's plays encode arcane information in their plot or language, Dee would likely be the best person in all London to explain it -- or to blame for it.

Dee definitely traveled around Europe; Shakespeare may also have done so, especially if one accepts some of the more romantic theories about his activities shortly before entering the theater. Thus, either could conceivably have encountered Tycho Brahe in Denmark (or elsewhere, if Brahe took a short study trip); Dee and Brahe are certainly two essential characters to appear in a secret magic or "weird alchemy" game set in this period, and as a crankish scholar living on an island, Brahe could be set up as the model for Shakespeare's character Prospero -- although he was, really, a much more earthy figure.

Moving on, one may note any number of leaders and rulers who must have known of each other, even if they never actually met -- Cardinal Richelieu and Oliver Cromwell, for example. (Those two would likely have hated each other, actually; the subtle Catholic eminence was almost the antithesis of the blunt Puritan revolutionary. Both could feature in a "Three Musketeers" based ***GURPS Swashbucklers*** game, anyway.) But as world travel became easier, the chances for glancing collisions grows ever greater.

Masonic Mysteries?

One pair of characters in the book with odd links are Benjamin Franklin and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. One of Franklin's lesser inventions was an improved form of the "glass harmonica" -- a musical instrument consisting of a set of revolving glass disks, moistened with water and played by a touch of the fingers -- for which Mozart composed a piece. This curiosity aside, both were Freemasons -- members of what was, at the time, an international society of generally independent-minded men. They do not seem ever to have met -- by the time Franklin was in Paris, Mozart was mostly based in Austria -- but both *were*

travelers to some extent, and conspiracy-oriented games set in the 18th century could involve encounters with both. (The other noted Freemason in the book, incidentally, is the rather later "Emperor" Norton.)

North, South, East, West . . .

By the end of the 19th century, even those characters who were not noted as travelers could well visit several continents; Norton, born in London and brought up in South Africa, would probably be in San Francisco if Lola Montez' speaking tours ever took her to that city, and Montez could have crossed paths with Sir Richard Burton or even Charles Darwin with little difficulty. The question becomes more whether two characters would have anything much to talk to each other about, rather than whether they could have met at all. Even those who shared interests might suffer clashes of temperament; for example, Rudyard Kipling, a poet with an interest in technology, could easily have been introduced to Alberto Santos Dumont while the latter was visiting Britain, and they would probably have chatted enthusiastically about experimental aviation -- but what if Dumont had made his strong pacifist beliefs clear to the supreme poet of British imperialism? Likewise, Kipling might have met Nikola Tesla on a visit to the USA -- only to be annoyed by Tesla's bizarre personal foibles.

Still, interesting alternate histories could be spun off from meetings that might have been. Imagine a collaboration between Tesla and Dumont, for example (each noted in their time as clever fellows who moved in high social circles); how might the eccentric prophet of electricity have applied his intellect to questions of flight, aided by Dumont's practical talents and experimental bent?

Anyway, I hope that other people have as much fun using the characters in ***GURPS Who's Who 1***, individually or variously, as a lot of us did preparing the book. Right now, I've got to get on with volume 2 . . .

Dork Tower Cardboard Heroes

by John Kovalic

Dork Tower is . . . well, you *know* what *Dork Tower* is, don't you? It's this really funny comic strip about gaming, and it runs right here in *Pyramid,* and . . . you know.

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(This is a low-res JPEG; click on the image to get the printable 300dpi PDF)

by James L. Cambias

Art by Dan Smith

Editor's Note: This article originally appeared in *The Familiar,* Issue #9.

The Gelbkopf Experiment

In the year 1945, as Allied armies crushed the remains of Hitler's Reich, an experiment took place in a secret laboratory in the Bavarian Alps. Doctor Heinz Gelbkopf, using a bizarre combination of advanced quantum physics and insane Nazi mysticism, created a portal to another universe, with physical laws very different from our own.

Gelbkopf had hoped the other universe could serve as a base and fortress for the dying Reich, but his success came too late. Germany surrendered, and the scientists and equipment from the Gelbkopf project were seized by the victorious Allies. Doctor Gelbkopf himself disappeared.

It was the Russians, working under orders from Stalin, who first duplicated the Gelbkopf experiment in 1947. They created a portal from the October Revolution Science Laboratory in Kazan to the other universe. News of their success spurred the American effort, and the Army's Project Wonderland, directed by Robert Oppenheimer, generated its first portal in 1948.

A crack team of explorers led by Major William Armstrong went through the gateway and discovered a fantastic world of magic, called Zoor by its inhabitants. Zoor resembled the settings of fantasy fiction, and was populated by Elves, Dwarves and other creatures of myth.

For the next three years, expeditions from Earth entered Zoor to study the strange new world and its people. Parties of scientists travelled under the United Nations flag, and for a time it seemed that all contact between Earth and Zoor would be conducted under UN auspices.

That changed in 1952, when the Soviet Union began arming and training rebels in one of the kingdoms of Zoor. The United States responded by furnishing weapons and advisors to the kingdom's ruler. Worried that the Communists might spread their influence thoughout Zoor, President Eisenhower authorized the construction of several new portals. The Cold War had come to Zoor.

It is now 1958. For six years now, Earth's superpowers have been expanding their spheres of influence in Zoor, conducting wars by proxy and teaching the folk of Zoor about Communism and Democracy. Nearly 10,000 people have passed through the Gelbkopf portals into Zoor, to serve their countries, to do business, or to seek adventure.

The World of Zoor

The universe which lies on the other side of the Gelbkopf portals is called Zoor. It is vastly different from our own

world. The universe of Zoor is an infinite flat plane of land and sea, with an infinite expanse of air above. There are no stars in the sky. Most of the world of Zoor exists in eternal night and cold, just as the greater part of Earth's universe is empty space.

But some regions of Zoor have suns, which rise from a certain place each day, travel through the sky, and set in a certain place in the evening. These regions are habitable, and have life and civilizations. The Gelbkopf portals open into one such region.

The Sun of Zoor is not a star like Earth's Sun. It is much smaller -- only about 35 miles in diameter. Zoor's Sun rises from a hole in the ground and ascends on an elliptical path to a height of 2,000 miles. It moves at about Mach 3.5, trailing a sonic boom which is faintly audible from the ground. How the Sun is propelled is still unknown.

In the evening, the Sun sets into another giant cavern at the opposite end of the known world. The Sun is very hot, so the areas where it rises and sets are baked into deserts. The parts of Zoor directly beneath the Sun's path have a warm, tropical climate. Further away from the Sun's course, the land is cooler, until one reaches the edge of the great icecap which stretches away millions of miles into the dark.

The habitable area of Zoor is a long oval, about 29,000 miles long by 7000 miles wide. Two-thirds of this area is covered by ocean, so Zoor has about as much landsurface as the planet Earth. Zoor's land is concentrated in the belt beneath the path of the Sun, so the climate of Zoor is generally warmer than Earth's.

The Inhabitants of Zoor

Marxists and Magic

The first Russian and American explorers were amazed to discover that Zoor is inhabited, with a number of very different sentient races. The biggest surprise was that Zoor has a population of humans, indistinguishable from the people of Earth.

Humans of Zoor: Humans arose in Zoor relatively recently, but make up close to half of that world's intelligent population. It is unclear if they evolved in Zoor or somehow crossed the dimensions from Earth in the distant past. Biologists prefer the migration hypothesis, as the idea of human beings evolving in such a completely alien enviroment makes a hash of Darwinian evolution. Physicists insist that there is no way to duplicate the Gelbkopf effect without advanced technology.

The passage of time and some magical meddling has divided the humans in Zoor into four subspecies. A few scientists believe that the races correspond to the ancient hominid groups. The human subspecies of Zoor can interbreed to a limited extent, although cultural barriers have made such mixing rare.

The dominant group of humans on Zoor are the True Men, who are very similar to the people of Earth. Zoorian Men have light brown skin and almond eyes. Hair color varies through all shades. They are very numerous -- the most numerous single species on Zoor. True Men can be found all over Zoor, but are typically farmers or city-dwellers.

Elves are smaller than normal humans, standing about five feet tall. They have light complexions and dark hair. Elves generally live in wilderness areas and forests, as hunter-gatherers or orchard-farmers. They have a sophisticated culture but are few in number. They are semi-nocturnal, and have superb night vision.Of the human races of Zoor the Elves are the most skilled at magic.

Dwarves are the smallest humans, never more than four feet tall, but wide and strongly-built. Their skin and hair colors range from deep black to pale white. Dwarves live in mountain regions as farmers and herders; they also are

great miners and depend on trade with other races for food. They are fairly adept magicians, specializing in the creation of magical devices.

Ogres are larger than terran humans, with abundant reddish hair and pale skin. They are big, often as much as eight feet in height. Ogres are immensely strong, but not at all stupid. They are typically hunter-gatherers or nomadic herders.

Skamneen: The oldest intelligent species of Zoor are the Skamneen. They are a reptilian species, who dwell in the hot lands of the tropics. Their rate of reproduction is slow, so they make up only about a quarter of the population of Zoor. But their ancient and wealthy civilization is very powerful. Skamneen are individually very imposing. They are stronger and quicker than humans. A female Skamne generally stands about seven feet tall, with thick scales and a long heavy tail. A Skamne's forearms are not as strong as a human's, but her legs are incredibly powerful. Skamneen fight by kicking and swinging their tails, often attaching barbs to the tip. Skamneen think slowly, but are not stupid by any means. A Skamne may take hours to puzzle out a problem, but her solution will almost certainly be the right one. The Skamneen lay eggs, and the sex of their offspring is determined by the mother's nutrition level. A poorly-nourished female lays more male eggs, while a well-fed Skamne lays more female eggs. Nearly all Skamneen are female, since their advanced civilization makes it possible for all to have enough to eat. Males are rare, and live apart from the females in a simple nomadic existence. Skamneen are carnivores, and raise animals on large ranches.

Dragons: The Dragons are huge winged reptiles, capable of breathing fire. They are highly intelligent, and are a force to be reckoned with in Zoor. The Dragons claim to be rebellious demigods transformed into their present form as a punishment by the gods, but records kept by the Skamneen tell that the Dragons were created magically by ancient Skamneen wizards. Dragons do not reproduce well -- their offspring are stunted and of animal intelligence. These "dragon children" are also mighty and dangerous, but lack the vast cunning and magical ability of their parents. So while Dragons rule mighty empires, the dragon children are merely dangerous beasts. The chief disadvantage which the Dragons suffer is that they have no hands, and so cannot make or build anything themselves. They are thus dependent on human or Skamneen slaves.

Hushanku: The Hushanku are small, ratlike beings who claim that one of the gods created them from rodents before the arrival of humans in Zoor. They are furtive and sly, nocturnal creatures, dwelling underground. Hushanku are common in cities, often living in secret tunnel complexes beneath the streets. Hushanku are not politically powerful, and do not control any large kingdoms, but they are astonishingly well-informed. Nothing happens in Zoor that escapes their notice. Hushanku are sought after as spies by all the rulers of Zoor.

Tripeds: The Avry (or Tripeds) are the newest major race; they appeared only a few thousand years ago and claim to have arrived in Zoor from another place (the possibility that they came through a Gelbkopf portal is being investigated). The Tripeds were accompanied by several related species of animals, and are still trying to make a place for themselves. As the name suggests, the Tripeds have three legs. Their bodies are bottle-shaped, with a long flexible neck. Tripeds stand five feet tall with the neck fully stretched. They have no hands, but instead have three tentacles spaced around the sides of their heads. Tripeds are physically frail, but are all formidably intelligent.

Minor Races: In addition to those described, there are numerous small groups of intelligent beings. Many survive in only a single location, and appear to be the result of magical transformations of humans, animals, or one of the other major races. Some minor races include:

Byoush -- midget sorcerers who ride the shoulders of Ogres and Men.

Centaurs -- wild nomadic hunters, shaped much like their mythological namesakes.

Drushvliand -- sentient fungi resembling man-sized mushrooms, that have an intricate and advanced civilization located far underground in giant caverns.

Etandri -- a tribe of humans shrunk by magic to only an inch in height. They dwell in termite mounds on the savannahs of the Noon continent, and have domesticated many insects.

Giants -- once thought to be another race of humans in Zoor, the Giants were recently shown by French scientists to be a tribe of Ogres magically increased to a height of 30 feet.

Krakens -- the oceans are ruled by the Krakens, giant intelligent squids who dwell in vast dark cities on the sea floor.

Unseen Ones -- the Unseen Ones are a mysterious race of invisible beings which seem to resemble Skamneen.

Kingdoms and Politics of Zoor

Most of Zoor is ruled either by powerful magicians, cults, dragons, or supernatural beings. When the Earthmen arrived with their technology, the age-old pattern of Zoorian life was shattered. The competing ideologies of Marxism and Capitalist Democracy have each attracted followers; in addition a group of Nazis escaped into Zoor before the collapse of Germany and have gained a few converts of their own. The following list of political entities only describes the major powers or states important to Earth.

The Sishtaash Empire: The Sishtaash Empire is the largest Skamneen kingdom, and the most powerful single state in Zoor. It dominates the Noon Continent, and controls much of the seaborne trade across the Southern Ocean. The Americans and Russians are competing to gain the Empire as an ally. But for now the aged and cautious Empress Shkaath prefers to remain strictly neutral in the battles of the aliens.

Drakensreich: This powerful and evil state is an empire ruled by dragons. It was the site of Doctor Gelbkopf's first portal, and a number of fanatical Nazis escaped through the gate to the Dragon realm. The Dragons liked the Nazi ideology, and adopted much of the methods and symbols of Hitler's Germany. Dragons are now the "Master Race," and all other races in the Reich are their slaves. Dwarves are especially hated, and the Dragons have embarked on a vast program of extermination. A cabal of German Nazis advise the Dragon leaders. There is a resistance movement struggling to overthrow the government. The Drakensreich has annexed its weaker neighbors to the north, and now has begun expanding eastward into Hyqlahm, through the mountainous ithsmus of Kesfir. The ruler of the Reich is Drakenfuhrer Gegros, an ancient lizard with gold scales. Martin Bormann is the leader of the Nazi advisers, and serves as Minister of Propaganda for the Dragons.

The Dwarven Clans: The high plateau of southern Hyqlahm is home to a strong confederation of Dwarves. The Clans are quite powerful, but weak leadership and internal fighting has kept them from being a major force. A recent influx of refugees from the Drakensreich has encouraged the clans to end their quarrels and arm for war. For generations the Clans have been feuding with the nearby Elves in the lowland forests. Leadership of the Dwarven Clans is contested between Baron Darol of the Iron Hills, and Lord Vorak of the Jade Caverns.

Empire of Noon: The most powerful state controlled by Men, this empire borders Sishtaash on the central continent. It is ruled by a vigorous dynasty led by the beautiful virgin Empress Thice. The Empire has aims at expansion to the west, into the metal-rich mountains populated by Ogres and Dwarves. The Empire of Noon, like its neighbor Sishtaash, is sufficiently secure and powerful that its rulers have kept the Russians and Americans at arm's length.

Ogre People's Republic: This land was the site of the first Soviet portal into Zoor, and is still the main Communist sphere of influence. It occupies a chilly mountainous section of the continent Verthegsor. When the Russians arrived, they found a kingdom of Ogres ruled by an Elven aristocracy. The Communists organized a revolution and supplied the Ogres with weapons. Despite some American assistance to the Elves, the Ogres prevailed. Today the OPR is a strong and willing tool of the Russians. The Ogres have already expanded and annexed several smaller realms. Some rebel Elves still hold out in remote regions. The Premier of the OPR is Comrade Grashkor, although he has a serious rival for power in the person of Comrade Argnab, the head of the Ogre State Security Bureau.

Kingdom of the Fair Folk: The tranquil forest-covered realm of King Udisur is the largest predominantly Elvish kingdom, with a substantial minority of Men. It lies in western Verthegsor, and borders the Ogre People's Republic. King Udisur fears the Communist Ogres to the east, but many Elf intellectuals have become enamored of Socialist ideology and oppose an alliance with the Americans. The unofficial leader of the socialist Elves is the bard Aelwyn.

The Wizard Cities: On the northern coast of the central continent is a league of small city-states ruled by magicians. Though individually the cities are relatively weak, the sorcerer-princes of the Wizard Cities are quite powerful when they join forces. The leaders of the Wizard Cities are extremely suspicious of the new arrivals from Earth, and refer to them as "Demonworlders." They oppose both Communism and Democracy, preferring to have things as they were before the Gelbkopf portals. The most powerful wizard (and the most reactionary) is the weather-sorcerer Naash, Prince of the port city Usmepir.

The Avry Eutocracy: Once the only state ruled by Tripeds, the Eutocracy must now share that honor with a Communist puppet state to the south. The Eutocracy's government is a vast bureaucracy, with advancement determined by competitive examinations and progress reports. Faced with Communist neighbors on two sides, the Eutocracy has become a close ally ofthe democratic powers of Earth. The nearest friendly Gelbkopf portal is to the east in the land of the Centaur Tribes, and the Eutocracy has recently entered into an alliance with the horse-men. The Eutocracy is led by the Chief Director Ytpu.

United Elven States: The Elven States are the strongest and most loyal American ally in Zoor. When Project Wonderland's second portal opened here, the land was ruled by the evil wizard Kandareth. The CIA arranged a coup which deposed the sorcerer, and American advisors helped the Elves create a democratic constitution on the U.S. model. Kandareth still plots in hiding to regain power. Elven troops join American advisors in neighboring lands to fight Communism. The current President of the UES is Farandir of the Golden Eyes.

The Twilit Empire: At the western edge of Zoor lies a sprawling empire with enclaves of all the major races, ruled by the doddering immortal Emperor Domen-Kar from his palace of gilded bronze. The nationalist aspirations of Dwarves, Ogres and Skamneen within the Empire have been fed by Communist propaganda, and the land is rife with intrigue and rumors of revolt.

Jardeen: South of the realm of the Dwarven Clans is a bleak mountain kingdom of Ogres, ruled by an aristocracy of Giants under King Vorven. Jardeen is notorious for being the home of a group of vicious pirates that plague the waters of the Sunset Sea and waylay ships passing through the stormy Straits of Jardeen. The pirates of Jardeen also venture eastward to raid the coasts of Sishtaash. Chief among the pirates is the swashbuckling Ogre captain Nagromm.

The Empire of the Great Stone Head: On the northern coast of the Dawn Continent is a large but thinly-populated realm inhabited by True Men, Tripeds and Centaurs. It is called the Empire of the Great Stone Head, because its ruler is an enormous marble sculpture of a human head 30 feet across. The Head is intelligent, and can float about in the air to survey its domain. It has vast magical abilities. The Great Stone Head is a fairly effective ruler, although it does have the regrettable habit of demanding an annual sacrifice of a dozen virgins. The Head is moderately pro-American, as the nearby Dawnlands People's Republic has made it afraid of revolution. Unlike most other rulers of Zoor, the Head is very interested in bringing modern technology to its kingdom.

Fair Folk Democratic Socialist Republic: The second Russian gate opened on the continent of Hyqlahm, in a realm of Elves beset by raiding Ogres and Dragons. The Russians have helped the Fair Folk fend off their enemies, but in the process have made the land a virtual colony. While American agents from the United Elven States to the east have tried to encourage democratic resistance in the Republic, the menace of the nearby Drakensreich has kept the Communist regime in power. The FFDSR is governed by Russian "Advisors of the Revolution" and a powerless Elven President, Holmir Silkentongue.

The Kingdoms of the Tanshadrin Mountains: Occupying the connection between the continent of Verthegsor and the Dawn Continent is the great Tanshadrin mountain range. The fertile valleys of the Tanshadrin Mountains are populated by Men and Dwarves. Each valley is a separate kingdom, but they all are united under a Dwarf High King, Ionar of the Granite Cliffs. The Kingdoms border on the Avry Eutocracy and the Tripedal Democratic Republic. Communist guerrillas from the TDR have begun using the eastern valleys of the Tanshadrin Mountains as a route into the Eutocracy, prompting cries of outrage from the Avry and their British and American allies. King Ionar is still undecided about the proper course: should he seal his border, or make common cause with the TDR against his old enemy the Eutocracy?

Rimland Confederation: North of the Drakensreich is a union of several small states at the edge of the vast ice-sheet

that surrounds Zoor. The people of the Rimland are Men, Ogres, Giants, Hushanku, and Unseen Ones. Many have fled to the Rimlands to escape the advancing armies of the Drakensreich. The Confederation is governed by a High Council of tribal chiefs and kings. The Rimland is the site of the French portal into Zoor, and France has been a great help to the Confederation in keeping the Reich at bay. A brigade of the Foreign Legion is stationed in the Rimlands to help repel raiders, and the Legion has recently started accepting Ogre recruits. The main drawback is that the French have begun to treat the Confederation almost as a colony, demanding the removal of certain Council members who oppose French policies, and exerting an increasing amount of control over the Rimlands army.

Dawnlands People's Republic: Far to the east, just beyond the Avry Eutocracy, is the main Chinese client-state in Zoor. Once a theocratic empire ruled by a Sun-worshipping cult, the Dawnlands are now controlled by fanatical Maoist Communists. The people of the Dawnlands are mostly Men. China's Gelbkopf portal opens into the Dawnlands, and there are now several thousand Chinese "Revolutionary Volunteers" in Zoor. Remnants of the old Sun cult survive in the desert around the Sun's Gate cave, and British agents have tried to make a formal alliance with them.

Archipelago League: The site of Project Wonderland's first Gelbkopf portal into Zoor was the Hymeg Archipelago, in the great Northern Ocean. The Archipelago is populated by Men, Krakens and Skamneen, and is made up of a league of city-states which cooperate for defense. The rulers of the League have not allowed the U.S. to build any military bases in the Archipelago, and so this Gelbkopf portal is now used for commercial transport between Earth and Zoor. The Archipelago sees an increasing number of American tourists.

Tripedal Democratic Republic: The first fruit of the Russian program of subversion and destabilization in Zoor came in the southern provinces of the Avry Eutocracy. Some ambitious local officials fell victim to Communist agitation, and mounted a successful rebellion with the help of a Russian paratroop regiment. Today the TDR is a perfect Communist puppet, combining the worst of Soviet methods and the traditional bureaucracy of the Tripeds. Acting in coordination with the Chinese-supported Dawnlands People's Republic, the Tripedal Democratic Republic is in a good position to spread Communist influence through the entire Dawn continent.

Centaur Tribes: The British operate one Gelbkopf portal, which opened into the arid plains in the heart of the Dawn continent of Zoor. The land is inhabited by warlike and primitive bands of Centaurs. British diplomats and agents, armed with centuries of experience from India and Africa, were able to form an alliance with the weaker tribes, then armed and trained them to overcome the stronger ones. Today the Centaur Tribes are England's main ally in Zoor, and the region serves as the conduit for British and American aid to the Avry Eutocracy. But the Communists on either side of the Centaur plains have not been idle. Their agents have been hard at work stirring up nationalist sentiment among the Centaurs, painting the British as "imperialists" and "neo-colonialist aggressors."

Marxists and Magic

Languages

Each race of Zoor has many languages, and communication with the natives was a serious problem for the first Russian and American expeditions. Scientists have identified some similarities between the languages of Zoor's human races (Elves, Dwarves, Men and Ogres) and Sanskrit, the "mother tongue" of the Indo-European language group.

The tripedal Avry all speak the same language, as they all still live in the same region and until recently were ruled by

a single government. Similarly most Skamneen speak dialects of an ancient language called Skaneesh. The Dragons also use a form of Skaneesh.

Traders and travellers in eastern Zoor often rely on a crude pidgin called Monok, which is spoken, or at least understood, in port cities and caravanseries in the eastern part of the world. In the Noon continent and nearby Hyqlahm the *lingua franca* is Skaneesh. To the west, the Twilit Empire has a dozen different languages within its borders, but uses a human tongue called Duskish as the official language of government and commerce.

The arrival of visitors from Earth has caused a great many Zoorians to learn Earthly languages. German is now widely spoken in Drakensreich, and English has made inroads in the American and British client states. The Chinese have made a great effort to prevent their allies from learning Chinese, perhaps in order to keep them from gaining technical knowledge.

Magic in Zoor

Magic is an important force in Zoor, but it is not very common. Magic means power, and those who have access to it are careful to preserve their monopoly. Most Zoorians can live out their lives without ever seein magic used. But it is there, and can create incredible effects when put to use.

Spells

Most magic in Zoor takes the form of magic spells which are spoken to cause things to happen. Anyone can learn and use a magic spell -- no innate ability is required. But spells are tricky and complex, and even a slight error in recitation can have disastrous results. Magic spells range from simple chants to bring luck or ward off disease, to exhausting day-long rituals that can destroy whole kingdoms or bind powerful beings.

There is no "science" of magic. Spells are learned by rote and jealously kept secret by mages. New ones are found by accident, or else are rediscovered in lost scrolls. (This may change now that both Russia and the United States have acquired some spellbooks and have put teams of researchers and powerful electronic computers to work in an effort to discover the underlying rules of magic.)

Magic Items

Less powerful than spells are magical items. These are objects which have been enchanted to produce magical effects. In general a magic item can embody only a single spell. An example would be a magic sword that had a spell of Invincibility cast on it: anyone holding the sword would be immune to harm, but in combat the sword is no better than any mundane blade. Most rulers have a whole collection of enchanted objects -- weapons and armor, devices to reveal assassins and poison, ways to spy on rivals, and so forth.

Creating magic items is time-consuming and difficult. Only the Dwarves seem to prefer making objects to other forms of magic. A great drawback to most magic items is that they have no allegiance. The enchanted sword which helps a king slay his foes will just as easily slay the king if a rival picks it up.

Potions

Potions are sort of an intermediate stage between spells and items. The potion takes effect when swallowed, just as if a spell had been cast on the subject. But potions can be stored for long periods, and do not require the magician's presence to work. From a magician's perspective, potions are the ideal way to work magic: the sorcerer can make them in the safety of his laboratory, but the customers have to keep coming back for refills.

Religions of Zoor

Zoor has generated no end of theological controversy among Earth's religions, because it is home to a large number of gods, most of which are demonstrably real and active. The gods of Zoor are not omnipotent, and are generally far from being perfectly good or all-knowing. This has led the Catholic Church and most Islamic mullahs to class all of Zoor's gods as either angels or devils. Atheistic Communist philosophers and Western rationalists prefer to think of Zoor's gods as just extremely powerful alien beings. The truth may never be known.

In general, each of Zoor's races has its own tutelary god or gods. Some deities are common to related races -- both Men and Elves worship Rantel, the Lord of the Hunt, for example. There are hundreds of gods and demigods in the mythologies of Zoor. The most important are listed below.

Berekel: The chief goddess of the Elves, Berekel is the protector of forests and the Queen of the night. She appears as a tall Elf maiden garlanded with leaves. Berekel is the consort of Rantel. Her worshippers must swear to never fell a living tree.

The Cylinder: All Tripeds worship The Cylinder, which is kept in a great domed temple in the capital of the Eutocracy. The Cylinder is a large cylinder of some greenish-gold metal, which hovers in the air within the temple and spins constantly. The priests of the Cylinder say that if it ever ceases to spin, the world will end.

Glute: The Trickster-god of the Hushanku, Glute is the only one of Zoor's gods to have openly embraced Communism. Glute has commanded his followers to worship him as "Comrade Deity" and is an active co-conspirator with KGB plots throughout Zoor.

The Great Stone Head: This giant living marble head is the ruler of the Empire of the Great Stone Head, where it is worshipped as a god with virgin sacrifices. The Great Stone Head allows no other religions in its domain, and denies kinship with any other god.

Nestamon: Nestamon is the god of earthquakes, volcanoes and the underworld. He is the chief god of the Dwarves. Nestamon appears in the form of a Dwarf, but with skin of stone, hair of metal, and eyes of molten lava. Nestamon is very active on behalf of the Dwarves, and armies attacking their mountain kingdoms are frequently beset by tremors.

Rantel: The Lord of the Hunt is worshipped by both Elves and men in Zoor, and is the chief god of the Centaurs. He appears as a mounted man with antlers, leading his pack of hounds in pursuit of game. Rantel is a frightening deity, who often hunts those who have committed crimes against his followers. Nobody can escape the Lord of the Hunt.

Skenskina: Skenskina is the goddess of the land and fertility, and is honored above all others by the Skamneen. She appears as a giant Skamne, and her followers claim that all living things hatched from an egg of Skenskina.

The Sun God: The only god with worshippers among all the races, the Sun God is simply the Sun of Zoor. Records tell of the Sun actively intervening in Zoorian affairs, but no evidence of this has been seen by visitors from Earth. The Sun's cult is strongest in the Dawn Continent, where nearly all the Men are members.

Meanwhile, Back on Earth . . .

Earth's history has progressed much as it did in the real 1950s, but with some minor changes that are likely to have important effects later on.

Research into space exploration has almost completely halted. Only a small band of enthusiasts with private funds are still interested in building space rockets. Ballistic missile development has been put on the back burner, as governments work to develop better Gelbkopf portals. Any nation which can learn to select where in Zoor a Gelbkopf portal will open could soon dominate that entire world. Another massively-funded area of inquiry is the possibility of opening Gelbkopf portals between locations on Earth. The commercial and military applications of such a gateway would be enormous.

The Cold War between America and the Communists is still going on, but Zoor is the primary theater of operations.

When the French were forced to evacuate their colonial possessions in Indochina in the face of a Communist insurrection, the United States declined to get involved in Vietnam. As President Eisenhower summed it up, "Why should we worry about a small country in Asia when an entire dimension is at risk?"

A Brief Chronology

1945: Heinz Gelbkopf generates the first portal into Zoor. Truman becomes President of the U.S. after Roosevelt dies.

1947: Russians duplicate the Gelbkopf Effect.

1948: Project Wonderland opens portal into Zoor. After the Russians block land transport into West Berlin, the U.S. supplies the city by air for nearly a year. State of Israel established.

1949: Mao Tse-Tung establishes Communist government in China. NATO organized to protect Europe from the Russians. Project Wonderland creates a second Gelbkopf portal.

1950: North Korea invades South Korea. Investigations of Communists in the U.S. Government begin.

1951: Truman fires General MacArthur as commander of U.S. forces in Korea. British establish a portal into Zoor.

1952: Eisenhower elected President of the U.S. Russians begin supporting the Ogres of Zoor in their revolt against Elven rule.

1953: Cease-fire in Korea. Stalin dies and is succeeded by Khrushchev as leader of the Soviet Union. Ogre People's Republic established. Russians open second Gelbkopf portal.

1954: French withdraw from Indochina, leaving a Communist regime in control of Vietnam. CIA agents overthrow the wizard Kandareth. Chinese create their first Gelbkopf portal.

1955: United Elven States formed. French portal into Zoor opens.

1956: Soviet forces enter Hungary to suppress a revolution.

1959: Fidel Castro deposes Batista in Cuba and subsequently forms close ties with Russia.

1960: Kennedy elected President of the U.S. 1961: Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba ends in disaster. Berlin Wall built to keep East Germans from fleeing to the West via Berlin.

A Cold War Glossary

Aggression -- Used by both sides to describe any activity by the opposition. American tourism in the Archipelago is denounced as "capitalist economic aggression" by the Russians.

Communist -- An adherent of the theories of Karl Marx. By the 1950s, nearly all Communists are under the direction of the Russian Politburo, and Communist ideology is subservient to Russian foreign policy. Americans tend to use the term to denounce anything they dislike.

Democratic -- This term is used by both sides in the Cold War. Americans and their allies use it in the sense most readers understand -- having to do with governments elected by those governed. Communists use the term pretty much arbitrarily, often two or three times in the name of the same country ("Democratic People's Socialist Democracy").

Destabilization -- A polite term for encouraging rebellion in a country, with the goal of bringing down the present government.

Domino Theory -- The strategic theory that a Communist regime in one country encourages the growth of Communist

parties in neighboring lands, eventually bringing an entire region under Communist influence. (The name derives from the analogy of a row of dominoes toppling.) Denounced by liberal intellectuals in the West as a false doctrine, despite numerous examples.

Fascist -- This term has two meanings. In its original sense, it refers to the militaristic, hyper-nationalist ideologies, of which Nazi Germany is the best-known example. It is also used by Communists and other leftists to describe anyone who disagrees with them.

Imperialism -- According to the Communists, all activity by the Western powers is a form of "imperialism," intended to extend their rule to other lands. Soviet domination of other nations is referred to as "assistance to the Revolution."

Intervention -- The use of military force. If a superpower sends troops into a country to install a friendly government, it's not an invasion, it's an intervention.

Oligarchy -- Rule by a small group or a limited class of citizens.

Reactionary -- Used by Communists to describe anyone who opposes them. "We must destroy the reactionary elements that endanger the people's revolution."

Revolution -- To the Communists, the Revolution is the final overthrow of capitalism, which will bring about a perfect society. The Revolution is always just around the corner.

Socialist -- Often just a euphemism for communist, but also applied to states which have a high level of government control of the economy, but with a democratic political system. The Americans view all Socialists as dupes or tools of the Reds.

Totalitarian -- American term for all non-democratic systems, especially those hostile to the U.S. Friendly dictatorships are merely "authoritarian."

The Cold War in Zoor

It is now 1956; the Cold War is reaching its peak. Atomic weapons have created a stalemate on Earth, but the struggle for preeminence in Zoor is still very active.

Just as Earthly technology works in a limited fashion in Zoor, Zoorian magic does work to some degree on Earth. The two Superpowers are frantically trying to stockpile magical artifacts and sorcerous knowledge. The fear of a "magic gap" is very real. The Americans are particularly alarmed by the recent success of a KGB quest to recover the lost Sword of Thagara, which is said to make its bearer invincible in battle. NATO generals are appalled by the thought of Soviet Shock Armies carrying mystical swords of power.

American Influence:

The American presence in Zoor has three main goals. In order, they are to stop the spread of Communist subversion, to maintain trade and peaceful contact with the Zoorians, and to conduct scientific study of Zoorian magic. So far the first goal has taken up the bulk of American efforts in Zoor.

American influence is strongest in the United Elven States and the surrounding kingdoms. The UES and some lands threatened by the Communists have formed ZATO -- the Zoor Alliance Treaty Organization. The Elven armies are backed up by an American presence of three divisions (two infantry, one armored), and six jet fighter squadrons. Zoor's bizarre natural laws mean these unit are not as overwhelmingly powerful as they would be on Earth, but the U.S. Inter-Dimensional Command is still a formidable force.

The CIA has an undisclosed number of operatives in Zoor, including a great many Elves. Agents are active throughout the continents of Hyqlahm, Verthegor and the Dawn Continent. Undercover agents often masquerade as wandering

warriors or itinerant singers.

Communist Influence

The Communist program of world conquest has made great strides in Zoor. The Russian and Chinese puppet states serve as bases for the subversion and destabilization of nearby lands. Russia's chief client is the Ogre People's Republic, while the main Chinese pawn is the Dawnlands People's Republic. The Russian pawns are organized into the Kazan Pact.

Russia currently has brigades in the Fair Folk Democratic Socialist Republic, The Ogre People's Republic, and the Tripedal Democratic Republic. The Chinese have approximately a regiment's worth of "Revolutionary Volunteers" in the Dawnlands People's Republic. Recently American agents in the OPR have detected signs of construction that could only be for missile silos. If the Russians do attempt to place missiles in Zoor, a grave crisis could ensue.

Finally, the Reds have a vast web of agents and agitators spread throughout Zoor. The extent of their influence is unknown, but it is clear they have total world domination as their goal.

Other Countries

The British and French each have a working Gelbkopf portal. The British cooperate with the Americans in opposing Soviet policies in Zoor. The French have tried to remain neutral, but still tend to side with the Americans. The British have mostly stuck to trade, but the French seem determined to replace their lost colonial empire on Earth with a new one in Zoor. Doctor Gelbkopf and the other Nazis in the Drakensreich dream of conquering all of Zoor and returning to Earth to fulfill Hitler's evil dreams.

Science and Magic

Gelbkopf Effect Portals

Doctor Gelbkopf's invention has shaken the very foundations of physics. Even today there is still debate over the theoretical basis for the Gelbkopf Effect.

Portals are very expensive, requiring extremely advanced machinery and components made of rare elements. Only the wealthiest states on Earth can afford to build them. Activating a Gelbkopf portal requires vast amounts of electrical power -- the Project Wonderland facility in New Mexico now consumes the entire output of Hoover Dam's hydroelectric generators. As yet there is no way to "aim" a portal; when activated they link to random places in Zoor. This means it is simpler to maintain an existing link than establish new ones.

The largest portals are barely big enough to pass a truck or a medium tank. Most are only man-sized. Sending anything through a portal temporarily increases its power consumption by a factor of ten. So even the two Superpowers have only limited resources in Zoor, and must do as much as possible using locally-available equipment.

The Russians and Americans each have two Gelbkopf portals. The Chinese, British and French each have one. The Japanese have begun constructing their own Gelbkopf Effect facility. All portals are government-operated. The only ones open to private travelers are the American portal to the Hymeg Archipelago, and the British portal which is open to scientists and researchers.

Technology Limits

Zoor's natural laws are very different from those of Earth, and they affect the workings of technological devices. Certain types of technology do not function at all in Zoor; others do but in ways different from Earth. The Project Wonderland scientists group technologies into four classes, based on how they are affected by Zoor.

Class I items become utterly functionless in Zoor. They operate on principles completely foreign to the Zoorian environment and become so much inert junk in the other world. Radioactive materials and semiconductors are Class I devices. So atomic weapons, transistor radios and the latest electronic computers do not work in Zoor.

Class II items have their efficiency drastically reduced. Most work at about a tenth of their usual level, or else require ten times the power for normal operation. Nearly all electrical and electronic devices are Class II items.

Class III items work at about half normal effectiveness. Nearly everything based on chemical energy is a Class III item -- firearms, rockets, motor vehicles, pharmaceuticals, steam engines and explosives. So guns in Zoor reduce range and damage by half, vehicles double their fuel consumption, and drugs require double doses.

Class IV items are unaffected by being in Zoor. Every machine that works by means of simple mechanics or which is powered by basic physical forces like gravity or wind operates normally. Swords, bows, waterwheels, sailing ships and catapults all work as well in Zoor as on Earth.

Scientists have noticed a strange paradox: technological devices which depend on chemical reactions work at half efficiency, but living organisms (which rely entirely on chemical reactions) appear to be unaffected by Zoor's environment. Dr. Linus Pauling has speculated that even Earthly organisms have some innate ability to drawn on magical power in Zoor, and that the reduced efficiency of chemical reactions is compensated by the use of magic.

Magic Limits

Just as Earthly machinery is affected by being in Zoor, so Zoorian magic works differently on Earth. Again, the Project Wonderland researchers have come up with four categories of magic based on how well it functions on Earth.

Class I magic is utterly functionless on Earth. Class I spells become nothing but bad poetry, and Class I magical items lose all special powers. Class I magics include wishes, spells to raise the dead, spells of creation or destruction, spells to tell the future, and any spell which the Gamemaster doesn't want in 1950s Earth. Very powerful magic items, particularly those associated with gods or demons, are Class I.

Class II magic works, but is only at about 10% effectiveness. Class II magics include elemental magics, necromantic spells, summonings, spells of movement and communication, and protective spells. Magic wands and rings are Class II.

Class III magic works at about half normal strength on Earth, and includes most illusions, spells of light and dark, healing spells, and spells that control animals. Most magic swords and enchanted weapons are Class III items.

Class IV magic works as well on Earth as in Zoor, and in many cases is simply the application of natural substances or processes. Poison and neutralization spells are Class IV, as are spells of curing and causing disease, spells of controlling the body, and spells of charming and affecting emotions. Potions are usually Class IV.

Important People in Zoor

Aelwyn: This Elf bard is the leader of the pro-Socialist Elves in the Kingdom of the Fair Folk. Aelwyn is a typical Communist tool, who sincerely believes the Marxist ideology and is blind to the failings of the Communist system. He is probably the most talented bard in the Kingdom of the Fair Folk, and his haunting folk songs have been a big hit among leftists in America and Britain.

Captain DeCamp: When Zoor's strange resemblance to the worlds of fantasy fiction was discovered, the United States government turned to fantasy writers for advice. The Navy scored a coup by reactivating the commissions of two top authors, Robert Heinlein and L. Sprague DeCamp. Captain DeCamp is now the chief American liason officer to the United Elven States. He spends much of his time working with Elven craftsmen and engineers to improve the weapons and tactics of the UES's army. Player-characters active in the UES are almost certain to encounter Captain DeCamp, and military characters may wind up under his command. Captain DeCamp is incredibly knowledgeable

about Earth's history, and has learned as much as he can about Zoor's past as well. He probably knows more than any other American about the history and legends of Zoor.

Doctor Heinz Gelbkopf: Creator of the portals which allow contact between Earth and Zoor, Doctor Gelbkopf is now head of the Drakensreich scientific research program. He and other Nazi scientists are struggling to develop superweapons that will work in Zoor's strange environment. Gelbkopf is also very interested in seeing if it is possible to generate a Gelbkopf portal from Zoor to Earth -- if successful, it would allow the Drakensreich to extend its evil influence across the dimensions.

Kandareth: This evil sorcerer once ruled the elves of Hyqlahm, but was overthrown by a CIA-backed coup. Now he lives in exile in the Wizard Cities, plotting revenge on the Americans. Kandareth is a supremely powerful wizard, although he lost many of his best magic items and books of lore when he was deposed. Kandareth is suspicious of all intruders from Earth, and so far has avoided dealing with the Communists. He has begun negotiating with the Dragons of Drakensreich, promising to help them if they supply an army to recover his kingdom. The Dragons have not yet responded.

Nagromm: The most successful of the pirates of Jardeen is the Ogre Nagromm. Unusually agile and quick-witted for one of his race, Nagromm commands the pirate galley Sunracer, with a mixed crew of Men, Sishtaash and Ogres. Nagromm has an honorable streak, and treats the captives he hold for ransom well. The rise of the Drakensreich has disturbed Nagromm, and he might be persuaded to help fight the Nazi Dragons.

Professor Tolkein: An early difficulty faced by the explorers of Zoor was the totally unfamiliar nature of Zoor's languages. Linguists and philologists from all of Earth's universities studied the tongues of Zoor and eventually made communication possible. One of the leaders of the effort was Professor J.R.R. Tolkein of Oxford. Professor Tolkein has remained in Zoor, among the Centaur Tribes of the Dawn Continent. Tolkein is an expert on the languages and literature of Zoor, and has recorded thousands of Dictaphone cylinders of Zoorian songs and poetry. Tolkein also advises British Intelligence, and occasionally his poetry-gathering expeditions include a few secret agents with their own missions.

Campaigns and Adventures in Zoor

Zoor's combination of Cold War conflict and high fantasy adventure means there is a wide variety of potential campaigns and adventures.

Battling the Reds: The players can take the roles of American military personnel in Zoor, struggling against their Soviet opposite numbers to prevent the spread of Communism in Zoor. While soldiers are unlikely to battle the Russians directly, "advisors" can see plenty of action helping put down local rebellions and protecting American allies from native Zoorian perils. Troops of the USIDC may also be called upon to slay monsters. Americans in the UES can see action against the Nazi Dragons of Drakensreich and their unstoppable Ogre stormtroopers.

The Shadow War: Spies or diplomats will find plenty of opportunity for intrigue and adventure in Zoor. They can spy on Soviet operations, uncover Red spy rings in the court of the Elven King, go on quests to recover magical treasures, and destabilize unfriendly regimes.

Making a Buck: The Gelbkopf portal to the Archipelago League is open to anyone who can cover the cost of its operation. A few entrepreneurs and corporations have sent people through in search of opportunities to make money. For an interesting change of pace, consider a campaign following the adventures of a crack team of salesmen in Zoor, braving dragons, wizards and other perils to meet their monthly sales target.

Interdimensional Tours: So far the only business which has been able to make a profit in Zoor is the tourist business. People from Earth will gladly pay big money for a holiday in the magical world of Zoor. Most tourists remain in the Archipelago League, but recently some travel agents have begun booking cruises to the Kingdom of the Fair Folk or the Empire of Noon. Players can take the roles of tourists (doing their best to fit the classic "Ugly American" stereotype of 1950s tourism), or else can play the long-suffering tour guides charged with shepherding groups of idiots

through Zoor's assorted dangers.

Pulp Fiction: Along with the various legitimate businesses looking for profit in Zoor there are some representatives of the Mob. Gangsters have begun moving in on the local Thieves' Guilds in several Zoorian cities. Since none of Zoor's kingdoms have extradition treaties with countries back home, it is a great place to go on the lam. Player-character gangsters in Zoor might even find themselves becoming heroes as they put the hit on dragons and evil wizards.

Crossovers: Gamemasters who don't want to tackle a long-running Zoor campaign can still use it as the setting for adventures in another campaign genre. Characters in modern-day, "Atomic Horror," comic-book superhero or 1930s "Pulp" campaigns can go through Gelbkopf portals into Zoor. Characters from before the Second World War will be battling the spread of Fascism rather than Communism, but otherwise the world will be very much the same. (It isn't even necessary to change much of the Earthly setting -- Project Wonderland and Zoor could be kept Top Secret, completely unknown to the general public.)

Gamemasters with an ongoing time-travel or cross-dimensional campaign can insert Zoor as just another alternate universe. Replace the Gelbkopf portals with whatever mechanism is already used in the campaign to enter different dimensions.

Characters in a fantasy campaign could find themselves on the receiving end of a Gelbkopf portal, and must cope with the strange aliens and their mysterious weapons. They might even be summoned to Zoor by a magician to help deal with the problem. Or else their home setting can be another patch of warmth amid the endless ice surrounding Zoor, and the player-characters have crossed the ice as part of some great quest.

Tone and Style

The flavor of a Zoorian campaign can range from campy humor to gritty realism, depending on how the Gamemaster wants to run things. In a broadly comic campaign, all the Americans are crewcut, gung-ho types straight out of an old B-movie, the Communists all speak with Boris-and-Natasha accents, and the natives of Zoor embody all the clichés of fantasy roleplaying games.

More realistic campaigns might touch on some of the moral questions involved -- do the Earthmen have the right to inflict their quarrels on the Zoorians? In such a campaign there will be heroes and villains on both sides, and both the Russians and Americans will sincerely believe that what they are doing is for the best. The Zoorians will be more alien, especially the nonhumans. Magic will be a powerful and occasionally terrifying force.

Finally, it is possible to run a grimly realistic campaign in Zoor. American grunts are fighting a war that has become a Vietnamesque quagmire. Elven villages are destroyed in order to save them from Communism, while Marxist fanatics do the same in the name of ideological purity. CIA agents and diplomats have become so caught up in power struggles that the original ideals that motivated American involvement in Zoor have been lost. In such a campaign the Gamemaster can also emphasize the brutality and squalor of life in Zoor's feudal, preindustrial society.

Adventure Hooks

The Lady Fair -- A beautiful princess has been taken captive by Communist agents. Can a group of brave knights and U.S. Marines rescue her before she is permanently indoctrinated with Marxist propaganda?

Dragonslayers -- The small mountain kingdom of Wormgate has long been ruled by the dragon Ironworm. Lately the State Department has become concerned that Ironworm is aligning himself and his realm with the Soviets. Can a team of CIA agents slay the dragon and keep his land safe for Democracy?

The Heist of the Ring -- The Dark Lord of Argoth is known to possess a magical Ring of great power. A group of gangsters have plotted to steal the Ring from the Dark Lord. The FBI and the KGB will both try to stop the gangsters, or get the ring.

Maquis -- The Nazi regime of Drakensreich is opposed by a daring band of rebels who hide out in the great Shadowleaf forest. A team of Israeli and American agents are dropped by parachute into the forest to make contact with the resistance and help them fight the Nazi dragons that rule the land.

Across the Ice -- The cold, dark plains of ice surrounding Zoor stretch off to infinity in all directions. The closest land of warmth and light is some 300,000 miles away. A well-financed British expedition has set out to cross the ice, using surplus Liberator airplanes to establish a series of bases.

Seven Circles -- The Olympic Games of 1958 will have a surprising new group of entries -- the first teams from Zoor will compete. The IOC has ruled that Elves, Ogres, Dwarves and Tripeds can participate in all events (the status of other races is still being decided). The various national Olympic teams of Earth have jumped at the chance to recruit athletes in Zoor.

The Road to Zoor -- The troops of the USIDC are in for a treat: the USO is bringing a group of top entertainers to help with morale. Marilyn Monroe is the headliner, along with Bing Crosby and (inevitably) Bob Hope. But when an evil wizard tries to make Marilyn his bride, the PCs must help Hope and Crosby get her back. (Gamemasters should feel free to substitute Abbot and Costello, Martin and Lewis, or even the Three Stooges.)

by Chad Underkoffler

"Do you expect me to talk?"
"No, Mr. Bond, I expect you to die."
-- Goldfinger

One of the staples of certain genres -- especially those of pulp, superhero, and espionage -- is the Deathtrap. The archvillain always seems to drop the stalwart hero into some dangerous area, strap the heroine into some infernal device, or pit them together against a giant robot in an underground arena, or something along those lines. Why do archvillains do this? Why not just shoot the heroes and be done with it?

"If you want to finish the Atom off, why not use a gun?"
"You see how your petty mind works, Kale! If you were running this show, you'd use the methods of a mere thug, I am Degaton -- and I prefer to do things my way."
-- Per Degaton, "The Day That Dropped Out of Time," *All-Star Comics #35*

Half of the answers to this question come simply from the expectations of the genre. Escaping Deathtraps is one of the things that makes a hero heroic. Deathtraps are *de rigeur*. The rest of the reason sits squarely on the personality of the archvillain: you don't get the label of "archvillain" without having a certain criminal *je ne sais quoi*. Specific elements of a Deathtrap building personality include:

1. The enjoyment of games and puzzles.
2. The wishes to impress or frighten an enemy with one's intelligence.
3. A twisted sense of fair play.
4. Delayed Gratification: saving the enemy for later torture, imprisonment, or disposal.
5. Diversion and Distraction: the wish to slow down one's enemy, buying time in an escape.
6. Any combination of the above.

"His life is mine . . . I can crush the breath out of him effortlessly! I can, at last, triumph! But such a hollow victory --! It was mere luck that caused my attack on him to succeed! I'd always envisioned my winning as a result of cunning . . . at the end of a bitter struggle between the Batman and myself -- him using his detective skills and me employing the divine gift men call madness. No, without the game that the Batman and I have played for so many years, winning is nothing! He shall live until I can destroy him properly."
-- the Joker, "The Joker's Five-Way Revenge," *Batman #251*

However, the constant cycle of design and construction of the damned things can be hard on the poor archvillains (and the GM!), taking up time, effort and resources better used in the formulation of nefarious plots... but one still wants to satisfy the one or more of the personality traits listed above. What to do? The Deathtrap Construction Kit is your inspirational tool for those times when you absolutely, positively need an idea for a deathtrap yesterday.

Here's how it works: Roll on the Restrained By table, then the On-Near-In-Over table. Certain results on each table may lead to one of the supplemental tables (Infernal Devices, End-of-the-Line Threats, Giant Objects, Fearsome Beasts, and Out-of-Control Vehicles). Multiple rolls may be indicated. Feel free to discard incongruous results, add

additional rolls, or ignore the randomness of dice entirely and select individual elements. The endpoint of this process remains the same: the archvillain now has a focused selection of elements to choose from to build his Deathtrap.

Examples

Professor Verbrecherisch wants to design a Deathtrap to delay his nemesis, Doctor Omega, in the event that Doc Omega bursts into his hideout unannounced. The troublesome "hero" always seemed to show up at the most inopportune times . . .

Example 1: The GM rolls on the Restrained By table, with a result of "Handcuffed to." Then, a roll on the On-Near-In-Over table gives a result of "Trapped in (roll on Out-of-Control Vehicles)." A roll on that table produces "Airplane." Professor V will have the annoying Doctor handcuffed to the tail-fin of a plane, have one of his thugs fly the plane out over the ocean, and have the thug parachute to safety, leaving Doc Omega to crash into the sea. Bwa-ha-ha!

Example 2: The GM rolls on the Restrained By table, with a result of "Threat Against Loved One." Then, a roll on the On-Near-In-Over table gives a result of "Piranha Tank." As Doc Omega bursts into Professor V's secret lab, the evil Professor need only say, "Hold it, right there, Omega, or your girl, Tess Truebleu, will be thrown to these ravenous piranhas!"

Example 3: The GM rolls on the Restrained By table, with a result of "Inside/Buried Up to Neck/Encased In." Then, a roll on the On-Near-In-Over table gives a result of "Acid/Threat of Acid." Professor V begins his Soliloquy: "If you value your life, Omega, don't move. And listen very carefully, I shall say this only once. You are encased in a thin coating of wax, covering your body all over up to your neck. You stand in a vat of sulfuric acid that can melt the flesh from your bones in seconds. All that is saving your life is that thin layer of wax. If you move, the coating may tear open, letting the acid in, and ending your life in searing agony. That should keep you out of my way for awhile. Good day."

Deathtrap construction-- no fuss, no muss!

Restrained By (roll 2d6)

2 -- Bars/Grating/Mesh/Net
3 -- Drugged/Hypnotized
4 -- Tied to/Chained to/Strapped to
5 -- Suspended Over
6 -- Inside/Buried Up to Neck/Encased In
7 -- Threat Against Loved One
8 -- Handcuffed to
9 -- Force Field(s)
10 -- Oddly Unrestrained
11 -- Motion Detectors/Pressure Plates
12 -- Roll twice on this table.

On-Near-In-Over (roll 1d6 for A,B,C,D,E,F; roll 1d6)

A1 -- Infernal Device (roll on Infernal Devices)
A2 -- Snake Pit

A3 -- Train Tracks
A4 -- Boiling Oil
A5 -- Automatic Ranged Weapons (darts, guns, lasers)
A6 -- In the Path of a Stampede

B1 -- Conveyor Belt to (roll on End-of-the-Line Threats)
B2 -- Crocodile Pit
B3 -- Quicksand
B4 -- Hot Coals
B5 -- Acid/Threat of Acid
B6 -- Blank Room/Psychological Torture

C1 -- Inside or On (roll on Giant Objects)
C2 -- Maze
C3 -- Hot Wax
C4 -- Spiders
C5 -- Fire/Threat of Fire
C6 -- Anthill

D1 -- Trapped in (roll on Out-of-Control Vehicles)
D2 -- Shark Tank
D3 -- Bomb/Time-bomb
D4 -- Area with a Descending Ceiling
D5 -- Poison Gas
D6 -- Rusty Iron Spikes

E1 -- Combat with (roll on Fearsome Beasts)
E2 -- Rats
E3 -- Unstable Floor
E4 -- Electricity/Electrified Object
E5 -- Piranha Tank
E6 -- Area with a Sliding Walls

F1 -- Heavy Weight
F2 -- Killer Bees
F3 -- Red-Hot Objects
F4 -- Open Sewer
F5 -- Bottomless Pit/Volcano Crater
F6 -- Hallucinatory Fog

Infernal Devices (roll 2d6)

2-3 -- If manipulated, secondary device is triggered (electrocutes hostage, sets off bomb, unleashes the hounds, etc.)
4-5 -- Drains traits (vitality, strength, powers, memories, intelligence, youth, beauty, etc.) from victim.
6-7 -- Mind-switches the victim.
8 -- Changes the victim's gender.
9 -- Drives the victim mad.
10 -- Roll on Giant Objects and Out-of Control Vehicles.
11 -- Roll on Fearsome Beasts and Out-of Control Vehicles.
12 -- Roll on Giant Objects and Fearsome Beasts.

End-of-the-Line Threats (roll 1d6)

1 -- Furnace

2 -- Reactor
3 -- Sawmill
4 -- Rotating Knives
5 -- Long Drop
6 -- Giant Press/Punch

Giant Objects (roll 2d6)

2 -- Centrifuge
3 -- Bell
4 -- Magnifying Glass
5 -- Hourglass
6 -- Scales/Balance
7 -- Typewriter
8 -- Spider Web
9 -- Venus Flytrap
10 -- Jukebox
11 -- Slot Machine
12 -- Catapult

Fearsome Beasts (roll 2d6)

2 -- Gorilla
3 -- Lions/Wolves
4 -- Killer Whale
5 -- Bear
6 -- Dinosaur
7 -- Robot/Golem/Demon/Monster
8 -- Human (Roman Gladiator, Great White Hunter, random thug)
9 -- Giant Insect(s)
10 -- Eagle(s)
11 -- Great White Shark
12 -- Augmented Animal (radio-controlled lemurs, sharks with lasers in their heads, mind-switched hawks, etc.)

Out-of-Control Vehicles (roll 2d6)

2 -- Wheelchair
3 -- Hospital/Ambulance Gurney
4 -- Balloon/Zeppelin
5 -- Sedan
6 -- Sports car
7 -- Speedboat
8 -- Public Transit (City Bus, Subway)
9 -- Airplane
10 -- Train/El
11 -- Rollercoaster car
12 -- Steamroller/Construction Equipment

by Matthew John Shields

Art by andi jones

Author's Note: This fascinating new character arose from a heated debate with a stubborn Marshall over how many points I got for an oath Hindrance I gave to one of my characters. Guess I showed him.

The undead. They inhabit the post-apocalyptic world of ***Deadlands: Hell on Earth*** just like the rest of the normal folks, muties, Sykers, Law Dogs, Templars and all of the other nasty creatures. The undead are merely an empty human 'shell' inhabited by a devious manitous. There is only one way to kill them forever: destroy the brain of the walking corpse.

A great many of the citizens of the Wasted West don't have the sand to do this.

A few Heroes do.

One group of obsessive vigilantes has made it their sacred mission. They are the Graveknights, the self-proclaimed destroyers of all things that come back in the flesh.

The Day the Bombs Fell

It was an otherwise normal day for a rather out-of-the-ordinary group of people. A group of state morticians were at a routine training convention in a large medical facility in New Mexico when reality as they knew it suddenly came to a rather ugly stop. A bomb had been dropped smack in the middle of Albuquerque and the shockwaves from the explosion rocked the convention hall.

The Aftermath

Those who hadn't been crushed by debris picked themselves up and sadly buried the survivors. The bulk of the group wandered north, towards their respective homes, but a few stayed behind. Those that did were mighty shocked when their buddies that they had so carefully and respectfully placed in the Earth got up and started walking around. There were a few grizzled old toe-taggers who had heard stories about the undead and what to do about them. Their companions were sickened to learn just what was involved: delivering a blow to the head. Not an appealing prospect to anyone, but they felt they had to do it.

Forging the Order of the Graveknights

The one whom it most affected was a young intern named Steven Thomas McAllister, although he preferred to be call Tom. He saw the murders of his resurrected comrades as an act of defending the "sanctity of the grave." Right then and there, he swore that he would spend the rest of his life using his knowledge to rid the world of the undead. Eventually, the initial jolt of the ghost rock bomb holocaust began to wear off the people of the Wasted West, and

McAllister's cause began to gain recognition. He realized, after he had acquired an entourage of about 15 people who shared his same zealous goal, that he could start something bigger than himself, something that could, potentially, eliminate the undead curse (he called it a curse) of the Wasted West. And so the Order of the Graveknights was formed.

The Oath

As it is with most other ***Deadlands*** secret societies, Graveknights must take a pretty grim oath before they can be inducted into the ranks. First and foremost, they have to agree to do their very best to take out anyone, friend or foe, who is undead. The second, and much more grisly part, is that when they feel that they are about to kick the final bucket, they've got to ruin the chances of any anxious manitous of making use of their corpse. Without going into too much detail, let's just say they've got to save their final bullet for themselves. When playing a Graveknight, you must take the *oath -5* Hindrance because of this.

The Graveknight

The Upside

Playing a Graveknight isn't all macabre oaths and violent lifestyles. After founding the Order, McAllister and a few of his most loyal followers began to study the manitous. They collected twisted relics, ancient texts and studied up on all of the spiritual hullabaloo that had gripped the world. Because of this, Graveknights get some dandy abilities to go with their quest.

Night Vision

'tis now the very witching time of night,
when churchyards yawn and Hell itself breathes
out contagion to this world.
-- William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*

Much of the wicked business of the undead takes place between the uncertain hours between dusk and dawn. The absence of the sun just seems to make it more fun to take the lives of the living. Anyone with *arcane background: Graveknights* can see better at night than most folks. When making a trackin' roll, darkness only acts as a -1 modifier. Also, when making an onerous (7) roll or above for detecting something at night, the TN is modified by -2.

Seein' Dead

While it's true that the Hallowed can disguise their death wound, Graveknights have had practice telling who isn't playing on their first quarter, so to speak. Anyone with *arcane background: Graveknights* must only meet a TN of foolproof (3) to detect a Harrowed. (How you play the eight of clubs mutation is up to the Marshall.)

Instinct

There's only one way to make sure you put someone down forever in the Wasted West: split open their head like a ripe casaba melon. Graveknights are trained (and survive because of their ability) to get the undead right between the eyes. Anyone with *arcane background: Graveknight* only suffers a -4 modifier when calling a shot to the noggin', provided they are aiming at an undead; it won't work for living things.

Playing a Graveknight

Players should go for high *shootin'*, *trackin'*, *quick draw*, *speed load*, and *search* scores. There are several Hindrances and Edges the character must take. The Hindrances are: *oath -5: Graveknight's Oath, self-righteous -3, enemy -5: All Manitous,* and *night terrors -5.* As for the last two, they are there because the manitous are determined to destroy the Graveknight threat, once and for all. The Edges the character must have are: *arcane background: Graveknight +3,* and *friends in high places +3,* because any time a Graveknight needs backup disposing of a nest of zombies, he need look no further than his comrades. Under normal circumstances, 1d4 buddies may show up in about 1d8 days to help finish to job.

A Graveknight Archetype

Deftness 4d10
Shootin': pistol 3
Speed load: pistol 3
Nimbleness 1d8
Climbin' 1
Dodge 3
Fightin': brawlin', ax 2
Sneakin' 3
Quickness 3d10
Quick draw: pistol 3
Strength 2d12
Vigor 2d8
Cognition 3d8
Search 3
Trackin' 3
Knowledge 3d6
Language: native 2
Area knowledge: home county 2
Mien 3d6
Smarts 2d10
Spirit 2d8
Wind 16
Pace 8
Edges:
Arcane background: Graveknight +3
Brave +2
Eagle-eyes +1
Friends in high places +5
Keen +3
Level-headed +5
"The Stare" +1
Hindrances:
Enemy -5: all Manitous
Night terrors -5
Oath -5: Graveknight's Oath
Self-righteous -3
Gear: Police Hellfire, 15 10mm rounds, and a hand ax.

Universality

The Graveknight is just too cool for all of us ***Hell on Earth*** players to keep it all ourselves, so here are some tips for transplanting them into other universes. First of all, the story only works well in this universe, so you might want to make a few changes. You can keep good old Tommy McAllister, just change him from a deranged mortician to a deranged something else. Second, and this is very important. Make sure there are undead in your campaign that can be killed by bullets. Ghosts don't work. Zombies, mummies, ghouls...they work. Also, many of the Edges and Hindrances translate almost perfectly over to ***GURPS*** Advantages and Disadvantages. The only one that might be hard to copy over is night terrors. For the non-***Deadlands*** enthusiasts among us, this means they are tortured while they sleep by evil spirits, and thus have very realistic nightmares. However, this is easily fixed by creating your very own Disadvantage. Finally, The biggest problem is that ***Hell on Earth's*** universe is unique because some kinds of undead characters (Hallowed) can disguise themselves to fit in with other people. If this isn't the case in your universe, no problem. Scrap Seein' Dead and just redistribute the points: make your character ambidextrous or something.

A Final Note

Playing a Graveknight is not exactly for novices. The main problem is that darned oath, which covers all undead, including automatons and dogs 'o War. The second part is usually bad for the posse because it ruins their chances of playing a Harrowed character. You should first check with your Marshall and all of your posse buddies to see if they'll go along with your character.

by Vernon (Rade) Bender

Art by andi jones

*It was raining in Night City. Hell, it was **always** raining in Night City. Never a good, clean downpour, either, something that would wash the filth and soot away, something that would sweeten the air in it's passing. No, this rain was a cold, gray drizzle, serving only to move a little more acid from the clouds back down to the city that spawned it.*

The man in the trenchcoat paid the rain little mind. Georg knew it was just another facet of doing business on the Street. Which was, incidentally, exactly what he was doing at the moment. His team was planning a run later this evening, and it was his task to scare up the extra munitions they would need. He smiled thinly, thinking that if he could slip a few euro in his pocket along the way, so much the better.

Georg moved cautiously towards the streetcorner that his usual munitions supplier had staked out as a storefront. Not that he was afraid, but it never hurts to be careful. Phreez was on-station as usual, his long coat not quite hiding several large bulges beneath it.

"Hey there, choom. Lovely weather we're havin', neh?" the oily-looking fellow said as Georg approached.

"Eh. Could be worse." Georg replied, his Russian accent all-but-vanished from his speech. Only the occasional rolled "r" gave away his heritage. Not that trivial things like nationality mattered much in that universal melting pot that was the Street.

"You shoppin' `r sellin'?"

"Shopping."

Phreez grinned widely. "Dat's wat I likes ta hear, choom. Whatchya inna market for?"

Georg knew that Phreez liked to do business bluntly and quickly, so he wasted no time with niceties. "Satchel charges. Time-det, if you have 'em. And AP rounds, 7.62 mike."

Again that crap-eating grin. "Yer in luck, choom. I gots just th' toys yer lookin' for." Phreez glanced around, then gestured for Georg to follow him down a nearby alley. George paced behind the little man, sticking his hands in his pockets as if to warm them. Actually he was reaching through the lining in his modified armortrench, his hand coming to rest on the worn butt of his Colt 2000. He needn't have bothered, though. Phreez was usually a good contact, and today was no exception. Some haggling, ending with the obligatory complaints by both parties that the other fellow was a thief who would pimp his own sister for a fast buck; and Georg had secured a pair of 10 kilo satchel charges, as well as a case of armor-piercing rounds for the team's rifles. Georg had also managed to shave enough off the price that he could pocket a few hundred euro of the team's cash, with no one being the wiser. He walked away chuckling, noticing the rain even less. Not a bad day's work.

Unbeknownst to either Fixer, the time-delay fuses on one of the satchel charges was defective . . .

The Quick Fix

Handling a good Fixer can be as rewarding as handling a good netrunner. Unfortunately for your party, it can also be as time consuming. Spending a few hours or more "making the deal" is very rewarding for the fellow playing the fixer, but the Solos in your group will be ready to bust caps on both him and you by then. Is there a way around this? Yes! The Quick Fix will not only let you spend more time playing and less time shopping, but it might even bring those twitchy Solos' blood pressure down a notch or two. Note that the rules presented here are in no way an attempt to stifle roleplaying by distilling it down to a few flavorless dice rolls. A good GM should always strike a balance between in-depth roleplaying and "moving the story along.". The Quick Fix sets out to do a little of both.

A Fixer has two primary duties as a party member. The first, of course, is cruisin' the Street, feelin' the pulse, and "acquiring" whatever the party needs. The second, and often overlooked use of a Fixer, is the generation of quick cash, through wheelin' and dealin', networking, and the like. To this end I've come up with a few tables that should make "quick and dirty" Fixer work a little easier.

Streetdeal Rolls

For a Fixer to make a bit of fast euro, he first needs some capital. In this case, a standard streetdeal roll represents time spent on the Street making connections, jobbing out third-party goods, and some petty black marketeering. Of course, to a really good Fixer, time is of no consequence. Remember, the more cash you want to make, the tougher it is to make it quickly. And ya gotta risk big to score big!

Capital Target Number
1-1000eb 10
1001-2000eb 12
2001-3000eb 14
3001-4000eb 16
4001-5000eb 18
5001-6000eb 20
6001-7000eb 22
7001-8000eb 24
8001-9000eb 26
9001-10000eb 28
10001 + 30

For each point the target number is exceeded by, add +10% to the investment.
For each point under, -10%.
Each attempted streetdeal roll takes 2 hours, no more then 6 attempts per day. Guy's gotta sleep sometime!

Streetdeal Fumble Table
1-50 investment lost
51-70 investment lost, angry customer. 50% takes offense / 50% stomps off.
71-80 investment lost, 1-3 angry customers attempt to roll the Fixer

81-90 investment lost, The Law shows up, and questions the Fixer. Stuff is confiscated.
91-00 investment lost, Johnny Law attempts to arrest Fixer for black marketeering

Fixers also excel at locating certain "items" that the party might need. Since these toys are often firearms, that's what I based the following series of tables on. Use the fumble table as normal.

Finding Stuff (50% base price / 50% modified price)
Common 15 / 10-60 % cheaper
Uncommon 20 / 10-30% cheaper
Rare 25 / 10-30% more
Very rare 30 / 10-60% more

Accessories and add-ons such as magazines, weapon-specific scopes and such are as rare (and as costly) as the parent item. Note that common items can be purchased over the counter, uncommons have a 50% chance of being available, rare has a 15% chance, and very rare must (in most cases) be bought on the street. Anything bought in the store is at base price. Rare items may be ordered from a store at a 10% markup, and take 1-6 weeks to be delivered. Very rare items may be ordered at a 50% markup. Assuming that most guns function better with ammo then without, use the next table to find if that streetcorner arms dealer has any rounds available for the particular toy your Fixer is interested in. Ammo, in most cases, should be purchased at base price.

Ammo / magazines (50% available, 1-33%=ammo, 34-66%=mags, 67-00%=both)
1-50% 1-100 loose rnds / 1-3 mags
51-90% 1-6 boxes / 2-12 mags
91-00% 1-3 cases (24 boxes per case, 20% off for wholesale) / 1-3 cases (12 clips per case, 20% off for wholesale as well)

Condition of Item
1-20% new in the box
21-55% slightly used
56-70% slightly damaged, 15 to repair (-15% to cost) (use whatever tech roll appropriate)
71-90% badly damaged, 20 to repair (-30% to cost)
91-00% trashed, 30 to repair, basically spare parts (-50% to cost) (10% chance of appearing new, but actually defective. Will catastrophically malfunction after 1-6 uses)

Please feel free to modify any of this data in any way you choose. It's *your* campaign, after all, choomba!

Advice for AD&D Players Overburdened by Wealth

by Lloyd Brown III

Art by andi jones

Players beware! There is a conspiracy afoot. Dungeon Masters everywhere are doing everything they can in a concerted effort to separate you from your gold pieces. Act now! Beat your DM to the punch, and spend that money on something worthwhile before it gets stolen, falls off a boat, or the illusion wears off and it turns back into iron.

But seriously, your DM is urged to do this thing called "monitoring," which means that if your character gets too much money, he has to lose it. The reason is simple and understandable: a character who can hire somebody to do his adventuring has no reason to adventure. There is also the consideration that too much money -- for your character's level -- can provide that character with better equipment and more power than he should have, making it hard to estimate an adventure's fairness, which in turn means adventures that are too easy or too hard. If you want the baby bear's adventures ("juuuust right!"), work with the DM in keeping your treasure in line with your character's level, social status and aims. Naturally, you want something for your willingness to cooperate, and so these ideas will take money away from you but provide you with something of value. In some cases, it may be only a good feeling, but that's better than being robbed.

Material Things

A holy water font is a heavy initial investment, and hard to maintain, since it can be defiled so easily. Once established and protected, however, it fulfills a constant need of player characters. When not used by the characters, the holy water provided by the font can be sold to lower-level priests of your character's faith, thus recouping some of the original investment.

Horses are a good way to get from place to place, and they are good to have in a combat as well. A warhorse can provide a great boost to the combat ability of a weak thief or wizard, or provide the mobility to win a battle with enemies on foot, or enable your character to escape larger creatures. Steeds can be expensive to maintain for beginning characters, but they are generally worth the expense if they can be kept alive in a dangerous campaign. Part of keeping them alive is providing whatever protection can be afforded, which means barding.

A ship can be a good purchase for a party of adventurers. It is a good place to store treasures, can be operated by a large party and one or two trusted henchmen, and holds its value as long as you keep it off of reefs and away from monsters.

Also, life aboard a ship can be a source of adventures, making the DM's job easier. Many adventures begin by assuming that the characters are aboard a ship or in a port town. If your party owns the boat, you don't have to sign on with untrustworthy knaves and risk getting left at the nearest island, or worse -- in the middle of the ocean!

There are many things out there that your character will need in small quantities for the rest of his life. Material components, ammunition for missile weapons, Greek fire, lamp oil, torches, rope, clothes, and even food and water. Stock up when you can. If your character has money, he should purchase these things in bulk. It is doubtful that a thief will sneak into your home and steal 2,500 torches, but he might very well roll you for the same value in coin in your purse. At some point, however, it is likely that your character will be short of cash and be unable to purchase some ordinary equipment that might make life easier. A little foresight can prevent this from becoming a major problem.

Services

Too Much Money

Wizard characters, or possibly bards or other magic-using characters, at the DM's option, may be able to hire an alchemist to create a homunculus. This magical companion can be a great help to an adventuring party and a roleplaying treat. They are valuable scouts, guards, and spies, and their sleep-inducing bite can be a great aid in combat. When dressed to mimic their owner, they can also provide great amusement for the rest of the party, since they adopt his personality as well.

Characters who wish to experiment or have an actual need for a spell can gather materials and begin spell research. This is money well spent. Your character will have a useful spell that he can add to his spellbook, will gain value experience, and will have an investment in the form of books added to his library.

If your character can find a high-level mage willing to do so, he may commission the creation of a magical item. Finding a wizard to create a potion or write a scroll may give a low-level adventurer firepower he could not otherwise acquire, or free up time for a high-level wizard to do something else. Advertising that you have a large sum of gold and need a pair of magical bracers to defend yourself with is not exactly a wise move, so the character should start by asking friends or allies if they have the time and ability to perform this favor -- in return for gold or jewelry, of course. Be careful with who you trust with this: the wizard may take the money and run, hold the magic item and demand more money, leave it out to be stolen before handing it over, or die before finishing it.

If the DM allows, your character may be able to hire a spy to keep tabs on an NPC. Since this takes away from roleplaying, it should be done carefully. The best way to use this tool is to hire the spy before beginning an adventure. The spy should check out loose ends from another adventure, or be used to dig up more information from rumors or adventure hooks, and when the party return from the current endeavor, you can use the spy's information to begin another adventure.

This might also include routine spying on one's neighbors, if your PC owns property and wishes to keep it from those who would take it by force. A half-orc might report on the state of the humanoid tribes in the area, a dwarf might be willing to provide regular notice of the goings-on in the Underdark, and a druid would certainly accept a donation to the faith in return for news of evil creatures moving through the wilderness.

If your group's style leans toward heavy roleplaying, or the particulars of the game world demand it (like an ***Oriental*** or ***Al-Qadim*** campaign) your character may wish to make an impression on society or improve his own quality of life by commissioning the creation of a visual work of art -- a painting, statue, or mural. For a low-level character, this artist may be an eager student who needs only enough to survive and purchase his supplies. For a powerful and influential character, this might be a renowned master of his art, bid for by kings and high priests. In addition to gaining an attractive piece of art for the home, the character may improve his prestige in the community, establish his reputation as a well-rounded individual, and gain the respect of his peers.

Your character might also sponsor a talented musician, composer, or songwriter. In this way, the character may wish to

immortalize his brave deeds in song, or tell the tale of a fallen companion. He may wish to dedicate a tribute to a valuable ally -- the unknown spy who set up the fall of the Pirate Kingdom, the elven tribe who sheltered the party from the Rain of Chaos, or the cloud giant whose sense of humor outweighed his desire for privacy.

If your character has a permanent home, you may wish to make some changes to the property in order to make it safer for people and property. An escape tunnel can be dug, a false treasure room set up, traps can be installed. You may wish your valuables to be hidden behind a secret door.

You may also wish to make your character's home more enjoyable. A garden, aviary, or fountain can liven up a home and make it look less like a lifeless dungeon. Pets, common or exotic, can warm the place up even more.

Business Ventures

Your character will do business with many different merchants during his career. Many of these will short-change him, sell him poor equipment, or just not respect him. On the other hand, some rare merchants will impress your character with their honesty, skill, and tact. The latter deserve to be rewarded. If you buy them a shop and ask for some small share of the profits and free goods or services, you both win. Characters who can count on an honest jeweler can save themselves thousands of gold pieces in potential loss to fraud. Those with an inn will always find careful grooms to take good care of their mounts, polite servers who understand discretion, and good cooks whose food they can eat without subjecting it to an array of divination spells.

This arrangement can work in two ways. Your character can offer to purchase the establishment from the merchant, and then pay the merchant (and other employees) a salary. This means that the merchant has to give up his chance of riches and autonomy. But he has a large amount of gold in his hand. Or, your character can give a smithy (or inn, or mill) to a prospective owner who has demonstrated skill and honesty and is willing to pay your character back, in gold and services. Any such contract may be verbal with the rules being made up as the situations occur, or carefully drawn up and supervised by the appropriate legal clerks, in accordance with your character's alignment and relationship with the merchant in question.

Powerful PCs with rooms full of gold may wish to buy a large merchant company, trading coster, or shipping business. These enterprises are easy to run once they get established because they often control all aspects of their business. A shipping company, for example, may have its own woodcutters cut wood for its own porters to take to its own yards, for its own shipwrights to make into ships. Goods then go to warehouses in one city to a carefully-routed triangle, trading goods for goods more valuable at each stop. These will cost huge amounts of money, but give your character prestige, power, and influence.

Activities

Your character or group may wish to sponsor some sort of competition. It can be to gather together the finest competitors in order to recruit new party members, seek out a particular NPC of known skill, or just for fun.

Wresting matches and foot races are two almost universally popular forms of competition. Wresting (or boxing, or martial arts) competitions normally use a single-elimination system which results in a dramatic final match between the two best undefeated fighters. Foot races can be part of a larger "track and field" meet, or a single long-distance race. In either case, betting (whether legal or not) is often a large part of the fun for many participants and spectators.

An archery tournament can be set up at little cost -- a few straw targets and some open land is all that is needed. Of course, a cash prize is important. This can be a set prize (monetary or an appropriate magic item), or it can be a purse, which is a percentage of the entry fees. Some things can make the tournament flow more smoothly (a spyglass or two for spotting, for example), but the basic needs can be met by a few low-level characters acting in concert.

A joust caters to the nobility, and if the characters sponsor a joust, at least one of them should be a noble of some reputation, or nobody will show up! They must have extra lances, clerics on hand to heal those accidentally injured,

and be able to provide meals for a large group of extravagant diners. For rules, DMs can use standard combat rules or adopt the ***D&D*** rules from the old ***Companion Rules*** book if that source is available.

A specialized tournament of a different form, such as a treasure hunt for thieves, or mage-fair for wizards could also be set up. The players may have to offer some sort of amnesty if they wish thieves to come out and identify themselves. They must also be very careful with security if they wish to have score or two wizards running around on their property: damage to persons or property is possible in the event of a miscast spells, accidentally-triggered protection magic, or a short temper.

Lastly, characters may well want to have a plain old party. Holidays, marriages, or success in an adventure may make them wish to invite their friends and neighbors over for eating, drinking, dancing, playing games, and general merriment.

Gifts

A gift can often sway the opinions of NPCs that may be unmoved by actions, words, or vulgar offers of cash. The PC may wish to seek out a special gift or choose something from an unspecified stash of gems and jewelry. This can be a gift given to a romantic interest for no occasion, an expected gift due to a feudal lord, or a pacifistic tribute to a neighboring landowner with whom the PC has had border disputes. It will usually cause the NPC to favor the PC, but can not always be counted upon.

Gifts can also be made of minor magical items the character no longer need. These should be given to adventurers or authorities with similar interests. Thus, a paladin may give his shield+1 to his church or a squire of another paladin when he gets a better one. A ranger may leave a dagger+1 with a dryad he meets in the wilderness. A mage may give his guild a copy of a new spell he has created or found.

Gifts don't need to be carefully thought out, nor do they need to be insignificant magic items. An impromptu gift made to an NPC or friendly monster is sometimes in order. How often has your character had his bacon saved by a treant, shedu, or good dragon who gave him arrows of slaying just what you needed that were lying haphazardly around the lair? These items come from somewhere, and it would be an interesting turnaround if your character gave one to them in return for valuable information or pulling your character from a waterfall just in time.

Donations or Endowments

Donating to a temple can be mandatory for some classes. Paladins and some priests must pay a tithe, or sometimes more, to a temple. If your character is a member of a faith that requires a tithe, he should pay it. Otherwise, followers of nearly any faith are asked to make donations, and player characters should at least give something to these temples in order to stay on their good side, if nothing else. If they do, they may find that the cost of services (that is, curing and restorative spells) and goods (holy water) will be reduced. If they do not regularly make donations, they may not be able to purchase anything at all from the temples.

Of course, from a roleplaying perspective, those who make noticeable donations to their respective faith will gain the notice of the priests, who may refer adventures their way. Perhaps a fellow member of the faith is a merchant whose ships have been falling prey to pirates or a monster. Perhaps the merchant has a thief in the company who makes his presence known in the usual manner. Maybe the merchant himself has no need for adventurers, but an old friend, an advisor to the duke, is worried about the rebellion festering in the south and wishes some brave people would round up a few of the agitators for questioning.

Generous player character might wish to give their money to a cause that will provide their character with no chance of monetary return or give them no immediate material benefit at all. A hospital, orphanage, or school could be established and would then need money on a regular basis. Providing an establishment like this with a large initial grant would be a logical move for any good character. Ideally, your character will be able to find somebody skillful at procuring donations from the community to help with the maintenance, but the organization may still have to be bailed

out in bad times.

Paladins and lawful good priests who spend money and large amounts of time organizing an affair like this may earn an experience point award, for "furthering the cause of the ethos." This is a strongly lawful act, as the character is uniting the services of many people in a common goal for the good of a larger group of people. This experience point award will not be given for simply deducting a number of gold pieces from the character sheet, but for contacting the NPCs involved in running the organization, buying or clearing land, overseeing construction, notifying the people who will need its services, etc. This could take up to a year of game time and provide numerous encounters with members of the community.

Good PCs in an oppressive environment may wish to set up a "safe house" for others of like mind. This can be a stop for escaped slaves, rebels planning a coup, or preserver wizards in a ***Dark Sun*** campaign. The safe house should ideally be a normal-looking home or business, and have an escape route, and possibly hidden weapon or treasure stores. Each situation will also have its own concerns and may need special equipment (clothes for slaves, material components for preservers, etc.).

Miscellaneous

Just as many people do in the real world, your character may wish to further his education. Learning a trade is a matter of finding the right master willing to pass on his secret knowledge, but an academic education can be obtained by enrolling in a university. If your character meets the university's requirements (enough gold meets nearly all of them), your character can learn such proficiencies as reading/writing, a new language, a musical instrument, singing, alchemy, astrology, local or ancient history, religion, navigation, or engineering. Depending on the campaign, there may also be trade schools or guilds where other proficiencies may be learned.

A well-played character may have a collection that he is constantly adding to. Collectibles common to adventurers include knives, swords, or armor and shields. Coins, autographs, holy symbols, or even pottery can be interesting to someone who has a genuine attraction to that field. DM's love to use this type of game interest to motivate adventures or to reward players with something more interesting than "d6 gp for each orc." While the other party members are searching the goblins for silver, your priest character might find, used as a booster seat at a dining table, a rare original of the famous autobiography *Journeys Across the Planes* by the patron saint of your character's faith.

This is just a beginning. Like in real life, there are more things to do than can be done by any one person. Especially in a fantasy world. Undoubtedly, you're motivated to go beyond this list and spend more gold than your character will ever have. That's a good thing, because your character will always have the drive to go on "one more" quest. Good luck, and good spending.

by Daniel Howard

Art by Dan Smith

"Orcs are the commonest `cannon fodder' of fantasy worlds. They are generally considered to be stupid, dirty and aggressive . . .' So begins the orc's somewhat derogatory racial description in ***GURPS Fantasy.*** Here we will explore the viability of the orc as a more serious opponent or, even, a desirable player character. Are orcs stupid, clumsy and senselessly violent? Perhaps they are merely misunderstood.

Society

No More Cannon Fodder

Any being is a product of its environment. To understand the orc one has to understand the society which produces it. The orc is the ultimate warrior. His whole life is concerned with little else. From his first days squalling in the nursery he learns what it takes to survive. Either he fights or he dies. Through physical abuse, he soon learns that the strong have all the privileges and the weak suffer and have nothing. In order to get anywhere in this society an orc must be brutal, ruthless, treacherous, and devious.

In a culture with no word for "friend" but over a dozen words for "kill"; in a society with little regard for life, that respects strength and power above everything else; a society where an orc over the age of 50 is considered ancient even though their natural lifespans may stretch to hundreds of years; the orc has to be as tough as a dwarf and as crafty as an elf in order to prosper. Respect and fear are interchangeable for the orc. To inspire terror is to command respect. Authority is determined by the size and strength of a given individual. Ascension to a position of leadership always involves a struggle between several candidates, with the focus centered on some symbol of power -- such as a weapon or crown. The strong rule over the weak, with more powerful orcs bullying their weaker brethren. The smallest orc finds small rodents or slaves to abuse. An orc will also use any available opportunity to exploit an unsuspecting victim.

If an orc wants something that he couldn't make himself then he would take it from someone who could. If an individual loses something, then he didn't deserve to have it in the first place. If he is stronger than you, then you may have to gang up with several buddies (or wait until he goes to sleep).

Other races are scorned by the orcs as cowardly and weak with no purpose but servitude. An orc might give grudging respect to a warrior with superior skills, but would look for a method to defeat him to prove orcish superiority (poison works well).

Food

Orcs have a reputation for cannibalism. Considering the inhospitable places they live and the nature of their appetites, this is understandable. Why leave a body lying around when there is good meat on it? Why leave evidence of a murder you just committed when the means to dispose of the body is so obvious? The orcish diet consists of anything that hasn't completely decomposed. Their lairs are virtual cesspools with furniture consisting mainly of piled refuse and garbage. The occasional bench or table is luxurious in comparison. In these conditions, diseases run rampant and any orc without a cast iron constitution soon succumbs and dies.

Slavery

In most orc societies, slaves would normally only be made out of captives from other tribes and races -- those they don't eat first. Some orc bullies may take delight in making slaves out of their smaller brethren. In either case, whether they are slaves or not, smaller orcs do what they're told or they get beaten up (or worse).

Breeding

Females are treated no better than slaves. Only exceptionally large and powerful females gain any measure of respect at all. Their primary function is to produce baby orc-imps. Only the strongest males have the right to mate and are permitted into the breeding chambers. Mating consists of brutal breeding techniques. Females have little choice with whom they mate. Newly born orc-imps spend their first few years in communal nurseries tended by the females. Cannibalism is common and the females frequently feed upon the weak and deformed of their offspring and encourage larger orc-imps to do the same. This is the beginning of the "culling" process which ensures that only the strongest survive to adulthood.

Religion

In every orc culture, the primary god of worship is the god of war. They would obviously see this god in their own image -- a huge orc in battle gear bearing frightening weapons of carnage. This god is the orcish ideal -- the consummate warrior with unsurpassed strength and capacity to inspire terror in the weak. Blood sacrifices to him would be common, as they help to inspire fear as well as provide an outlet to the primal blood lusts of the orc.

The orcs' religion is difficult to analyze. There seems to be only two ways in which an organized religion would develop within orcish society. The first would be if the god takes an active role in the world and chooses his own priests. He would then need to give them terrible powers to be able to maintain control over the others -- especially the strongest who are not used to taking orders. The second would be an artificial religion created by an outside intelligence in order to exert some sort of control over the tribe. Again, the priests would need to wield significant power in order to sufficiently impress their "flocks."

Warfare

Orcs have a reputation for being clumsy. Their weapons and armor are considered ugly and awkward by other standards. In reality, orcs simply don't care how an item looks as long as it functions properly. Their long arms and great strength allow them to easily use weapons that weaker folk might consider unwieldy. When not pushed into battle by a stronger individual, an orc is very careful when entering combat. He has spent his whole life learning to survive in the most treacherous and deadly of environments, why would he throw it away in a senseless charge? Unless the orc has a clear advantage he will almost certainly flee. Some would call this cowardly (so would the orc while in the company of his brethren) but don't worry, he will return soon enough -- with reinforcements. An orcish ambush can be particularly devastating -- as long as they can keep from squabbling amongst one another long enough to remain undetected.

Orcish ingenuity is directed solely towards war and the infliction of pain. Weapons are designed to maximize "splatter and splash." Morning stars and flails are almost status symbols, for they require a high level of skill while providing an unparalleled exhibition of blood and gore. Apart from war, their fascination with torture seems to be their only form of entertainment and serves to exercise their devious minds. Torture devices are designed to keep the victim squealing as long as possible whilst giving a fine spectacle of blood. A good trap will do the same.

Orcs as Player Characters

The orc as defined above would make a very poor player character, unless the entire party consists of orcs. Even this would be difficult for a GM to control and direct. Imagine a party of thieves, assassins and cutthroats -- every GM's nightmare. In order to successfully play an orc character, the orc has to be revised somewhat. Consider the orc as a mighty warrior rather than a bloodthirsty savage. They are proud of their heritage as a warring people and adhere to their own code of honor. This code of honor could include tenets such as: "never refuse the opportunity to fight," "never surrender," "never show fear nor cowardice," and "never let an enemy see your back." An orc would be doubly careful to follow this ideology if in the company of "lesser" races (anyone who is not an orc) in order to impress upon them the notion of orcish superiority.

GURPS Advantages could include: Alertness; Combat Reflexes; Danger Sense; High Pain Threshold; Night Vision; Peripheral Vision; Rapid Healing; Strong Will; and Toughness. ***GURPS*** Disadvantages could include: Bad Temper; Bloodlust; Berserk; Bully; Code of Honor; Impulsiveness; Intolerance; and Overconfidence. An orc would very rarely have any physical disadvantages (deformed imps are killed at birth) unless they were gained during battle: One Eye; One Arm; etc. These sorts of wounds are considered badges of honor and an orc who survives such a serious wound is greatly respected -- as long as the injury is not debilitating and he can still fight alongside his brethren.

The fighting style of the orc emphasizes the individuality of the warrior rather than cooperation within a disciplined unit. Each orc strives to outdo the others in fighting prowess, and the more carnage he can reap, and the more blood he splatters during a battle, the more respect he will earn within the tribe. In a one-on-one confrontation, an orc will nearly always win. This is due to their ruthlessness and singlemindedness -- an orc lives to fight and is not afraid to die as long as he can kill his enemy first. The best way for an orc to die is to take as many of the enemy with him as possible before he goes. Suicide, while not desirable, is preferable to surrender and disgrace.

Conclusion

After taking all the facts into account it is surprising that any orcs survive to adulthood at all. Those that do are fearsome creatures indeed. An orc is a being of absolute ruthlessness, of awesome strength and tremendous constitution, with a taste for blood and the desire to inflict pain. He has a mind that is devious, treacherous, deceitful and ingenious.

A product of countless generations of selective breeding, the orc is a powerful warrior well capable of taking care of himself. The unprepared adventurer would be well-advised to reconsider facing one in single combat -- and a horde of orcs charging down upon him should leave him quivering in terror or whimpering for his mommy . . .

by M.J. Dougherty

Art by andi jones

Introduction

This adventure is set in the Mileu 0 ***Traveller*** setting, in year 8 after the founding of the Third Imperium. It can easily be transplanted to a different setting -- anywhere that there is a little colonial expansion going, where small settlements like Dashgad can exist.

The storyline follows on directly from Cold Night On Dashgad, a summary of which follows:

The characters' situation is not looking particularly hopeful. Having arrived on Dashgad, a frontier world of little importance except as a trade link to the Apge Consortium, the characters were able to find only one cargo worth shipping. Worse, they had to pick it up from one of the outlying farms themselves using a grav truck. Worse yet, a "Cold Night" was descending, as Dashgad moved into the shadow of the gas giant it orbits. Temperatures plummeted as the characters left Smit Town, the only settlement larger than a farm on the entire planet, and headed for the Parnaby ranch to collect their cargo; several tons of Dashgoat eggs, an excellent oxidizing agent and Dashgad's only export.

Greeted warmly by the isolated ranchers, the characters set to work and were in the process of transporting the cargo, requiring several runs to Smit Town by grav truck, when the Cold Night took a turn for the worse.

Scientists had long wondered how the numbers of giant insect-like Dashgoats were controlled before humans came to Dashgad. With no predators, the Dashgoats' numbers should have increased until the planet was completely covered in them. Yet even before the ranchers began to control their numbers by harvesting the eggs, the Dashgoats' population was controlled by . . . something.

During that cold night, the riddle was solved. The Dashgoats' natural enemy emerged from its long underground slumber in the form of a 1-2 meter-long armored caterpillar-like creature. In previous cycles, the predators fed voraciously on the immense Dashgoat herds, laid their eggs deep in the ground, then curled around them to die, leaving the Dashgoats to rebuild their numbers over the years. 99% of the Dashgoat population were slaughtered in this manner each cycle.

But tonight is different. The vast herds are gone, their numbers drastically reduced by human ranchers. With no ready source of food, the predators are starving. Biological imperative forces them to seek new sources of food so that the cycle can continue. Fortunately for the predators, there is another source of food on Dashgad.

Humans.

It's going to be a long night on Dashgad.

Referee's Notes

Most of the data required to run this adventure was presented in the preceding Cold Night on Dashgad scenario. The referee is urged to refer to this data, though the following overview lists the most important points as well as presenting some new information.

World Data

Starport: C. Standard but for a lack of orbital facilities.

Size: 1. 2360 km diameter, with surface gravity of 0.37g.

Population: 2. 632 people, of whom 596 live in the main settlement, Smit Town. The other 36 run Dashgoat ranches.

Government: 2. Participating Democracy. Every citizen aged 16 or over is entitled to vote via a computer network on all major policy decisions while the day-to-day running of the world is carried out by officers of the Imperial Colonial Office.

Law Level: 4. Dashgad is a young colony and its laws are few, leaving most legal decisions in the hands of the Imperial Ministry of Justice Marshal and his three deputies. Weapons which are neither military nor fully-automatic in nature are available at the world's "INSTORE". A wait of three days is mandatory while the IMJ computers run a check of your permit and any criminal status.

Tech Level: B. The average Imperial tech level reflects the investment in facilities by the ICO to create a port near the Apge Consortium. The world's citizens enjoy a high standard of living.

Flora and Fauna

The world has only two major forms of plant life: Stiltgrass and Green Weed. Green Weed is a ground-hugging creeper with sharp thorn-like leaves which grows in tangles between the rocks and hills of the uplands. As a plant, Green Weed has no value other than providing a little oxygen by photosynthesis.

Stiltgrass, however, stands 2 to 2.5 meters in height, with a typical stalk having a diameter of 30mm. Stiltgrass covers about 60% of the world's surface in gently-waving forests. Stiltgrass has little value except as food for the world's population of bizarre creatures named Dashgoats.

Physically, the Dashgoat resembles a six-legged insect-like creature 3m or so in height. They lead a simple life roaming the Stiltgrass forests in herds of several hundred, pausing to eat the Stiltgrass, then plodding mindlessly onwards. Dashgoats have no eyes, steering their sedate progress by means of sensitive pads on the leading pair of feet and legs. This lack of senses does not pose much of a problem to a creature which frequently moves as little as a few hundred meters in a day even when on the move. Dashgoat stampedes are not to be feared.

Human Habitation

Smit Town

Home to all of 596 people, or 94% of the world population, the town is centered around the world's small Starport.

The Downport is a collection of 15 launch/landing pads each capable of handling a 400dt vessel. One pad however is very large and can handle 1000 dt. This pad is never used in practice, since large vessels tend to remain in orbit.

The pads are simple plasticrete structures with landing lights and connection points for auxiliary power, life support

and drinking water.

Fuel is supplied on request by a grav-tanker, which is in turn supplied by a fuel shuttle, a custom-built vessel which is little more than a huge scoop which makes constant runs to and from the gas giant, delivering its skimmed fuel to the two underground holding tanks built some 60km from the Starport for safety reasons.

The last structure on each landing pad is a small bunker which in fact houses a grav-lift, taking the visitor from the pad to Smit Town deep below the surface of the planet. A second large grav-lift is to be found in the bunker, along with grav pallets, allowing cargo transfer to take place.

The town is built entirely within custom-drilled caverns to protect the citizens from outside conditions, and allowing internal grav fields to provide a constant 0.7g, oxygen-enriched air and a day-night cycle of 12 hours each. A holographic sky-scape projected onto the cavern ceiling gives the impression of dawn, daylight, dusk, and full night.

The caverns themselves are quite tall, most being around 15m high. Buildings are cut into rock faces, though these are decoratively faced leaving no bare rock to be seen. Most buildings are 2 stories high.

The main caverns feature guided walkways and small parks filled with native Sylean plants. Grav lifts hover at about 6m above the floor and grav-stairs consist of a small staircase leading to a platform where a grav-lift can be caught for journeys to various areas of the town. To operate, a verbal instruction is issued and the lift will then proceed directly to the destination.

The town itself is divided into three main sectors, all of which are linked via the main cavern.

The Residential Area has space for far more then the existing homes of the 596 inhabitants, ready for the expansion of the colony over the next few years. There is also a school and a small medical center, and the Democratic Hall. This acts as a museum and library as well as a meeting hall, as most votes are cast via the computer network. The CPU which handles the votes is kept here, as are public records and such like.

The Shopping Mall is quite small, and is dominated by INSTORE, a department store which sells a limited selection of most goods from weapons to data pads.

Other stores include an Astroburger franchise, a cinema, and the Emperor's Head, an expensive restaurant. There are no bars except those within the cinema and restaurant.

The third sector is the Port Sector, and contains the Colonial Broker Office, warehouses, a small ship's outfitters and the Dashgoat-egg packaging facilities.

The largest trading firm in the port is Pharmacologique Fabrique LIC, which has recently expanded its operation to gain a 38% holding in the Dashgoat-egg industry. Some 34 people are employed here (5% of the population). The only other large company is Smit Holdings LIC, a family firm owned by a very minor noble house. Sir Hercule Smit now leaves most of the corporation's day to day running to Sara Smit, his daughter and heir. She has already invested heavily from company profits into local businesses, and Smit Holdings now own or have shares in virtually every enterprise on planet.

The Port sector also houses the town's powerplant, which provides power for grav plates, oxygen compressors and other energy needs. This installation still belongs to the Colonial Office, and is guarded by a squad of ICO troopers.

The Farms

The Dashgoat ranches are scattered about the equatorial region of Dashgad. They are all built on low mounds of rocky earth -- either artificial or natural. Buildings are blocky and low, built of plasticrete. All the farms have their own grav and environment controls, a couple of grav vehicles and a processing unit for the Dashgoat eggs. They are generally family businesses operated by an extended family or an owner plus a few hired hands.

The farmers are competent and hardworking individuals, but with plenty of land and Dashgoats they are not especially competitive or aggressive.

Weapons and Military Capability

ICO Troops

The main offensive capability on planet exists in the form of a sergeant and six troopers from the Imperial Colonial Office. These are not regular soldiers but security personnel whose job is to guard the powerplant. As such they are armed with sub-machine guns only, and have a limited supply of ammunition. They also have light body armor and helmets. Their presence shows how important the powerplant and environmental control unit are, and they will not allow these to be left unguarded.

Imperial Marshal

A Marshal and three Deputies are the only representatives of the law on this peaceful world. All have a Diplo armor vest, a sidearm and a baton, plus a teargas spray. For emergencies they have two autorifles and two shotguns in a cabinet in the office.

The Characters

The characters have whatever they arrived with, bought, stole, picked up, made, converted or filed down from a girder in their spare time . . .

The Colonists

In Smit Town, about 10% of the residents own guns. This includes colonial officials with an issue handgun in a drawer somewhere, ex-service personnel, sporting shooters and colonists who thought that a pistol or shotgun might be useful someday. Thus there are about 50-60 firearms in civilian hands in Smit Town. The vast majority are cheap small-caliber pistols of no great lethality. There are about 30-40 pistols and revolvers, 10 shotguns, 10 semi-automatic rifles and carbines, plus a couple of "specials" in the hands of detailed NPCs. The referee should decide precisely who is armed with what, but remember that this is a peaceful colony with no real need for heavy firepower.

The INSTORE has a small gun rack, selling only weapons legal on Dashgad, and just a few of those. There are no automatics or explosives, just eight various pistols, three shotguns, five carbines and a powerful hunting rifle. The owners will not relinquish their property readily, and may need to be persuaded.

The Farmers

Most of the farmers have a gun or two; mainly a shotgun or small-caliber rifle for dealing with the smaller animals of Dashgad.

The Opposition

"Dash-Hunter"

100Kg, A2 F8. Speed: Double.
Armor (see note) 20/6
Weapon: Claw (Contact/Very short 2D)
Teeth (Contact 2D)

Note: These centipede-like creatures move very quickly above or below ground. They cannot dig in the stony ground of the uplands, however.

Physical Appearance: They have a large head with a thick rigid shield of bone-like armor, together with two 2m long claws which grab prey and hold them for eating. These arms are adapted for grabbing feeding Dashgoats, which stand 2-3 m high. The head shield provides 3 rigid armor while the leathery hide of the body counts as 2-points of flexible armor.

The Adventure

During the long and eventful night ahead, there are several scenes which may be played out. The order in which the referee stages them will depend upon the actions of the players. Some scenes may not be used, or may be heard about from NPCs later on, while the characters may find themselves in new situations not listed here. The referee should play for tension, interspersing dramatic action scenes with personal interaction as the colonists try to decide what to do, or take stock, mourning relatives or friends killed by the predators. The colonists as a whole will be very frightened and will look to others for leadership. Without firm, and charismatic -- and successful -- leadership, the colonists will be as much use as a herd of sheep, more of a problem than an asset. Many will simply demand that "something be done," while others will engage in desperate and possibly ill-conceived rescues, stage futile defenses of their property, and otherwise complicate an already appalling situation. Properly led, however, the colonists can do a lot to help themselves. Gaining control of the colony and directing the efforts of the population might be an important step in surviving the events ahead.

Scene 1: The Town Meeting

The characters have brought the news of the predators to the colony, and the colonists will try to decide what to do. To this end, a general meeting is called. About a hundred colonists will pack into the chosen building, shouting and demanding their opinions be heard. The characters and the leaders of the colony will be buttonholed and shouted at, bombarded by demands that they "do something," or stop telling tales and frightening decent folks. The leaders will react according to their nature: the Marshal will try to keep order, the ICO troops under Greener will continue to guard the environment plant, Fergy will try to form a committee to decide what to do, with representatives from all the interest groups there to have their say. The director will become flustered, say something about needing more information and retreat to his office. The meeting is unlikely to achieve much without the characters; intervention.

Eventually, several points will emerge from the babble:

1. More information is needed about the predators.

2. If there really are that many, they'll eat all the Dashgoats and wreck the economy.

3. The predators do not seem to have come anywhere near Smit Town yet, but some of the farms are out of contact.

Someone will have to try to reach the farms and see what can be done.

4. Some sort of plan or organization is going to be needed. Evacuation is not an option, since the PCs ship is the only one in port. Even the fuel shuttle is half a day away on a run to the gas giant..

The characters' suggestions will be important in shaping how this scene is played out. The referee should roleplay the support and opposition to any suggestions like forming a militia or mounting an expedition to destroy the predators.

The most likely solution will be for most of the colonists to remain where they are, protected by a militia armed with pistols, shotguns etc. A couple of groups constructed around more powerful weapons used by the ICO troops or the marshal's men will form a reaction force, while the characters undertake an expedition to gather more information, round up a few Dashgoats, rescue the farmers, or whatever the colonists decide is the most urgent task.

This is an interaction/roleplaying scene, and should be used to introduce the characters to the colonists' leaders, plus force the players to make some decisions.

Scene 2: The Last Roundup

It is obvious that if the predators are allowed to slaughter all the Dashgoats, the economy of Dashgad is finished, since Dashgoat eggs are the only export. The colonists decide to mount an expedition to round up a small herd of Dashgoats, move it to a safe location, and defend it against all comers. The characters may join this expedition or hear about it later.

The problems inherent in this undertaking are not few. First, a suitable group of Dashgoats must be located. Second, this group will of course attract the attention of the predators, which must be kept at bay. Third, herding Dashgoats is not as easy as it sounds. They are 2-3 meters tall, blind, and slow moving. Dashgoats respond best to vibrations through the ground, and can be induced to move by causing vibrations "behind" them. If sufficiently vigorous, these vibrations will become unpleasant for the beasts, which will amble slowly away from the noise. It might be possible to herd the Dashgoats onto the landing pad (which the predators cannot break through), or even down the cargo lift into the colony. Whatever the characters do, they must later live with. Dashgoats wandering the colony's corridors dripping acidic enzymes everywhere will cause a set of problems all their own.

The challenges in this scene are to decide where to find the Dashgoats -- and what to do with them. Then to get them to go where the characters want. The occasional predator attack will not help matters, and a minor crisis like a grav-vehicle failing due to the cold should keep the players thinking.

Scene 3: Breakthrough

Returning to the colony, the characters are invited to another meeting of the Provisional Defense Council (Fergy will come up with grand titles like this for everything). Matters are still deteriorating. The predators are swarming out of the ground in seemingly endless numbers, and a few seem to have managed to get into Smit Town by some means. A discussion takes place, where information can be shared and collated. It seems that the predators cannot burrow through rocky soil very well, and not at all through solid rock. The few that have managed to get in can be dealt with by reaction patrols, but already the defenders are stretched thin. It is not known how these few have managed to infiltrate the town. The meeting will throw up a couple more "must be done" jobs for the colonists or the characters.

A couple of families have managed to escape in their grav harvesters or trucks and reach the town, but others are still trapped on their farms. A rescue attempt must be mounted. The points of entry for the predators must be found and sealed or at least guarded. Colonists must be moved from their homes in the most threatened areas of the town.

Before a plan can be properly formulated, news arrives that a dozen or so predators have somehow managed to get into the town and are rampaging about the residential district. The patrol assigned to defend the area has taken several casualties trying to contain the situation, and their injured personnel are threatened, along with several civilians in a temporary aid post set up nearby.

A response will have to be mounted immediately, or the wounded will be slaughtered.

This scene allows the characters a chance to interact with the colonists before being plunged back into the fray.

Scene 4: Stocktaking

Back at Smit Town, the characters will be briefed on the current situation. The incidence of predators getting into the town is on the increase. The defenders are doing their best but the entry point is going to have to be found and blocked or the colonists will be overwhelmed.

Other problems to be dealt with include rising panic among the colonists and a feeling of mistrust towards the characters (who could escape in their ship if things become too desperate) showed by some of the colonists. Others will try to bribe or beg for a berth aboard the ship to escape.

Clearly the colonists need to be given something constructive to do rather than wait and hope. Characters who form teams of medics, set colonists to building barricades or jury-rigging explosives, or otherwise "manage" the colonists should be rewarded, while those who simply ignore them are going to have a problem -- maybe even a riot -- on their hands. Some of the colony's leaders might actively support such a revolution among the colonists if it places them in a better political position or furthers their aims.

By this scene, the colony is under pressure from within as well as without. How the characters handle the interactions here could prove the turning point in the scenario. A colony divided, with different groups scrambling for power, will surely fall. The referee should play out several scenes of discontent, fear and vicious selfishness as the characters try to rest and take stock.

Scene 5: The Battle Of Duct 39 Alpha

The worms' entry point has been discovered. They have managed to get into the ventilation ducts above the artificial caverns of Smit Town, squeezing or forcing their way through the grilles and fans of the ventilation and condensing system. From here, they are able to get into the colony itself, and a small number are already roaming the town. This number will increase rapidly as more find their way through the ducts, widening the gaps forced by earlier arrivals.

In fact the situation is much worse than that. Some of the predators have managed to get into the machinery and been chopped to bits by the fan blades. Their armor plating has jammed some of the fans, causing the rest to become overloaded. If the ventilation system is not cleared then within 6 hours the colony's air will become unbreathable.

Volunteers are sought for an expedition into the ventilation system, to climb up the service tunnels and clear the fans, then drive the worms out of the system and shore up the grilles -- or if that is not possible then to station guards on the entry points to defend them.

The volunteers will be required to negotiate narrow access shafts, most of which are unlit. The environmental system is built more in the vertical than the horizontal plane, meaning that at least some of the fighting will have to be done while hanging from ladders or balanced on inspection ledges.

This scene should be reminiscent of the "Alien" films, with combat taking place in awkward places, in the dark, and with the very real danger that a ricochet might injure one of the volunteers. There is also damaged machinery to contend with -- not merely requiring repair or the clearance of minced worms, but posing an active hazard from bare wiring or whirling damaged fan blades. There is also the possibility that a dead worm might fall upon its killer from above.

The characters will find themselves having to think as well as fight, to overcome technical problems with the machinery, to find a way to keep the worms out in future, and also to avoid falling down the shafts or into the fans.

Scene 6: The MacInray Farm

This incident is typical of any of the rescues that might be staged. The MacInray farm is some distance from Smit Town, and has been out of contact for hours when a weak radio transmission is picked up. The message has been rebroadcast by the fuel shuttle, which is coming in from the gas giant. The ranchers have sent a brief GK (SOS) signal to the effect that their ranch house is surrounded by predators, which are crawling up the foundation mound and seeking a way in. Most of the family have barricaded themselves in, but the doors and windows cannot keep the predators out for long.

The MacInray farm is home to a family of four, plus three hired hands. Of the seven, five are in the house, with one of the hands currently on top of the environment hut trying to get an emergency hand radio to work while fending off predators with a length of pipe. The minced remains of the farm owner are currently being fought over in the yard, where Douglas MacInray tried to reach the harvester to rescue his family. Once the Dash-hunters have finished eating him, there is little to stop them bursting into the farmhouse. The rescue party arrives in time to see a predator finally manage to break a triple-glazed toughened-glass window and slither inside. Others move to follow.

The rescue is complicated. The characters must get the hand off the roof quickly as well as rescuing the family from inside the building. This presents a challenge of its own, as there are two screaming young children who do not yet know that their father is already worm food -- ironically the only reason the predators have not broken in earlier -- a farm hand armed with a large spanner vainly trying to fend off the onslaught in the kitchen, and a very frightened but nonetheless determined Mrs. Eileen MacInray armed with a double-barreled shotgun, for which there are exactly two shells left. She is scared enough to shoot at any movement -- this may be the first character into the room. Worse, she might decide that the kindest thing she can do for her children is to turn the gun on them rather than let the "worms" get them.

The characters have to somehow get this crowd into their vehicles and away before the worms finish with Douglas and begin looking for dessert. There are simply too many of them to just shoot them all. A fast rescue is the only answer.

This scene is not a simple firefight. The characters need to move fast, convince the farmers to move and leave Douglas behind, and keep the terrified children calm. The latter may have the team wishing they could just go hand-to-hand with the predators.

Scene 7: Last Stand On Dashgad

Things are a little better, or so the characters think. The defenses are holding, the farmers and a small herd of Dashgoats have been saved, the threat to the environmental control units has been dealt with.

The colonists begin to look at what they can do beyond the immediate survival necessities, and ask the characters if it might be possible to use their ship to go for help. With suitable measures in place, the colonists should be able to hold out for a couple of weeks, by which time the threat might have passed, or the characters brought back reinforcements.

Reaching the ship would require a sally in force by the defenders to drive the worms away from the vessel long enough to board safely. A discussion is begun about how to mount this operation when a huge explosion rocks the cavern. Rock falls from the ceiling, buildings are damaged. Power is lost to some areas. Another explosion follows, and a third.

After a few frantic minutes trying to find out what is happening and to deal with the immediate crises, the full extent of the disaster becomes apparent. While the main liquid hydrogen tanks are stored some 60km away from the town, there is a small reserve in the grav-tankers used to refuel visiting starships. The worms have begun trying to get inside any vehicle or structure, so desperate they are to find food. Their efforts may have damaged one of the grav-tankers, or perhaps it just had a leak. The truth will never be known.

One of the worms managed to get into a storage area containing a crate of Dashgoat eggs, ate all it could of the powdered eggs and went into a frenzy as the oxidizing agent in the eggs began to act. Blundering about covered in egg

powder, the worm came into contact with a little hydrogen from the leaking tanker. The resulting small explosion ruptured the grav-tanker bringing several tons of liquid hydrogen into contact with air and the super-oxidizing egg powder.

The resulting explosion has partially destroyed the starport, damaged the characters' ship, and blown open several entryways to the town. The atmosphere inside will soon become unbreathable as the gases inside mix with the low-oxygen atmosphere outside, requiring emergency filter masks to be worn. Far more urgently, the worms are entering the last stages of starvation, and begin to plunge into the town through the grav lift shafts, ventilation ducts and cracks in the ceiling.

The colonists' last refuge is threatened. The worms are apparently swarming in from all over the planet. There is no chance for rescue.

Grimly, the colonists construct barricades from whatever is to hand, bar themselves into the most sturdy buildings and count out the few remaining rounds for their weapons. The defensive ring shrinks as the defenders are forced back. Finally the remaining colonists are crowded into a small space in the center of town, a ring of barricades manned by the surviving defenders the only flimsy obstacle between them and a messy death.

As dawn approaches, the colonists prepare to make their last stand.

Scene 8: Deliverance?

The life cycle of the worms is a complex one, and requires certain conditions to be met. One of these is extreme cold. Only in the very depths of a Cold Night will the worms awaken, to rampage until the temperature rises again. Only when the alignment of planets is such that the world experiences three nights in a row -- i.e. the time Dashgad spends in the shadow of the gas giant Masia corresponds to what would normally be a day -- will the temperatures fall low enough. On this particular Cold Night the timing has been perfect for the worms, causing them to awaken.

Dashgad has been through two natural and one "shadow" nights, and the temperature will begin to rise. Within a couple of hours of sunrise, the worms will sense the temperature rise and begin seeking a place to burrow and lay their eggs. Those which have had enough to eat will do so immediately, while the rest become increasingly desperate. They will hurl themselves at the barricades to try to get at the colonists, but also will try to eat one another, especially the wounded.

Gradually the tide will ebb, until there are no more worms at the barricades. The colonists emerge into the light of a new day and begin to repair their shattered lives.

Assuming, of course, that anyone survives at all.

Note: The cavalry does not arrive, just in time or otherwise. The characters and the colonists must weather the storm and survive by their own efforts. The overall feeling of the scenario should be rising tension, interspersed with interaction scenes before the next crisis breaks. If the characters do not emerge limp and exhausted, joyful at the new day's breaking but saddened by the losses they have sustained, then the referee wasn't really trying!

NPCs

The following are a few of the NPCs who might play a prominent role in the events of the night. They are not just there to bear arms, but will have their say at any meeting, perhaps insisting that their course of action is the only sane one or demanding that the defenders protect an installation in return for weapons or advice.

The colonists may form several teams of defenders, and some of these NPCs, who may well be known to the PCs by name, will be on those teams. The news that a friend is on the team that was just reported as surrounded and down to the last few rounds will make a rescue more dramatic -- or more poignant as the characters arrive just too late. These NPCs are expendable, but their demise should have some impact upon the PCs. No skills are listed, as their

personalities are more important to the adventure.

Imperial Marshal Yvonne Lavillii. Age 36. Lavillii is an ex-Captain in Ground Force Command (the Imperial Army), with decorations and a couple of combat ribbons to show for it. She is opposed to the idea of armed civilians running about the place, and will trust only ex-military personnel. At first she will argue that only the "proper authorities" should deal with the situation -- the ICO troops and her own deputies, plus any ex-service personnel she can co-opt. She will quickly agree to the formation of a militia among the more able civilians once the situation begins to get out of hand, but has a rather utopian view -- she wants this militia to undergo training for a couple of days before deployment. Lavillii will cling to her illusions rather longer than is sensible.

Sergeant Holden Greener. Age 28. Greener is also an ex-army man, but has no combat experience. He is absolutely unwilling to leave the life support equipment unguarded, but will allow pistol-armed colonists to replace half his men, freeing them for mobile duty. Greener will argue for the formation of "fire brigades" of armed colonists, deployed to respond to any breakthrough by the predators, which will be detected by a screen of lightly armed patrols. This is a sensible idea, but typical of Greener's NCO mentality -- hang on and wait for the officers to sort the problem out.

Greener also has an inner demon. He has not seen combat, and does not know if he will be able to lead his men in combat. His doubts may make him cautious or reckless, or both.

John Fergy, Gabatith Shipping. Age 48. Fergy represents the corporate interests on Dashgad, and is the voice of economics on the emergency council. He will be the one to point out the value of anything destroyed, and the first to realize the fact that if the predators eat all the Dashgoats, then Dashgad's economy as well as her ecology is finished. He is middle-aged, overweight and not especially brave. Although he has a pistol in his desk drawer, Fergy will be the man to organize a defense rather than lead it. He may be invaluable in helping formulate and agree on a plan, though.

Commander Sharrii Attarii, ICO. Age 27. Attarii is a career officer in the Colonial Office. He is young to hold the post of a colony director, and up until today was proud to be a high-flyer. Right now he's scared of many things -- what might happen to his career, to the colonists and installations under his jurisdiction, and not least being eaten by the predators. At first he will dither and err on the side of the defensive option when he makes a decision at all -- more often he will simply rubber-stamp the most conservative plan. As time goes on and casualties mount, Attarii will gradually lose his authority and begin to despair as the situation slips away from his control. He will still try to take credit for successes, weaseling frantically to make sure that any blame falls on others -- like the PCs. He would not be above selling the characters out to save his career. He has a pistol, which will probably remain unfired throughout the crisis.

Sam Jenkins. Age 52. Sam is an old soldier. His military career was uninspiring -- a series of garrison duties with little active service. He does, however, have a considerable amount of experience gathered over the years, and an inexhaustible store of common sense. He also still has his service rifle, kept as a reward for long and dedicated service. Initially just a gray-haired face in the crowd of colonists, Sam will emerge with a few choice words of advice, and though not terribly fit will volunteer for duty defending the colony. He advises that the most defensive option is not always the winning choice, and will bluntly state that there isn't going to be any rescue. The colonists are on their own. Sam does not want to lead or command, but he will advise someone who does. He will do whatever it takes to protect his new home, his friends and neighbors, whatever the consequences. He might even shoot a leader who was leading the colonists to destruction if Sam thought that was the only option.

Petrov Nadile. Age 18. Petrov will not appear until the first incursions into the underground colony. He is a fairly typical colonist. Or was, until the predators attacked his family. He knows for certain that his parents are dead. He is searching for his sister, baby brother and his girlfriend, who was babysitting for them. He has no idea if they are alive, and is becoming increasingly unbalanced. He will volunteer for patrols in order to search a wider area, but gradually his motive will shift to just killing the predators. He will lead patrols into danger to get them to kill more of his enemies.

Veronica Margrave. Age 39. Just an ordinary colonist, a computer programmer working on the environment control staff, Veronica has three children in the colony. She will speak for the "ordinary colonists" at any meeting, demanding not glib reassurances but hard facts, wanting to know what the colonists can do to help themselves. Unarmed, Veronica

will be seen leading groups of younger men and women she has shamed out of hiding to bring in the wounded, form medical parties, retrieve stores and generally perform common-sense supportive tasks. She will quickly become the rallying-point for the non-combatant colonists. Her death would shake them badly, though she takes great risks to do whatever seems necessary.

Win Your Next Rail Baron Game

by Steve Okonski

Rail Baron is now the oldest, continuously published board game with a railroad theme, and remains one of the most popular. This Avalon Hill (now Hasbro) game is even the inspiration for other train games, such as Mayfair's ***Empire Builder*** and ***Eurorails.*** In ***Rail Baron,*** each player moves his train along railroads to randomly chosen destinations. Upon arrival, the player can purchase one of the 28 historical railroads on the US map. Players vie to assemble a network that provides access to most of the important destination cities while preventing opponents from doing likewise. This article discusses various strategies for winning, and assumes you are familiar with the game.

Destination Probability

Assembling a good railroad network is essential to winning ***Rail Baron***; many factors must be considered when purchasing RRs. One of the most important is the probability of the destination cities that are served. For example, due to the way the destination chart is arranged, New York is much more likely to be a destination than Fargo. Therefore, it is more important that your RRs serve New York than Fargo. The four most probable destinations are: San Francisco/Oakland, New York, Los Angeles and Chicago. The four least likely destinations are: Fargo, Chattanooga, Shreveport and Charlotte. In general, the probability of each city is vaguely proportional to the size of its population.

If you add up the probability of all destinations served by each railroad, you'll find that the Pennsylvania tops the list. Single handedly, the PA serves over 28% of the destinations. This factor, combined with its moderate price, makes it the best value on the map. In fact, the owner of the PA wins half the matches! This statistic was determined empirically with help from the ***RB Player*** shareware computer program. ***RB Player*** (downloadable from http://www.insystem.com/rbp/) can not only play the game against you, but also against itself while tallying the results.

The Race to Buy the PA

In a game of experienced ***Rail Baron*** players, the start of the game often turns into a contest of who can be the first to gather enough cash to buy the PA. If you are the lucky person, that's great. However, if you arrive at your first destination with too little cash for the PA and it looks like none of your opponents will be able to afford the PA, the strategy I recommend is to purchase the inexpensive NYNH&H. This does three things: 1) it minimizes your expenditure so that if you happen to get to your next destination very quickly, you might then have enough to buy the PA, 2) if someone else can afford the PA, it eliminates a very valuable link to Boston for that person, and 3) if the PA is already taken, the NYC also connects with the NYNH&H and makes a solid alternate choice.

The Northeast is the region with the highest probability, so it is best to concentrate your early purchases in that area. This fact was well known to the six finalists at the 1998 Rail Baron tournament at Avaloncon (replaced this year by the World Boardgaming Championships, and now open to non-AH games). By the time the person who went last in that final game reached his first destination, the PA, NYC, B&O, C&O, NYNH&H, and B&M had all been sold.

Don't Tell the FTC

If the PA and NYNH&H are sold when you first arrive, go for the NYC. It has the fourth highest destination service probability in the game, plus gets you close to Boston and Portland, ME, both important cities. Next choice, even though it is substantially weaker, is the B&O. If you can't afford either the NYC or B&O, you have two choices: buy the B&M or the SAL. If you think you'll be able to get the NYC later, take the B&M, otherwise go for the SAL.

Both the B&M and the SAL are valuable because of another important factor: monopoly power. The B&M is the only RR that serves Portland, ME and the SAL is the only one that serves Miami, another highly probable destination. Monopolies can be very important in the game: they force opponents to pay you track use fees. Results from ***RB Player*** indicate monopolies are at their most powerful in 3-player games, and at the weakest in 6-player games. This makes sense because in a 6- player game if you spend too much time and money locking up destinations, you won't have enough left over to purchase RRs that get you elsewhere on the map.

Stretch, Rush or Save?

After you have a good RR that serves the Northeast, many different purchase strategies are available: 1) the Southeast Stretch, 2) the Northwest Rush, or 3) the Southwest Save. The Southeast Stretch is the extension of your network into the Southeast. The Southeast region has low probability, so usually this is not the best strategy, but might be worth trying. Basically, it involves extending your Northeastern RRs into the Southeast. The SAL is the best RR in the area, because it monopolizes Miami, but the ACL is not a bad second choice. One problem is both require another RR to connect to the main Northeastern lines. To avoid this drawback, choose the L&N which connects with the PA, NYC, B&O and C&O in Cincinnati, plus monopolizes Nashville. The SOU is rarely the best choice; its good attribute is that it provides a connection from Washington, DC to New Orleans.

The Northwest Rush gets its name because there are only three moderately priced RRs that serve the region. In a four (or more) player game, at least one player is not going to have easy access to the Northwest. If you are the first to buy one of NP, GN and CMStP&P, you immediately put pressure on the other players to expend a purchase acquiring one of the two remaining. But, which do you buy? To find out, I let ***RB Player*** keep the computer busy overnight playing thousands of games. It's a close race, but the NP is associated with victory more often than the other two. The drawback to the NP, as well as the GN, is it requires another RR to provide a connection at the eastern terminus. CMStP&P connects to Chicago, provides direct and fast service to the NW region, but does not serve Portland, OR, an important destination.

The Southwest Save involves hoarding cash in order to purchase one of the expensive biggies: AT&SF, SP or UP. This is, perhaps, the toughest strategy, as it can take quite awhile to save the necessary cash. You'll need nerves of steel as your opponents snap up lots of smaller RRs while you sit pat. Again, to determine which of the three to buy, I enlisted the help of ***RB Player.*** The results are close, but the AT&SF helps to generate victory more often than the UP or SP. The beauty of the AT&SF is that it serves Chicago where it connects to all the major Northeastern RRs. The UP and SP force you to purchase additional RRs to connect.

The Southwest Save is probably the best of the three strategies described here. It helps you obtain one of the three big RRs; you'll need one, or lots of luck, to achieve victory. While saving, if an opponent grabs the big RR you wanted, consider purchasing the WP. It will only set you back $8,000, but is very important to provide access to San Francisco/Oakland in the event you wind up with the UP. Many players feel the UP is inferior compared to it expensive cousins. However, testing with ***RB Player*** does not support this. In fact, after thousands of simulated games, the UP shows a significant advantage over the SP. So, don't shy away from the UP, especially if you already own the WP.

Complementary Combinations

After you have one of the big three (and a nearly empty bank account) I recommend you look for a RR that

compliments it. The WP and UP is just one example of a pair of RRs that work well together. An attribute of these "complementary combinations" is that the RRs connect, but do not overlap much. Another such pair is the UP and CMStP&P; the latter fills in the important Seattle coverage, plus connects to Chicago. I like the SP and D&RGW combination because the latter provides an important mid-country connection to several other RRs (MP, CRI&P, CB&Q). The SP and CRI&P also are a good pair: the Tucumcari connection is a valuable one for shortening coast-to-coast trips. The CRI&P is expensive, but it also provides a handy connection to the NP and GN. Consider pairing the AT&SF with the CB&Q, especially if you have the NP (for the Billings connection). The AT&SF plus WP is less costly, and especially good if the GN is one of your holdings.

Derailment!

It is also useful to know which RRs to avoid, or if you somehow wind up with them, which are good auction material. ***RB Player*** tells us that the RR least often associated with victory is the IC; other than a direct Chicago-New Orleans connection, it doesn't do much. Also associated with losing are the C&O, B&O (these rank low because the PA and NYC are so much better choices), and MP. Avoid these unless they are the last choice to provide a connection. To have any serious chance at winning, your network must be fully interconnected by the time all the RRs are sold.

Dream On

In a four player game, you can expect to be able to purchase 7 of the 28 RRs. The seven-RR, fully-connected dream network (i.e. the one that provides the highest destination service total) is SP, UP, PA, CRI&P, CMStP&P, L&N and SAL. Unfortunately, this group costs a hefty $191,000, which is rarely affordable in a four-player game. The following group, at $151,000, is more affordable, and provides only slightly lower destination service: SP, PA, CRI&P, L&N, SAL, NP and NYNH&H.

Destination service is a very important factor to consider when purchasing RRs, but it is not the only factor. You must also watch for monopolies, connections with your existing network, access to your home city, distance of typical trips, where your opponents are currently headed, and more. Simultaneously, you must evaluate these factors for your opponents as well. For example, if you have a choice of similar RRs, such as the MP or CB&Q, and the CB&Q is the RR an opponent needs to connect to his NP, you should grab the CB&Q. Cutthroat? Yes, but it's only a game, and politeness rarely wins in such situations.

Are You a Rail Baron Fanatic?

Many of the statistics used in this article came from the ***RB Player*** software that you can download from the Rail Baron Fanatics web site. At the site you can also request a free improved (easier to read) destination / payoff chart, join a mailing list, read other articles, and more. If you ever tire of the USA map, you can download alternate game maps that cover other geographic areas. There are maps for Colorado, the northeastern corner of the USA, the New York City subway system and others. Armed with the knowledge from this article, combined with practice against the ***RB Player*** computerized opponents, you should be ready to win your next game of ***Rail Baron.***

by Christian Walker

Art by andi jones

At one time or another all of us have ventured into a game store only to be sorely dismayed at what we found. Rude or inattentive employees, poorly displayed stock and lack of support are only a few of the problems that plague many shops. This is unfortunate because attention to a few basic retail practices can make a world of difference. Dear Mr. Game Store Owner is a letter to a fictitious shop owner praising him for his excellent business sense. It is meant to provide owners and customers with a few ideas how to make their business and gaming environment much more enjoyable.

Dear Game Store Owner,

Yesterday I visited your store and thought that I'd send you a quick note on my impressions of your establishment. There are many lackluster hobby shops plaguing the market these days and fortunately yours is not among them. What follows is a short list of all the things you are doing right in your store, just in case you're not getting enough positive feedback.

When I walked though the door I wasn't sure who or what would face me. Much to my relief you stopped what you were doing at the counter and greeted me with a pleasant, "Hello." This is a nice change as I have gone into some stores where I was either casually ignored or actively shunned by the employees. These employees made me feel that by coming into the store I was interrupting an important personal call or disrupting someone's reading time. Thank you for being human. Its nice to know that some game store owners still consider new customers to be more important than a heated game of ***Magic the Gathering.***

Dear Game Store Owner

Its been a while since I've been shopping for games and I had no idea what had been released in the past few months. I didn't have to search for long thanks to a sales fixture devoted entirely to new releases. A sign above the fixture indicated what the new products were, who published them, price, and release dates. There was even a list of upcoming releases, which will give me plenty of time to save. Okay, I really don't need the time to save. What I actually need is the extra time to convince my wife that I absolutely cannot live without a new RPG.

After picking up a new supplement for a favorite game I walked around the store to see if there was anything else I needed. The shelves were neat and orderly, with clear delineation between the various game companies. Even more

helpful was that among all the titles by one publisher there was a separation between rulebooks, scenarios and even the different editions. This is extremely helpful because on more than one occasion I have purchased scenarios and supplements that did not match the version of the game I had just bought. Frustrating indeed, but with your organization a similar mistake is unlikely.

Since I'm new to the area I need to find a group to game with. A quick scan of the store revealed a bulletin board where gamers were able to post ads looking for GMs and players. All the posts were dated so that I could quickly tell which ones were a bit out of date. This is a minor detail, but extremely helpful because I can quickly tell which games have most likely been filled. I jotted down a few numbers and looked to see if there was someplace I could peruse the products I had selected.

In the back of the store I found a few tables that were perfect for leisurely reading or gaming. They were large enough to accommodate six players and were spaced far enough apart that the gamers would not drown each other out with their noise. In store gaming is something I enjoy very much because there are few easier ways to meet other gamers than to start up a session and see who drops by. In-store gaming also appears to be a good way to generate weekend sales, so everyone seems to win.

On the topic of in-store gaming I was pleased to see that you support a variety of game related promotions. Near your miniatures section I saw entries for a painting contest as well as winners of previous events. I also saw a few flyers for RPGA events, ***Magic*** Arena tournaments and ***Warhammer*** leagues. It was obvious that there is a devoted community of gamers active in the store and that I would find someone to role-play with in no time.

I still had a few dollars left, but was having difficulty finding anything new that I could afford. Much to my delight I found a section that no game store should be without: used games. A few shelves were devoted to RPGs that people had brought in for store credit and among them I found some real gems. For just a few dollars I picked up a few out-of-print supplements that I thought I would never be able to find. I decided that on my next visit I'd bring in a few titles that were collecting dust on my shelves to see if I could trade them for other used games or get store credit. I never cease to be amazed by the fact that people will spend $30 on used games before putting down $20 on new ones. From what I remember of my days as a record store employee, the used section provides a nice profit margin and customers feel that they are getting a good deal. Again, everyone wins.

Having run out of time and money it was time to check out. I was relieved to find that a space was kept open in front of the cash register, since nothing is more annoying than having to interrupt a CCG to get some attention. You completed my transaction with a smile, invited me to sign up for the mailing list and gave me a copy of the last newsletter you sent out.

All in all, I had a great shopping experience. I attribute this to your understanding that even though games are an informal hobby, running a business is a serious affair and that attention to standard retail practices is vital.

Thank you and good gaming!

by Jason Tondro

Art by andi jones

Celestial Glory Kung Fu is the broad term for a number of martial arts styles designed specifically for angels by Yephiel, Angel of Kung Fu and Seraph of War. There are seven major styles of Celestial Glory, inspired by the celestial forms of the various Choirs. Although originally intended as a weapon for use in the celestial realm; some of its applications are nonetheless best suited to corporeal battle. The seven variations of Celestial Glory are: Plumed Serpent (Seraphim), Furious Guardian (Cherubim), Blazing Wheel (Ofanim), Divine Equilibrium (Elohim), Relentless Perfection (Malakim), Hundred Eyes (Kyriotates) and Eternal Friendship (Mercurians).

In Nomine Recap: Unarmed Combat

Before proceeding it may be beneficial to repeat the information provided in the ***In Nomine*** rules on page 65 under "Contact Weapons."

	Power	**Accuracy**	**Skill Required**
Punch*	-3	--	Fighting
Kick*	-2	-1	Fighting

* A skill level with Fighting greater than 4 and some kind of protection (steel-tipped boots, heavy gloves) each add 1 point of Power to the kick or punch. A supernatural level of Strength (9 or better) also adds 1 point of Power to the attack.

Power is added to or subtracted from the check digit to determine the number of hits inflicted on the target.

Accuracy is the bonus or penalty which this type of attack gives to the initial skill roll to hit.

***

This system of martial arts does not replace skills such as Fighting, Dodge, Large/Small Weapon and Acrobatics. Instead, it grants minor advantages which are combined with those skills during the combat turn. All unarmed Celestial Glory attacks -- regardless of form (punch, kick, head-butt, etc.) or hand/foot protection -- are delivered at a base +0 Power and +0 Accuracy (instead of the usual punch and kick modifiers, see below). The attacker may describe his attack any way he likes, the more colorful the better. Additional Power/Accuracy modifiers for the various substyles of Celestial Glory are listed below. High skill level or Strength does not give any additional bonus; but note that if the final (skill + characteristic) roll is over 12 the excess is added to the check digit as per the usual rules.

The various styles are purchased as Choir Attunements and cost 5 points each (Yephiel is not an Archangel and does not give out these attunements herself; they are supported by Michael who considers the whole thing a bit of an experiment). At the moment Yephiel is the only teacher of Celestial Glory techniques; she runs a dojo in Las Vegas

and her classes are well attended. Although willing to teach dedicated celestials more than one style, she always starts with the one most suited to the student's Choir. Mortals may also purchase and use Celestial Glory styles; Yephiel herself maintains a large band of Soldiers who are masters of Plumed Serpent. To date no demon has learned or demonstrated the techniques, but there is nothing inherent in the art that prevents their use by the Infernal, and it is probably only a matter of time before a diabolical variation appears, corrupted from the original.

A fighter who knows more than one style of Celestial Glory Kung Fu decides which style he is going to use at the beginning of each turn, and must use the same style for the rest of the turn. The fighter may not combine the advantages of two or more styles in a single turn. For example, if an angel knows both Plumed Serpent and Relentless Perfection style, he may either enjoy a +2 bonus to Power or use the Plumed Serpent combat maneuvers, but not both.

Plumed Serpent Style

Celestial Glory Kung Fu

The oldest and most well-known of the Celestial Glory styles, Plumed Serpent is inspired by the Seraph's celestial form. It can be used by either Seraphim or Balseraphs in that form, or by human figures in whatever realm. Certain Cherubim or Djinn with serpentine celestial forms may also be able to use it. Plumed Serpent uses a combination of legsweeps and kicks (delivered with the tail when available), grappling techniques, and a vicious clawed punch (or bite). Each maneuver is described separately below. Plumed Serpent can be effectively combined with Numinous Corpus; use Feet or Tail with The Feathered Lash, Sweeping the Earth and Wrapping the Coils, and Claws or Fangs for The Tearing Fangs and The Serpent's Bite.

The Feathered Lash is the standard strike of the Plumed Serpent fighter; it is a swift spinning kick simulating the whipping motion of the serpent's tail. The Feathered Lash is -1 Accuracy and +2 Power. The fighter has +1 to Dodge on the same round that the maneuver is used.

Sweeping the Earth is a maneuver that can only be used in the corporeal realm; it is a legsweep that throws the enemy to the ground. The maneuver is +2 Accuracy and does normal damage, assuming that the target is thrown onto a hard surface, but the martial artist is -1 to Dodge on the round that the attack is made.

Plumed Serpent fighters learn how to wrap their bodies around an opponent in an elaborate grappling technique called Wrapping the Coils. To execute this kind of hold, the fighter must hit and do damage. No hits are actually inflicted, however; the total is used solely to determine if the maneuver is completed. If it is successful (that is, if the check digit exceeds the opponent's Dodge roll) three of the target's limbs are immobilized (the attacker's choice; note that a head, tail, or wing counts as a "limb") and the attacker may choose to do damage normally on following rounds. The victim cannot Dodge these subsequent attacks but he can resist using his Strength (plus Corporeal Forces if a celestial) or Will (plus Celestial Forces) if in celestial form. The check digit of this resistance is subtracted from the damage; if the check digit of the resistance roll exceeds the damage inflicted that round the target has broken free and can act normally in subsequent rounds. Instead of breaking free, the target can attempt to attack his grappler with free limbs, but he suffers a penalty equal to the grappler's Corporeal (or Celestial) Forces. A fighter using Wrapping the Coils is -1 Accuracy and +2 Power throughout the initial attack and later rounds; he is -1 to Dodge but, if the grapple succeeds and the attacker is wrapped around his victim, the attacker cannot even try to Dodge anything except an attack from his own target.

The Tearing Fangs is a clawing hand strike that simulates the fangs of the serpent; it is performed quickly, ripping and tearing the flesh of the target at +1 Accuracy and -1 Power; the fighter is +1 on Dodge rolls that round. The Tearing

Fangs are particularly nasty when used to claw the eyes, but such a strike is very difficult and is only effective in the corporeal realm. The attacker must hit with a -4 Accuracy (instead of the usual +1) but, if the strike hits, the target is blinded for a number of turns equal to the damage done. If the damage is enough to stun the target, he will probably require medical attention before he can see again.

The Serpent's Bite is the most feared and famous element of Plumed Serpent style; it is also the most difficult to master. Like The Tearing Fangs it is a hand strike that simulates the fangs of the serpent, but the Bite targets vital areas and does not let go, destroying nerve clusters and causing paralysis, unconsciousness or even death. A fighter attacking with The Serpent's Bite can choose to do normal damage or, if in corporeal combat, can attempt to paralyze. Paralysis attacks can be directed against the arms or legs at -2, or against the head or chest at -4. No hits are actually inflicted by paralysis attacks; if the amount of damage rolled is higher than the victim's Strength (plus Corporeal Forces for celestials) he cannot use the limb for a number of turns equal to the damage total. Paralysis of the head causes unconsciousness while paralysis of the chest leaves the victim awake but completely unable to move. If the damage number would be enough to stun the target, the duration of the paralysis is measured in minutes, not turns. The Serpent's Bite is -2 Accuracy and any fighter using it is -2 to Dodge. Once it hits, the fighter may choose to not let go and continue the effect. He must roll to hit again each round but no Dodge is allowed; if the attack "misses" the fighter loses his grip. Continued attempts at paralysis are not cumulative; the damage is rerolled each round in a new attempt to beat the target's Strength.

Sidebar: Celestial Glory and Numinous Corpus

In general, Celestial Glory may be combined with Numinous Corpus. Claws will add to the effectiveness of punches while Feet add to kicks and Horns make head-butts more powerful. Fangs and Tail are less easily applied; they may only be combined with certain Plumed Serpent maneuvers and relevant styles of Furious Guardian. Acid, Tongue and Wings gain no benefit when combined with Celestial Glory techniques.

When combining Numinous Corpus with Celestial Glory, simply add all the relevant Accuracy and Power modifiers together.

Furious Guardian Style

This is actually a method of adapting "animal styles" of mundane kung fu to the celestial forms of the Cherubim, and there are a host of minor variations depending on the animal being used. These are referred to as Guardian Lion, Guardian Bear, Guardian Ape, etc. Furious Guardian forms can be used by nearly anyone, including Seraphim and Balseraphs (the Guardian Serpent style), Cherubim and Djinn, as well as anything in human shape. Practitioners of Furious Guardian receive a +1 bonus to both Accuracy and Power, or +2 to each if combined with Numinous Corpus appropriate to the animal form being used.

Blazing Wheel Style

Inspired by the abstract celestial bodies of the Ofanim, Blazing Wheel practitioners are constantly in motion, often running or spinning. With this energy they deliver blows of terrific force and power. Attacks are dodged rather than blocked. Blazing Wheel can be performed by anyone in human shape, or by the Ofanim themselves in celestial form. Blazing Wheel grants hand to hand attacks a +1 Power and the celestial is also +1 to Dodge; these bonuses are raised to +2 if the martial artist is in a large space with plenty of room to maneuver (GM's discretion; the celestial realm almost always counts as a large space). Ofanim can use their resonances to complement rolls when using Blazing Wheel style.

The Way of Divine Equilibrium

This Celestial Glory style is a balance of active and passive techniques relying on the Elohite's subtle ability to predict the enemy's actions. It can be used by anyone in human form. If a practitioner of Divine Equilibrium is attacked in hand to hand combat he may attempt to "turn" the blow. The fighter must Dodge the attack normally. If the check digit

of his Dodge exceeds the check digit of the incoming attack, the target of the Divine Equilibrium takes damage equal to the check digit of his original attack. No Dodge is allowed. A Divine Equilibrium fighter can "turn" any number of attacks in a single combat turn but cannot initiate any attacks of his own when using this style. Fighters using Divine Equilibrium gain a +1 bonus to Dodge rolls. If an Elohite uses his resonance on an enemy when turning a blow, and his check digit is 5 or 6, he can add +1 or +2 (respectively) to his Dodge roll!

Relentless Perfection Style

The most direct, aggressive and downright brutal of the Celestial Glory styles, Relentless Perfection is a natural art for Malakim but can be practiced by anyone with a human form. Attacks are usually blocked rather than dodged, and weapon use is emphasized. Relentless Perfection fighters get a +2 bonus to Power, doubled to +4 if the fighter is using a weapon of any kind.

Hundred Eyes Style

The most unusual of the Celestial Glory techniques, Hundred Eyes is intended for use by Kyriotates, but can be used by any other fighter regardless of shape or realm. It emphasizes awareness and multiplicity, combination punches and cooperation between multiple fighters against a single enemy.

A Hundred Eyes fighter is trained to be aware of his surroundings, and is said to have eyes in all directions (for Kyriotates and Shedim, of course, this is literally true). Once they enter combat they cannot be surprised by anything short of an attunement or resonance.

Hundred Eyes fighters also rely heavily on punch combinations, varying the blows in direction and style so that they cannot be predicted. This grants them a +1 to Accuracy for punching only (including the amorphous and omnipresent hands of celestial Kyriotates and Shedim); the bonus cannot be used for kicks, head-butts or any other kind of attack (meaning that certain Choirs -- Seraphim, Cherubim and Ofanim -- cannot gain the bonus when in celestial form).

Finally, practitioners of Hundred Eyes are trained in cooperating with other Hundred Eye fighters to gang up on a single opponent. Every additional Hundred Eye fighter attacking the same opponent causes that target to suffer a -1 penalty to his Dodge roll (so three Hundred Eye fighters would force a -2 penalty). Obviously, this is particularly useful to the multiple hosts of the Kyriotates. Note that these advantages can be combined with the combination punch bonuses mentioned above.

The Art of Eternal Friendship

Mercurians cannot commit violence without generating dissonance; this Celestial Glory style uses passive stances, blocks and dodges to avoid blows without violating the Mercurian's essential nature. It can, however, be practiced by any fighter regardless of form or realm. Any Dodge by a practitioner of The Art of Eternal Friendship gets the benefits of a Full Dodge (+2) and, if they are actually performing a Full Dodge the bonus is doubled (to +4). The Art of Eternal Friendship allows a Dodge roll against any attack; even those that would otherwise automatically hit or against grapples that have already succeeded. However, a fighter using Eternal Friendship may not initiate any hand-to-hand attacks during the combat turn.

Celestial Glory Techniques

Plumed Serpent Style

	Power	Accuracy	Dodge	Notes
The Feathered Lash	+2	-1	+1	kick
Sweeping the Earth	+0	+2	-1	legsweep
Wrapping the Coils	+2	-1	-1	grapple 3 limbs

The Tearing Fangs	-1	+1	+1	can target eyes at -4
The Serpent's Bite	+0	-2	-2	damage or paralysis

Furious Guardian Style

Any hand to hand	+1	+1	+0	weapon or unarmed
Numinous Corpus	+2	+2	+0	appropriate to animal

Blazing Wheel Style

Any hand to hand	+0	+1	+1	weapon or unarmed
Room to maneuver	+0	+2	+2	GM's discretion

The Way Of Divine Equilibrium

Turning the Blow	n/a	n/a	+1	do attacker's check digit in damage
Any hand to hand	+0	+0	+1	weapon or unarmed

Relentless Perfection Style

Unarmed attacks	+2	+0	+0	without weapons
Armed attacks	+4	+0	+0	usually swords

Hundred Eyes Style

Awareness	+0	+0	+0	immune to surprise once combat is entered
Combination punch	+0	+1	+0	punches only
Coordination	+0	+0	+0	-1 to target's Dodge for every additional fighter

The Art Of Eternal Friendship

Dodge	+0	+0	+2	Dodge any attack
Full Dodge	n/a	n/a	+4	Dodge any attack

Yephiel

Angel of Kung Fu

Seraph Friend of War

Corporeal Forces -- 5 Strength 10 Agility 10 Body Hits 90
Ethereal Forces -- 4 Intelligence 8 Precision 8 Mind Hits 32
Celestial Forces -- 5 Will 10 Perception 10 Soul Hits 50
Vessel: Human female/4, Charisma +2
Skills: Acrobatics/6, Climbing/2, Dodge/6, Fighting/6, Knowledge (Philosophy/2, Teaching/4), Language/3 (Chinese), Large Weapon/4 (Axe), Medicine/2, Move Silently/4, Running/3, Tactics/3, Throwing/4
Songs: Dreams (Corporeal/4), Healing (Corporeal/3, Celestial/3), Numinous Corpus (Fangs/3, Wings/4), Projection (Celestial/4)
Attunements: Seraph of War, Ofanite of War, Howl, One to One (see ***The Final Trumpet***), Proficiency (with kung fu), Friend of the Fighters and all seven styles of Celestial Glory Kung Fu.
Special Rites: Spend an hour teaching a martial arts class (+1); Win a round in a martial arts tournament (+1 per round, cumulative).

When first assigned to Earth, Yephiel was the only Servitor of War in a town dominated by Novalis, Yves, Dominic and lots and lots of demons; because of this, she has a habit of self-reliance and she works hard to be capable of fighting in all three realms. This led to an emphasis on unarmed fighting techniques instead of weapons (which couldn't go celestial or ethereal), and this in turn resulted in a mastery of mortal martial arts. Always an active angel working hard for her Superior, she was awarded with the Word of Kung Fu after developing the Celestial Glory techniques for which she is most famed.

Yephiel continues to perform occasional strike missions for Michael, often accompanied by the Brilliant Dragons, a gang of a few dozen martial artists led by a handful of Soldiers. Most of her time is spent teaching, but she competes in a tournament somewhere in the world at least once a month. She is currently trying to organize the first Heaven & Hell Kumite, to be held in Las Vegas.

Although she appears all business to her fellow celestials and students, Yephiel has a compassionate streak that can surface in the face of great distress. She has a habit of ignoring Michael's rivalries with other Archangels unless she herself is treated poorly. Her greatest emotional attachment is in fact to Blandine -- she makes excuses to visit her tower every few weeks, and Blandine's power, beauty and determination have taken the young Seraph by storm. Yephiel is honest with herself -- indeed she can't help it -- and she knows that she is in love with the Archangel of Dreams.

Her corporeal vessel is an attractive Chinese female going by the name of "Jesse." She dresses casually in loose, unrestrictive clothing of blues and black, her green eyes hidden by dark sunglasses. She drives a fast-moving Japanese motorcycle and carries two Chinese fighting axes in a long bag over one shoulder.

Yephiel is a powerful Word-Bound angel most likely to appear in the role of instructor. Alternately, her plans for a celestial *kumite* might finally come to fruition, with PC brawlers (and their rivals!) on the invite list.

by Alexander Shearer

Art by andi jones

Author's Note: Some of the material in this article was presented by the author on the Usenet group rec.games.mecha in 1994.

Captain Harris maneuvered his Marauder into position, sunlight glinting off its deadly twin PPCs and the newly-painted sunburst insignia of House Davion as it moved cautiously through the light woods. He was jerked into full combat-alertness by the hollow sound of small-arms fire rattling off his armor.

"What was that?"

Lieutenant Rio's voice crackled over the comm line. "Looks like a machine gun nest maybe 700 meters ahead." More bullets spanged off the Marauder's thick plating. Harris checked his targeting system.

"Damn! Out of range."

While it's a bit entertaining and possibly a good Murphy's Rule, the example above is a bit of hyperbole since infantry weapon ranges are even more dismal than normal weapons in ***BattleTech.*** Though the general problem of ridiculously short weapons ranges doesn't take away from the game of fire-and-maneuver played by gamers everywhere, sometimes you just need a step towards realism. Sure, mecha are inherently implausible as futuristic war machines. Yes, there are other problems with the background presented in FASA's ***BattleTech.*** All things considered though, the problem of range is still the most intuitively unsatisfying part of ***BattleTech.***

Rather than whip out the tool kit and turn ***BattleTech*** into a painfully-detailed game of futuristic mechanized warfare, the ***Age of Ares*** rules provide a simple fix for those with a hankering for rules that help you suspend your disbelief and have a good time. Of course, there's a lot more to it than that, since any sweeping change to a wargame, even a single uncomplicated rules modification, will alter the way the game feels and plays. It may not be for every ***BattleTech*** gamer, but it really does help make the setting more intuitively plausible. This is especially helpful for gamers who play both ***BattleTech*** and its associated roleplaying game, ***MechWarrior.***

Essence of the Age

The core change in ***Age of Ares BattleTech*** play is that all ranges are multiplied by ten. This is a simple, clean way to push weapons past the capabilities of Napoleonic cannon without a horde of special case rules. In ***Age of Ares,*** each range bracket (short, medium, long) now has a maximum hex range equal to its original ***BattleTech*** maximum multiplied by ten. The medium and long rang brackets start at one hex past the next lowest range. Thus, the classic ***BattleTech*** Medium laser changes as follows:

Weapon	Short	Medium	Long

Classic Medium Laser	1-3	4-6	7-9
Age of Ares Medium Laser	1-30	31-60	61-90

A few other changes are also made. Weapon Minimum ranges are only doubled, though the modifier remains +1 per hex within that minimum range. Weapons gain a new range, termed Point Blank, which extends to twice the *original* short range of the weapon. Targets within Point Blank range are at -2 to be hit.

There are a few special cases. Flamers are only treated to doubled ranges, with no Point Blank range. Infantry ranges are multiplied normally, with each hex of range now equating to a ten-hex range bracket. This extends the influence of missile-carrying infantry out to a respectable 60 hexes. All armored infantry and other trivia (e.g. protomechs) have weapon ranges increased like normal combat units. Weapons with adjacent-hex effects (e.g. swarm LRMs, artillery) maintain their original effect radii.

A few example weapon systems are described below, noting only the changed values for ***Age of Ares.*** For all weapons, tonnage, critical spaces, heat and damage remain the same.

Weapon	**Minimum**	**Point Blank**	**Short**	**Medium**	**Long**
Flamer	-	-	1-2	3-4	5-6
Small Laser	-	2	1-10	11-20	21-30
Medium Laser	-	6	1-30	31-60	61-90
Large Laser	-	10	1-50	51-100	101-150
Autocannon/5	6	12	1-60	61-120	121-180
LRM-20	12	14	1-70	71-140	141-210

Effect on Play

Age of Ares

This basic modification can be played on your normal ***BattleTech*** maps with no other changes. In this case, the combats represent very close encounters relative to weapon ranges. Most weapons will be within short range much of the time; long-ranged weapons with substantial minimums will suffer. Players experienced with the dueling system found in the ***Solaris VII*** boxed set will be familiar with this style of play. These BattleTech games will feel much like a modern tank engagement at very close ranges, with tremendous amounts of firepower and a real need for maneuver and cover.

Games played like this work especially well in urban environments, where there is a lot of cover and every unit (including the newly-supercharged infantry) can play a part. The ***Age of Ares*** rules modifications were first tested in an urban setting. Combat is somewhat faster and deadlier, but it definitely replicates that feel of giant mecha going at it up close and personal.

Other Ways to Play

More can be done under ***Age of Ares*** than just playing more explosive games on the same old maps. Some options for changed play are described below. The really big changes lend themselves more to miniatures than maps and counters. Most ***BattleTech*** players seem especially fond of miniatures anyway, making the conversion pretty easy.

Smaller Hexes

Admittedly, it doesn't seem like much of a change. Moving play onto a tighter hex grid allows large game areas in the same amount of space. There are a lot of blank maps out there; you can also easily adapt maps from your favorite wargames. To really have any effect, units should be able to do a substantial amount of maneuvering while remaining more than 30 hexes apart. This ensures that at least the shorter-ranged weapons (e.g. medium lasers, AC/20s) will deal with range as a major consideration. Once again, more cover makes for better games of ranged cat-and-mouse. While this is also true in regular ***BattleTech,*** a boring slugging match is somehow more obviously tedious when the units are 20 hexes apart.

Time Scale Changes

This is a bit of a cheat, really. Rather than go the ***Age of Ares*** route, you can attempt to salve your suspension of disbelief by declaring that all hexes are six times wider and all turns six times longer (or ten times, or twenty-three, etc.). The astute reader has noticed that this isn't a change at all (in fact, really astute readers with a sense of history will note that the time scale in ***BattleTech*** has changed at least once already in its published past). As a result, this is usually a less than appealing approach, since one now wonders why the mechwarriors can't be bothered to fire more than once every minute or 100 seconds or whatever.

Ground Scale and Miniature Scale

Miniatures wargaming has a long-standing tradition of having game scales that don't match miniature scales -- simply put, this means the miniatures aren't to scale with the play area; they're oversized. ***Ogre Miniatures*** explains this by saying that the game area is the holographic representation seen by the commanders, but for decades ancients gamers have ignored such concerns entirely.

The ***BattleTech Miniatures*** rules use a game scale of 1"=10 meters, or an optional compressed scale of 1"=15 meters. Good ground scales for ***Age of Ares*** games include 1"=60 meters and 1"=120 meters. For 1"=60 meters, each movement point (MP) is worth 1/2" and weapon ranges are equal to half their listed ***Age of Ares*** range (e.g. a medium laser's short range extends to 15"). At 1"=120 meters, each MP yields 1/4" and weapon ranges are a quarter their ***Age of Ares*** values (the same medium laser now has a short range of 7 1/2"). Either variant makes the longer-ranged weapons more plausible for tabletop play. In the latter case, LRMs are chopped down to an easily-handled 52 1/2", well within the boundaries of long-ranged weapons in various miniatures wargames.

The only obvious concern with this approach is what happens when the units are close to each other. Since ***BattleTech*** already dealt with this in a somewhat abstract manner using its 30-meter hexes, one can just treat the miniatures and their bases as "zones of control," and assume that physical combat and rams occur normally when these bases touch. Obviously, effects from pushing and other physical attacks that cause movement will be lessened, as the units only move 1/4-1/2". More ambitious players can adapt the overrun system from ***Ogre Miniatures*** to deal with base-to-base contact.

Follow the example of the printed miniatures rules for extrapolating things like artillery blast radii at new ground scales. As a simple guide, the primary effect usually happens within a 15-meter radius, with the secondary effect within the next 30 meters out (a 45-meter radius circle). Thus, an Arrow IV system at 1"=60 meters would do 20 points of damage within a 1/4" radius and 10 points out to an additional 3/4" radius.

It is also possible to use miniatures which more closely match the new game scale. Extremely small mecha figures are functionally impossible to find, but other units can be adapted with reasonable success. Several companies produce 6mm infantry that can serve as full-sized 'mechs in a pinch. Vehicles and individual infantry are a bit harder at that size, making this option best for those playing in Battlemech-only games.

Map It!

One other method, popular with some fans of the ***Harpoon*** naval combat wargame, is to plot out long-distance combats on a topographical map. This can be used for both board and miniatures gaming, as a way of handling initial long-distance approaches (especially handy in miniatures gaming if you want to play the final conflict at a large ground scale and don't feel like setting up two game tables). When plotting moves in this manner, just take note of the map scale and remember that one MP equals 30 meters.

The drawback to this approach is that it can take a while for units to properly engage. One way of handling this is the "traveling/encountering/engaging" (TEE) method. With TEE rules in effect, turn length changes depending on how close the opposing forces are to each other. As long as no non-artillery units are within range at the beginning of the turn, each unit moves six times its normal movement; this is "traveling" mode. Though these are one-minute turns, units eligible to fire, usually only artillery and units that happen to enter long range during that turn, only get one shot. This assumes that it takes longer to line up shots when units are distant and that artillery needs nearby units to direct high-speed fire. Once one or more units are within long range at the beginning of a turn, the game moves into "encountering" mode. Now, turns are 30 seconds long, so each unit receives a triple move and may fire once. If there are units at medium range at the beginning of a turn, the game is in "engaging" mode, with normal turn lengths (ten seconds) and firing. Note that if the two sides disengage, as may happen when an advanced scout is eliminated, the game can revert to one of the "longer" modes of play.

With a little bit of care, the battle can be transferred to a gaming table or a map once the units are close enough to make it feasible.

Artillery

Artillery is another place where the current ***BattleTech*** rules fall down a bit. ***BattleTech*** artillery is both short-ranged and implausibly slow (the average shell travels at about 360 kph, which is roughly the speed of a Formula-1 race car). For ***Age of Ares*** play, the maximum ranges and times in flight have been changed to make the artillery a bit more reasonable.

Maximum range is still listed in terms of ***BattleTech*** maps. When using artillery in miniatures or mapped scenarios, recall that one map length roughly equals 500 meters range.

Weapon	**Max Range**
Arrow IV System	12
Long Tom	48
Sniper	28
Thumper	34

Distance	**Time in Flight**
1-15	1
16-30	2
31-45	3
46-60	4

Winners and Loser

A final ***Age of Ares*** consideration is, "Who comes out on top?" The obvious answer is, "the Clans." The usual several-hex range advantage of Clan weapons translates to substantially longer ranges and large short range brackets compared with typical Inner Sphere units. Fortunately, that keeps with the story and feel behind Clan units, and should present minimal problems for those players who use the Clans.

Even with only standard Succession Wars units, there's a lot of advantage in long-range weaponry. With units no longer able to quickly close distances and remove the range advantage, those AC/5s no longer seem like such wastes of space. There's a lot of motivation for constant movement (keeping the movement modifiers high) and sending a fast scout or two forward to target for indirect LRM barrages. Faster units are relatively better survivors when it comes to crossing open terrain or sprinting for the best cover. The most disadvantaged units are the classic assault types with very powerful, shorter-ranged weapons like the AC/20. The Marauder, packing three impressively far-reaching weapon systems, returns to its rightful position as a heavy command unit for the discriminating company captain.

Try your favorite units in a few different games under the ***Age of Ares*** modifications. Play at long ranges and in close-up brawls. Learn what new strengths and weakness come from the change. Strap into your giant killing machine and have a good time.

Super Special Dork Tower!

The December 1998 Shadis was to have been the last issue printed before the magazine's ongoing hiatus. Well, despite rumors to the contrary, that particular issue was never printed. Shadis may or may not see light of day again. However, this cartoon was to have run on the very last page of the last issue.

This cartoon is a bonus to Pyramid readers. It takes the place of neither your regularly scheduled, monthly Dork Tower, nor of a Murphy's rules. It's just a little bonus brought to you by Pyramid magazine.

Even if Shadis does return, this cartoon will never really work again. But I'm quite happy with it, and how it handled Shadis' (temporary?) demise, so...here it is! Seeing the light of day at last.

Enough explanation. Hope you enjoy it.

John Kovalic

Dork Tower!

Ogres in Space

By Matt Cairo

Sighing heavily, Commander Desjardins sealed down his oxygen mask and opened the hatch on his heavy tank. Climbing out onto the dusty plain, the Paneuropean Space Corps officer immediately saw what had stopped the tank minutes before: sulfur flats. They were everywhere on Io: powdered sulfur deposits left by volcanic eruptions. The powder was so fine that it caked around treads, seeped into motor axles, and generally made life miserable for tankers. It would be at least a half-hour before they could get underway again. Desjardins cursed, kicking the BPC treads in frustration.

"Ok, boys, we had better get to work on these treads."

His three crewmen popped out of their hatches. There was a long volley of curses in several languages. With sighs of resignation, all four men began to scrape the powdery sulfur from the tank's treads.

Suddenly, there was a rumble in the ground.

"Volcano!" Desjardins bellowed. "Run for it!" All four men scattered desperately. As he dove into a small crevice, Desjardins glanced back at the disabled tank, only to see it engulfed by a flood of red-hot magma. On the horizon, he saw the telltale yellow plume of a sulfur-and-lava eruption spouting several miles high in Io's low gravity.

"I have to get off this planet."

The Last War was fought on all types of terrain. From the shifting sands of the Sahara, to the sticky swamps of the Amazon, to the frozen tundra of Siberia, Earth offered 21st-century generals numerous tactical dilemmas. But the great superpowers didn't confine their ambitions to the Earth alone. Beginning in 2019, they engaged in a renewed race to colonize, exploit, and, of course, fight over, the other planets and moons in the Solar System.

This is a set of variant rules for playing ***Ogre Miniatures*** on seven other planets in the Solar System. Included are basic statistics on these planets and moons, special rules to simulate the effects of these harsh environments, and suggestions for modeling alien terrain and setting ambiance for an interplanetary game of ***Ogre Miniatures.*** (Note: Unless otherwise stated, militia and archaic units cannot be used on other planets.)

The Moon

Satellite of Earth

Atmosphere: None
Atm. Pressure: None
Gravity: 0.167 G
Terrain: Rocky, with flat dust expanses in the Maria.

Colonization Period: 2019-2104

Earth's nearest extraterrestrial companion, the Moon was the starting point for the superpowers' space race. The Moon, rich in heavy metals, and with the advantage of low gravity, proved most useful to both the Combine and the Paneuropeans. The Paneuropeans were the first to colonize the Moon, building a base in the Sea of Crisis named Liberté. The Combine soon followed suit, constructing two military installations, Selene-1 and Selene-2, at Tycho and Clavius, respectively. The Nihon Empire built a small covert base on the far side of the moon, named Nara, which it used to launch probes to Mars and Venus. The Chinese Hegemony never built a moon base, and was thus cut out of the Second Space Race until much later: they had enough trouble dealing with Nihon incursions on Earth.

Obviously, due to the lack of an atmosphere, GEVs, LGEVs, GEV-PCs and Hovertrucks do not work. All other vehicles can move up to 2" farther each turn, but if they choose to exceed their normal move, they must roll a die: on a 4-6, they are disabled normally. Ogres roll 1-1 versus their treads: an "X" or "XX" result will remove a number of treads equal to the Ogre's size rating. This represents over-stressed power trains being pushed too far in low gravity. Infantry may add 2" to their move without penalty. All attack ranges may be extended by 4", but for each additional 2" over the normal ranges, subtract 1 from the roll on the CRT. This represents targeting difficulties in low gravity. (As an optional rule, this penalty can be reduced or eliminated for "experienced" crews. Determining just what makes a crew "experienced" is left as an exercise for the referee.)

Modeling lunar terrain is easy. The ground on the Moon is fairly flat, and can be represented by a flat section of mottled gray fabric as the base. Use torn chunks of foam rubber, sprayed with appropriate grays and blacks, to represent the crags and rocks on the moon -- remember that some of them are quite high indeed! Lighting over your game table should be very strong, so as to cast deep, dark shadows, representing the harsh light and dark on the Moon.

Mars

Fourth Planet from the Sun

Atmosphere: Carbon Dioxide, Nitrogen
Atm. Pressure: 0.007 atm.
Gravity: 0.377 G
Terrain: Rocky, broken, with high mountainous areas. Icy and flat at the polar icecaps.

Colonization Period: 2042-2101

Mars had long been a source of fascination for humankind, and it became one of the Last War's most fiercely contested battlefields. Launching colonizer rockets from the Nara base on the Moon, the Nihon Empire beat their opponents to Mars by nearly three years, building a huge base at Utopia Planitia, including an Ogre facility. By the time the Combine and Paneurope arrived, Nihon forces dominated the Southern Hemisphere of Mars, and were in the process of constructing a set of surface-to-orbit laser cannon on the slopes of Olympus Mons. After two years of conflict, the Combine managed to gain a foothold on Mars, constructing the base Ares-3 deep beneath the frozen North Polar Icecap. Paneurope had to settle for scattered secret outposts and minor production facilities, and never managed to become a dominant presence on Mars.

Mars, in game terms, is similar to the Earth. The gravity is not low enough to significantly affect shell trajectories or

movement. GEVs, LGEVs, GEV-PCs and Hovertrucks will work, but at decreased efficiency due to the thin atmosphere. All GEVs lose 2" from *both* movement phases (in some cases, it may be better to use tracked vehicles).

Martian terrain is varied depending on the region of the planet. Equatorial areas can be modeled in the same fashion as the Moon, but with a dark red as the main color. The more mountainous, the more crags and rocks there will be, and elevation levels will change more. If combat is occurring in the Polar Regions, the playing surface will be almost completely flat, with gently rolling hills, modeled in white or light gray colors.

Ogres in Space

Venus

Second Planet from the Sun

Atmosphere: Carbon Dioxide, Nitrogen
Atm. Pressure: 92 atm.
Gravity: 0.907 G
Terrain: Broken, rocky. Mountainous in highlands. Frequent sulfuric acid rainstorms, with heavy electrical activity.
Colonization Period: 2060-2097

Venus was one of the more difficult planets on which to build military bases, but both the Paneuropean Federation and the Combine did it quite well. The crushing pressure and extreme heat of the atmosphere, combined with frequent electrical storms and corrosive rains, made Venus a violent planet equaled only by Io. The Paneuropeans, angered by their lack of a secure base on Mars, were the first to land on Venus, with Nihon and the Combine close behind. Ogres proved to be an invaluable resource, as the general bizarreness of the planet degraded the performance of even the best-trained human crews and their machines. Paneuropean Fencers, built at the Fraternité base near Ishtar Terra, performed especially well in the harsh conditions, and Paneurope came to dominate Venus, completely beating off Nihon landing forces. The Combine was not as easily deterred. Operating from bases on Aphrodite Terra, Combine units engaged the Paneuropeans in a guerrilla war right up to the collapse of the Federation.

Venusian weather is the most violent in the solar system. Huge storms can strike for days at a time, and the unusual atmosphere of Venus results in powerful lightning and sulfuric acid rain. Before every battle on Venus, roll one die on the following table to determine if there are any weather conditions at the time:

Roll	Weather
1	No Weather
2	No Weather
3	Acid Drizzle
4	Light Rain
5	Heavy Rain
6	Major Electrical Storm

A "no weather" result means that weather will not effect the battle. Acid drizzle will require every armor unit (Ogre weapons and treads unaffected) to roll a die each turn -- on a roll of 6, the unit is disabled, though already-disabled units are not affected further. A light rain will cause a unit to be disabled on a roll of 5 or 6 (but already-disabled units will not be destroyed, as above). A heavy rain will act as a full 1-2 attack every turn (disabled on a 5, destroyed on a 6, and units already disabled by heavy rain may be destroyed by a second disabled result).

A major electrical storm will have two effects. First, it will act as a full 1-2 attack on *every* unit *every* turn, including Ogre weapons and treads. Second, it will result in lightning strikes. Use the "star" counters from the ***Ogre Miniatures*** manual and drop 1 die's worth of them on the table from at least three feet above it every turn. The final landing place of each counter represents the location of a lightning strike, with a "single attack" template used to determine spillover fire. If the counter lands on a unit, that unit is immediately attacked with a strength of 4. If the target is an Ogre, a

random weapon system is attacked in this manner (treads cannot be damaged by lightning).

Due to the high atmospheric pressures on Venus, all armor units except Infantry have movement reduced by 1". GEV-based vehicles lose 1" from *each* movement phase (thus, a GEV would move at 7"/5", a GEV/PC would be 5"/3", etc.)

The terrain on Venus is dark yellow-brown, rocky and broken. There should be plenty of crags, channels, canyons and cliffs. Light cannot get through the heavy atmosphere very well, so lighting in the room should be somewhat dimmer than usual.

Io

Satellite of Jupiter

Atmosphere: None
Atm. Pressure: None
Gravity: 0.183 G
Terrain: Sulfur deserts, volcanic highlands with frequent magma eruptions.

Colonization Period: 2085-2091

The Combine was the first to set foot on Io, and they immediately regretted it. Io was the most volcanically active moon in the solar system, constantly spewing plumes of sulfur and magma into the sky with a force powerful enough to destroy an Ogre. But, true to Combine doctrine, Io had to be occupied, because, as a Combine Congressman said, "If we don't do it, our enemies will." The main problem with Io was that it was naturally indefensible. The frequent geologic activity made permanent bases difficult to place, and the sulfur in the sky made detecting and destroying enemy landings virtually impossible. All spacefaring empires, including China, established outposts on Io, and some heated exchanges were fought on Io's sulfur deserts. But eventually, Io proved to be more trouble than it was worth, and it was abandoned.

Io has no atmosphere and very low gravity, and so all rules from the Moon apply. In addition, each turn there will be a one in six chance of a volcanic eruption occurring somewhere on the table (drop a counter from three feet above the table to determine where). An Ionian volcano has game effects identical to a cruise missile strike, with one exception: a volcano will last for d6 turns, doing cruise missile explosion damage every turn.

Two new types of terrain appear on Io: Sulfur Flats and Magma. Sulfur Flats represent fast fields of powdered sulfur ash that has fallen to the surface of Io after a volcanic eruption. They are moved across as clear terrain, but for every 2" of movement, a die must be rolled to see if the sulfur clogs the unit. A roll of 1 to 3 indicates that the unit is immediately disabled, just as for swamp. Sulfur Flats are generally found in low areas such as valleys and hollows. Ogres are unaffected by Sulfur Flats. Magma represents pools of molten rock, and will generally be found near recent volcanoes. No armor unit can cross Magma. Ogres can enter Magma at a cost of 2" of movement for each 1" of terrain crossed. Every turn an Ogre spends in Magma destroys 5 tread units automatically, and results in a 1-1 attack on each of its weapon systems.

Terrain on Io is generally black or dark gray, representing basaltic rock. Red magma pools, like water, can form rivers and streams as well. Sulfur flats are just that: flat yellow expanses.

Titan

Satellite of Saturn

Atmosphere: Nitrogen, Argon, Methane.
Atm. Pressure: 1.5 atm..
Gravity: 0.381 G

Terrain: Rocky, broken, methane oceans.
Colonization Period: 2077-2094

Titan, the mysterious moon of Saturn, was unique in that it possessed an atmosphere. Titan was so far from the sun that it was quite cold, and so methane in the atmosphere condensed into vast volatile oceans. When the three empires arrived on Titan, they were quick to realize that combat was a great deal more dangerous than on the other moons of the Solar System. Ricochets and misfires were often just as dangerous as the explosions themselves, as they could ignite methane vapor in the atmosphere, or, worse, they could ignite the entire ocean!. This didn't stop combat on Titan, of course. The three nations merely resolved to work around the problem, and keep their forces more widely spaced.

Since Titan has an atmosphere, GEVs, LGEVs, GEV-PCs and Hovertrucks can be used. Due to highly flammable methane vapor in the atmosphere of Titan, all explosions are treated as one step worse when calculating spillover fire. To determine full strength attacks, use the original template, but to determine spillover fire, a "single attack" will use a 10+ template, the 10+ uses the 15+, the 15+ uses the 20+ and the 20+ should have its diameter extended by 1/2".

Titan has a new type of terrain: Liquid Methane. Expanses of condensed methane from Titan's atmosphere can form oceans, lakes, rivers or streams. They are treated for all purposes as water, except that any shots fired at units on or in liquid methane will ignite the entire terrain surface on a roll of 1-3 on one die. In such a case, every unit on or in that area of liquid methane (Ogres unaffected) will instantly be attacked with a strength of 3. If a continuous path can be traced to the point of explosion along a methane ocean, lake or river, the unit is attacked. After it is ignited, liquid methane will revert to its original state at the end of the turn until attacked again - there is not enough oxygen in the atmosphere to sustain a fire for an extended period.

Titania

Satellite of Uranus

Atmosphere: None
Atm. Pressure: None
Gravity: 0.122 G
Terrain: Mountainous
Colonization Period: 2089-????

The steep mountains of Titania, Uranus's moon, were perfect for building defensible bases, and the Combine, Paneurope, and Nihon all took advantage of them fairly rapidly. Combat this far out in the Solar System was necessarily limited in nature, due to the 21-month delay for resupply. Most battles on Titania were cybertank duels among the rocky crags. Extensive use of smaller Ogre designs, especially the Mark I and Mark II, allowed the three empires to field adequate units, but actions were never really anything more than reconnaissance-in-force. Larger Ogre types were used in small numbers, but these were reserved for special duties and endgame maneuvers (they were difficult to replace, given the limited facilities available). The colonies on Titania were never officially evacuated. Contact was lost with the three empires' colonies during a trans-Saturnian meteor shower in 2099, and they were assumed destroyed. All three outposts were self-sufficient in terms of food, power and oxygen, however, so it is possible that the colonies are still there.

Titania has low gravity and no atmosphere, so all rules for the Moon apply to Titania. Remember that the crags are ground, and so they will block line of sight. This alone can make combat on Titania very dangerous. The peaks can be very high due to Titania's low gravity. Infantry is very powerful in such close terrain. Infantry which initiates an overrun attack will receive +1 to its die roll in the initial round of combat, and gets to fire first, in exception to the usual "defender-first" rule for overrun. All units which are firing from two or more levels of elevation higher than their opponent receive +1 to their attack roll.

Titania's main claim to fame is its mountainous, rugged terrain. When constructing terrain, keep this in mind. A lot of canyons, steep cliffs, ledges and crags should be placed. Terrain should be very restrictive: this is Titania's advantage and its danger. Titania is also quite far away from the sun: light is low, so dim the lights in the room to increase shadows on the cliffs and crags.

Desjardins sighed even more heavily. His tank was no longer disabled by sulfur, but embedded in solid rock, as were his gunner and his driver. He cursed again, and radioed for a rescue rocket.

"I really have to get off this planet."

by Jacob Williamson

Art by andi jones

Darkness. Good thing, too -- sunlight doesn't go with my style. What is this; I, ancient of the Bourgeois, being forced to meet with a Daft Bloke in some grimy alley? Next time, I'll pick the meeting place -- It'll take days to get the chewing gum off my shoes. And he's late. Ten more minutes and I'm getting back into my Limo.

There it is again -- wet dog. Come on, we have animal shelters for a reason, people!

Ah, yes, here he comes. One cannot sneak up on a predator. Catlike, I turn, facing my prey, my merchant. You know, for a Daft Bloke, this one looks awfully calm. Heavy boots, scruffy hair, a five-o'clock shadow you could strip paint with -- looks more like a Marmoseta! But I approach, "unarmed."

"Are you Weird Earl?"

He shakes his head lazily. That was helpful, Blokes never give a straight answer. "Grand. You brought my merchandise, yes?" I hold out my hand in greeting; he takes it, friendly enough.

"Said I'm not Weird Earl," he growls low in his throat, and gets . . . bigger. Nine feet of black fur and yellow teeth. And he's still holding my hand.

"Ah, well, perhaps we can cut some sort of deal, then -- I never liked Earl, odd fellow, not all there if you know what I mean, good doggie, I shall give you a biscuit if you let go of the nice hand."

Again, a lazy shake of the head. Then the werewolf lifts me over his shoulders, begins the wind-up --

"Stop! Why are you doing this?"

"Thought would be fun!"

-- and the pitch.

When I come to, I'm halfway through the wall of the alley, face to face with a cat food cannery. Third time this week. I swear, I should be getting Frequent Flyer miles.

Toon: World of Obsessive Gloominess

Somewhere between the bright hope of dawn and the darkest midnight, a world hangs in the balance. The fates of men are in the hands of creatures of shadow, monolithic omnicorporations, and entities which could devour the Elderly Gods for a midmorning snack. Any hope of finding right and wrong is lost in a flood of grays and inexplicably quoted material.

Put on your best black, spin your most morbid album, and wear your gloomies and angsties proud, kids -- we're going to have fun!

Disclaimer: We at Tooniversal Tours are proud of our record of consumer safety and satisfaction. Over the years, we have sought to give you, the customer, the thrills and excitement you so richly deserve. We have brought you Dungeonworld, the Way-Out West and many other universes to explore. The recent desire for a world of doom and uncertainty is a strange and confusing trend, but what the hey, it's your dollar. Welcome to our newest attraction. No refunds, all damage to property is absolutely not our fault, and if you get bitten by a vampire, tough noogies.

Character Types

Vampires

Plotters and schemers, The Head Honchos. Vampires have had more than a few years to build their webs of power, and even though they can't have a business lunch at a sidewalk cafe they control everything! More on the vampires later.

Werewolves

Nature's little deli meat slicers, werewolves roam the woods and mop up anybody the vampires left behind. Their basic philosophy can be summed up in seven simple words: "If you don't like it, maul it." In particular, they don't like vampires, litterbugs, politicians, journalists, Corporate CEOs, or each other. This policy keeps the werewolves very busy. Werewolves get their own subsection. They're special.

Wizards

There's magic in the world. It's hard to find under the grime, but it's there. A few lucky weirdness magnets have gotten hold of the power to mess with reality. There aren't many of them, and for some odd reason the vampires and the werewolves both hate them. Magic works, but it's fraught with disasters (like falling pianos and the odd nuclear warhead). Wizards have a difficult road to travel, but they only get three paragraphs and a sentence fragment.

Just Us Mundanes

Normal people, day-to-day types. Police officers, librarians, FBI agents, university professors, and victims of every shape and species. As surprising as it sounds, Mundanes still outnumber the Forces of Night by a good hundred to one. Almost all Mundanes have a special Shtick at level 10, Ignore the Blindingly Obvious, an amazing power that saves them from an inferiority complex. The best Mundanes can completely forget a werewolf attack! A few Mundanes learn to really see the strange world they live in. A word to the smart vampires: watch out for them. Mundanes don't get much of anything at all, except the occasional chalk outline . . .

New Rules and Shticks

Vampires

"Immortality. Immortality and the great clothes."
-- Baron Revenagle III, Duke of Miscyllvania, when asked what he liked best about being a vampire.

Vampires have been with us for a very long time, posing as mortals and preying on society since . . . well, for a very long time. The first recorded vampire, from whom all others trace their descent, was one Bernie Du'Rottwieler, a vicious dog who forswore his mortality for fangs and a snappy cape. Since his transformation many other vampires have populated our fair planet, establishing lairs and theme parks from which to work their dark plots. And with all Time for your agenda, you can work some pretty dark plots!

Vampirism (10 points/level 4, 8 Plot Points for each additional level)

Vampires live a long time. Du'Rottwieler celebrated his 875th birthday last week, and the light from the candles kept most of the guests at bay. With a possible life span of a millennium or more, the fact that Vampirism is such an expensive shtick isn't so bad -- most vampire characters will outlive their players. They can afford to take a long-term view of little things like Plot Points. Luckily, or unluckily for vampire hunters, the shtick package comes with all sorts of interesting powers.

A vampire lives forever. Really, really forever. They don't breathe, don't drink water and are only uncomfortable if zapped with a Death Ray. Vampires can be hurt by magic, fire, sunlight and wooden stakes -- most other weapons won't work. Wooden stakes are available at any fencing store. For magic and enchanted weapons, consult your local wizard or pawn shop. If a vampire is hit by sunlight, she Falls Down for a very long time and won't be back until next nightfall.

Besides stakes and fire and such, each vampire has a few special weaknesses. Many become weak or nauseated in the presence of garlic or tofu. Some can't cross running water. Most are allergic to crosses and churches, although some religious vampires cannot enter a comic book store. Special weaknesses vary between each vampire, so if you want to play one . . . be creative.

Yes, vampires drink blood. Unless the players are in a gory mood, the Animator should probably skip over these scenes.

Four basic types of vampires have cropped up in the tabloids, although others probably exist. Each "family" has its own special powers, weaknesses and unique character.

The Bourgeois

As the Upper Crust of the vampire class, the Bourgeois maintain appearances. They dress to perfection, have excellent diction, and decorate with the latest in cobweb motifs. The Bourgeois know they're better than the other vampire families, and are out to prove it! It is required that a Bourgeois fly into hysterics if she gets dirty.

Power: Modeling themselves after the famous noble, Count Dauntublahstov, the Bourgeois have mastered the art of mind control. If she makes her Vampirism roll, a Bourgeois may command someone exactly as if she had the Hypnotism shtick!

Weakness: Appearances are important. A Bourgeois must look nice at all times. Even worse, the Bourgeois's superior attitude prevents her from saying please. Only in the worst possible situations can she ask for help . . .

Quote: "Now, if we will just put down the gun and forget about our little assassination, we can all get along with our little lives."

Daft Blokes

Some vampires spend years plotting webs of intrigue, playing enemies like pawns in "wheels within wheels" of cunning beyond the abilities of short-sighted mortal man to fathom. The Daft Blokes can't, and won't. As a family they are completely insane, to a member, much more so than an average animated individual. While they are capable of some engaging conversations, the Daft are out of their element in an ordered world. In the Tooniverse they're masters of illogic.

Power: As if any given Daft Bloke wasn't already schizophrenic enough for any three ***Toon*** characters, their special power gives them the ability to Read Minds! Use the rules for the Mind Reading shtick (p. TTG166).

Weakness: As we have already established, the Daft Blokes are very, very realistically challenged. If the Animator catches a Bloke acting in a rational manner he should assign him all sorts of penalties.

Quote: "What's that on your shoulder? Yes! Pink, pink! Woobah! I'm not a vampire, are you a vampire? Alas, poor Yorick, I knew him, Marvin -- he was a sort of neo-cubist guy, with a foot."

Icky Sewer Dwellers

Nasty, ugly tunnel-haunting monsters. Even other vampires dislike the Icky Sewer Dwellers' company. They are usually totally disgusting and have very low Chutzpah scores.

Power: Because humans, vampires and most other species avoid them, the Icky Sewer Dwellers have learned to talk to the animals . . . and control them! By making his Vampirism roll, the Sewer Dweller can control up to his Smarts score in "normal," non-Player animals. If the Animator thinks its funny, the Icky Sewer Dweller might be able to control a Player's character, but it's not a nice thing to do.

Weakness: Well, they're *ugly*!!! The Icky Sewer Dwellers have big, twisty fangs, lumpy foreheads, and generally look like they've had a rough time of death. An Icky Sewer Dweller can never fool any reasonably intelligent creature into believing he's not a hideous monster, and will never be invited to a party. Amazingly enough, Mundanes sometimes miss this.

Quote: "Boo! Hee, hee -- Hans, did I scare you? Hans? Hans?"

Marmoseta

"In a swirl of night-black smoke Nosfuratu, the King of the Undead, turned himself into an aardvark." The best that could be said of the Marmoseta is they don't decimate small villages. They rarely stay in any one place long enough to put wrinkles in their pants, let alone terrorize the locals. The worst one might say about them is that they are the most intense, unsettling and confused of all the vampiric families. The Marmoseta wander like gypsies, stalking through the night like (or more frequently, as) wolves, and worrying the local vampire hunters. A Marmoseta is more terrifying still on that rare occasion when he gets all of his tricks working properly.

Power: Like the vampires of literature, the Marmoseta can assume four forms: the shape of a bat, wolf, cloud of mist and kumquat. This is assuming -- here's the big "but" -- assuming they make their shtick roll. For all practical purposes this power is identical to the Shape Change shtick.

Weakness: The Marmoseta are understandably muddled about their identities. They are prone to long bouts of introspection and often "forget" who they really are. It is perfectly appropriate and in character for a Marmoseta to Fall Down by stepping off a cliff, flapping his arms as he plunges to a violent death or whatever a vampire would plunge to. The Animator should encourage this sort of behavior.

Quote: "The woods, the wilds -- can you hear them calling? Yes, that's it. No, not the mosquitoes. They're family. The other voice. The whiny one that keeps saying -- " scratches at flea " -- your name."

Werewolves

"Well, it's really nice. You get to run around in the woods and no-one tells you to put your laundry in the hamper. Of course, we don't actually need clothes, but the principle's the same. Honestly, why are you asking me all these questions?"
-- Lobo Garunoviche, *Interview with a Werewolf*

Mankind fears that which it does not understand. Early cave-dwellers huddled in the night, telling stories of skin-changing demons. Wolf howls in the distance brought forth tales of nightmarish creatures, both human and wolf, monsters from the hidden corners of humanity's subconscious. Of course, modern toaster ovens are deathly terrified of a creature they hint at in stories of "She who Comes with Sledgehammer and Wire Clippers," but we'll deal with her in a later ***Toon*** article.

Like all special powers, Lycanthropy -- the ability to turn into a wolf -- is a Shtick, but a special one, a package of powers. There's the basic "Do Werewolf Things" Shtick, but when you create your werewolf character you also get an amazing *Free Bonus Power*! (Now how much would you pay?!?) This bonus power should be treated as a separate shtick in all respects.

Lycanthropy (7 pts.)

Your character may change shape, assuming the form of a true wolf or a "hybrid" form, a big drooling monster with claws, fur, sharp teeth and opposable thumbs. This hybrid can walk on its hind legs and looks just a bit like the character in his regular form; if he normally wears a pink shirt and glasses, his half-wolf, mostly humanoid form will have a pink shirt, glasses and lots of fur. A character's attributes and the Skills under those attributes are modified in each special form:

-- In "normal" form, the character's attributes are just those listed on the character sheet.
-- In "hybrid" form, the werewolf gets +2 Muscle and -2 Chutzpah (try fast-talking and growling at the same time!)
-- In "wolf" form, the character gets +1 Muscle, +2 Zip, -2 Smarts *and* can't talk or pick things up (the character's wolf form is more like a "real" wolf than a "cartoon" wolf -- no thumbs).
-- In both Hybrid and Wolf form, the werewolf gets an extra 8 hit points due to its extra fur and muscle!

Werewolves, Healing and Silver: It has been said that werewolves can be hit only by silver weapons. This is not the case -- but only silver weapons will do any good! They heal *really* fast, which is why they can get into as many fights as they do. Each round, a werewolf has a 50-50 chance to heal one die of damage, unless it was hurt by fire or magic.

The werewolf's well-known weakness -- silver -- provides a hunter all sorts of protection. If a werewolf is hit by a silver weapon, there is a 50-50 chance he will Fall Down on the spot, with a great deal of drama. For reasons unknown, silver weapons freshly pulled from a Bag of Many Things have no effect on a werewolf. It's just one of those things.

Werewolves and the Moon: Under a Full Moon, werewolves do not need to make a Shtick roll to change shape. The Animator may roll a die any time there is a full moon in the sky and a werewolf gets angry, embarrassed or frustrated. About half the time, the werewolf gets really angry and goes on a rampage. The rest of the time, he or she takes a deep breath and counts to ten. It is never a good idea to paint little moon pictures on a werewolf's glasses. Never.

Werewolves and The Blot: The beginning came suddenly. Larry the Armadillo was being exploded by his Arch-Enemy, Slimy Neil. He Fell Down, which really didn't surprise anybody. The surprise came three minutes later, when Larry didn't show up at the next scene change. And he didn't come back in the next episode. Or the next season. Or in the movie spin-off, "Larry Comes Back." He just didn't get back up!

Slimy Neil, in a fit of grief, dropped an anvil on his own head. He was never seen (in three dimensions) again. Since then, at least 20 incidences of characters not Getting Back Up have been recorded, and the reports come in on a monthly basis. The werewolves blame this horrid phenomenon on what they call the Blot.

The Blot is a terrible un-creature who exists to make the universe gloomier. It uses its nasty powers to make characters stay flattened . . . permanently! No-one has seen the Blot, but the werewolves claim the Serious Police, Porcs, vampires, Mad Scientists, Wizards and street mimes are its minions. But they fight against each other for the same reason; this opinion is not widely shared by Wizards, vampires and so forth.

For a prime example of the Blot and its effects on an otherwise content universe, see Craig Shaw Gardner's *Ciniverse Cycle.*

There are four different types of werewolves (they call themselves "Packs"), each with a different bonus shtick, appearance and general world view. While each Pack of werewolves loves to fight Vampires, Monsters and Villains, they seem to prefer fighting each other . . .

The Grass Walkers

Quote: "Like, what's the hurry? There's always time for a run through the trees. Nah -- you don't need your flashlight. Leave it here. And I'll hold your wallet for you, too."

Appearance: Big gray wolf, like in a nature documentary. In their normal and hybrid forms, Grass Walkers wear tie-dye clothes, bell-bottom pants and long hair.

Philosophy: "We're all part of a big cosmic cycle, ya' know? Nature's important. We should all get back to our roots." The Grass Walkers are very fond of the Great Outdoors, more so than the other werewolf Packs. They spend much of their time in the wilderness, trying to get in touch with their inner selves.

Bonus Power: The Walkers can use their Lycanthropy power on other characters, turning them into wolves! Use the above modifiers for the wolf form. No, they can't turn them into nine-foot wolf monsters.

Black Furries

Quote: "Grrrr . . . "

Appearance: Big black wolf, like in a horror film. Black Furries like to wear heavy metal T-shirts, torn black pants and interesting weapons.

Philosophy: "Violence is fun!" Black Furries have given werewolves a bad name. They're the mean ones, the monsters that go around persecuting innocent campers in cheesy horror films. They always have really high Muscle scores and do not make nice party guests.

Bonus Power: In their hybrid form, a Black Furry werewolf can use the Incredible Strength shtick. Even worse, they use it with Break Down Door! (No Virginia, there is no wall . . .)

Tanuki

Quote: "Okay. Now, I think it's 'left foot, left foot, right foot, turn, shake the rattle, bang the drum, spin, right foot right foot howl, spin, Invocation to the Thunder Spirit, spin, right foot, jump, throw the drum into the fire, step, jump jump spin, crouch-and-leap, shake the rattle, step and hold.' Yeah, that did it. Now, pick a card."

Appearance: Red wolf, like in the zoo, often splotched with paints. Tanuki wear crystals, copper jewelry, have long braided hair and carry miscellaneous occult gear in their Back Pockets. They often wear tattoos with Spiritual Meaning.

Philosophy: "Knowledge is Power." The Tanuki have learned many tricks, and are not afraid to work with strange entities to learn even more. They almost never tell their secrets. A Tanuki often learns Spells instead of "normal" shticks, and is fascinated by any sort of magic.

Bonus Power: Tanuki characters have a very dangerous power. The Tanuki may "bind a spirit" into any plant or inanimate object. This works as the "Animate" powers in Supertoon (p. TTG160), but the animated object is totally out of the Tanuki's control! (Roll a die: On a 1-2, the "spirit" of the plant or item is friendly toward the Tanuki. On a 5-6 it is totally malignant. Otherwise, the spirit will pay no attention to the werewolf, and may just get up and go for a brisk walk.) To use this power, the Tanuki must touch any plant or inanimate object smaller than a car and make a Shtick roll.

Children of Concrete

Quote: "Come on! We're gonna play 'fetch the cop!'"

Appearance: Wolf with matted, scruffy fur, somewhere between a hunter in darkness and a junkyard mongrel. The Children wear trendy clothes and are addicted to electronic toys and digital watches.

Philosophy: "Embrace the City." The Children of Concrete lived in the cities when cities first crawled out of the sea. They feel that the city is an ideal environment for every creature's physical and spiritual growth, and rally behind the cry of "Progress" as if it were the true purpose of existence. If it ain't digital, electric or made of cinder blocks, it probably isn't worth keeping (except in an appropriate theme museum!)

Bonus Power: The Children of Concrete may use Stunt Driving (p. TTG32). The Children claim that they are in touch with the Urban Spirits when they use this power. In truth, they all share a really good driving instructor.

What do they want? What are the werewolves' goals? First and foremost, they fight against the Blot, forever questing to save the Tooniverse from its black tendrils. Secondly, each Pack wages a continual war with the vampires. Neither group is quite sure why the vampires and werewolves battle, but their war occupies a large chunk of time. The werewolves' last great passion is to fight each other. The Tanuki wage a holy war with the Furries, and the Children of Concrete are invariably at odds with the Grass Walkers. The rest of creation is content to sit and watch the fun -- whichever side wins, at least the other teams won't be around!

Wizards and Magic

"Sufficiently advanced magic is indistinguishable from a biology lab with a 700-foot blast radius."
-- Macphearson's Guidebook to the Hermetic Paths

The more or less complete rules for Magic and spells can be found in the Dungeons and Toons universe (p.TTG77, 92). However . . .

It's a mean world out there. Unless a wizard is completely alone, there's a fair chance that something nasty will happen whenever she casts a spell. If her spell roll was an 11 or 12, use the Random Trap Table (***TOON,*** p. 201) or favorite Random Disaster chart to figure out exactly what kind of spectacular failure occurs. If she tries to cast a spell around a Mundane, there's a fifty-fifty chance the spell won't work at all, and the wizard will get a random disaster instead of the spell she was trying to cast!

World of Gloominess wizards come in all sorts of clothes. Wise men, old priests, alchemists and even hackers could be spell-casters! It's still magic, no matter what the packaging looks like.

Stuff

Any Boy Scout can be prepared. It's much more important to be *stylish* . . .

Guns, Flamethrowers, Hand Grenades, Instruments of Ranged Destruction

Guns are very stylish, but not particularly useful against werewolves and vampires. Hand grenades and flamethrowers can actually *hurt* the creatures of the night, but don't look good with tight jeans.

Longbows, Crossbows, Arrows, Archaic Instruments of Ranged Destruction

Extremely stylish, but inconvenient. The Grass Walkers in particular love bows and arrows, while any vampire who has survived the Middle Ages will be a fair hand at archery. The Tanuki often turn up with *magic* bows . . .

Big Knives, Big Swords, Instruments of Up Close and Personal Destruction

Knives and swords look *good*. The average werewolf can heft two longswords like pocketknives, most vampires are pretty quick with a rapier, and even wizards will admit that it's good to have a dagger around when that Guacamoleball

fizzles.

Silver

After hydrogen, silver is the most common element on the planet. It would have to be, to explain all the silver knives, swords and sledgehammers the werewolves keep around as "collector's items." Compared to the amount of silver the Furries alone have in stock, all four vampire families combined couldn't open a small jewelry store. Silver is stylish, but tarnishes.

Places to Go

Any point of destination in the World of Gloominess is pretty much dangerous as the next one. Have a nice day.

The Woods

The theoretical home of the werewolves, though they appear with alarming frequency in back allies and night clubs. The darkest forests are also great places to meet Marmoseta and certain hermit-type wizards.

Be careful! The deep, deep forest is *really* important to werewolves. If they didn't get around to it before, they'll certainly maim somebody who trespasses on their turf!

Urban Sprawls

A favorite hunting ground for vampires, because nobody notices what goes on in the Urban Sprawls -- somehow, that Mundane ability to Ignore the Blindingly Obvious kicks in when they go near the lowest-rent districts. Also a favorite stomping ground for the Children of Concrete. The sewers and water ducts are the exclusive province of the Icky Sewer Dwellers.

Night Clubs

The epitome of coolness, a good night club has a magnetic attraction for the Bourgeois and Daft Blokes. The noisier leather and metal clubs attract a double handful of Black Furries. Despite the almost deafening clamor, the city's most popular night club is *the* meeting place for supernaturals of every stripe.

Things to Do

The Velvet Shower Curtain

Remember, kids, don't mess with wizards. One minute, a raiding party of werewolves and a clique of Daft Blokes on a lark were trying to hide from a sorcerer who just happened to walk into the bathroom at exactly the wrong moment, the next . . . well, where exactly is here? Now vampires and werewolves must work together to get out of this strange, horrible world where everything is warped and twisted.

Okay, Animators, this is the perfect opportunity to run your Toony Tyke and Way-Out West crossovers. Star Toon is probably not a good idea.

Rage over Boise

Some truly demented, Blot-serving vampire with a penchant for magic is working an evil spell over the innocent potatoes of Boise, Idaho. The dark spuds are attacking in droves, monstrous and fell tubers with huge, glowing eyes. The time for action is now -- before the yam crop succumbs!

The Blue Tartan Dancers

A new Pack has turned up, threatening to upset the balance of bloodshed. The Tanuki hate the Furries, and the Walkers abhor the Children -- but who will fight the Blue Tartan Dancers? These bagpipe-wielding werewolves will be the end of incivility as we know it!

The Lost Supper

It's embarrassing, but it happens. Some vampire gets distracted at a delicate moment, and their dinner makes a break for freedom. This one was a reporter, though -- not for a Tabloid, but a journalist from the Metropolitan News! We may need to hire a wizard for this one -- that whistle-blower sure can hide . . .

The Errata of Madness

Where does information go when you press the delete key? Mugwump the Half-blind, professional research wizard, has compiled the world's expurgated and lost data into his notebook, the *Liber XX*. The vampiric Secret Masters or the werewolves' Elders have found out about this reference work to end all reference works, and of course they're going to send their most disposable stooges -- ah, mightiest warriors -- to find the codex. Nobody told them that the book was the size of three elephants . . .

Sammy was Here

How were we supposed to know he was a werewolf?

The Bourgeois are all apologies about this one, if only to keep the situation from becoming totally explosive. Sammy Mud-on-his-Jeans, Child of Concrete, was mistaken for just another teenager, and Henrietta Henrietta of the Daft Blokes took him home with her. Now, he's an insane vampire -- who can turn into a big, hulking monster! And if that wasn't bad enough, there's a witch over here who swears Sammy was her apprentice. We're going to have to move quickly before he blows *everybody's* cover!

Project Daylight

Here's an odd one; it's time to play the Mundanes. Can you go through a simple day when you can't even see half your customers, and your son really needs a shave and won't tell you where he goes every night? Try playing an intrepid government agent, working to undermine an ancient conspiracy of tax evasion. Here's a chance to get into some serious trouble.

Characters

Bernie Du'Rottwieler

Bernie is a white shaggy dog with sharp fangs. He wears an elegant black suit with a long cape. Bernie speaks with a Russian accent and never gets anyone's name right -- he's over 800 years old, after all. He carries Tabasco sauce, sunblock and Vampire Hunter-B-Gone in a spray can.

Beliefs and Goals: Survive. Set an example for the other vampires -- you're the first, after all. Make dramatic entrances, dramatic exits, and avoid wooden stakes like the plague.

Hit Points: 15 **Speed:** 8

Muscle: 5
Break Down Door: 6
Climb: 5
Fight: 8
Pick Up Heavy Thing: 10
Throw: 7

Zip: 6
Dodge: 8
Drive Vehicle: 3
Fire Gun: 8
Jump: 8
Run: 8
Swim: 3

Smarts: 8
Hide/Spot Hidden: 8 (10 for Dramatic Entrances)
Identify Dangerous Thing: 10
Read: 8
Resist Fast-Talk: 8
See/Hear/Smell: 10
Set/Disarm Trap: 8
Track/Cover Tracks: 10

Chutzpah: 6
Fast-Talk: 6
Pass/Detect Shoddy Goods: 6
Sleight of Hand: 6
Sneak: 8

Shticks:
Vampirism (Bourgeois): 10!
Teleport: 7

Myra Wags-Her-Tail-Alot

Myra Wags-Her-Tail-Alot is usually a pretty young lady who wears tacky pink flamingo jewelry and puppy-dog sweaters. Occasionally, she's a really nasty Grass Walker, who still wears flamingos. She's cheerful and has a kind thought in her head, even when snarling. Myra carries breath spray, herbal tea and flowers in her Back Pockets.

Beliefs and Goals: Cheerfulness wins hearts. We werewolves aren't monsters -- just misunderstood. Always apologize after ripping someone's throat out. Always tell people the wrongs of littering and pollution, and if they don't listen, well . . . hopefully they'll listen next lifetime.

Hit Points: 8 **Speed:** 5

Muscle: 4
Break Down Door: 4
Climb: 6
Fight: 6
Pick Up Heavy Thing: 5
Throw: 7

Zip: 3
Dodge: 4
Drive Vehicle: 2
Fire Gun: 2
Jump: 5
Run: 8
Swim: 6

Smarts: 2
Hide/Spot Hidden: 7
Identify Dangerous Thing: 3
Read: 2
Resist Fast-Talk: 4
See/Hear/Smell: 9
Set/Disarm Trap: 2
Track/Cover Tracks: 8

Chutzpah: 3
Fast-Talk: 3
Pass/Detect Shoddy Goods: 3
Sleight of Hand: 3
Sneak: 6

Shticks:
Lycanthropy (Grass Walkers): 6
Shape Change Others to Wolves: 5
Come Up with Cheerful Aphorism: 12

Three Ways To Skin A Cat

by Steve Jackson

Art by andi jones

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As the designer of a multigenre game system, I've given a lot of thought to the theory behind such games. Not just "What can I add to ***GURPS***?" or even "If we did a Fourth Edition, what would be different?" -- but "If I were starting over *entirely*, what might I do differently?"

Now, I admit to bias. But even if ***GURPS*** is the True Way, I know there are **other** True Ways out there too. I see three valid approaches to a multigenre game system . . . that is, three distinct philosophies for writing basic rules and supplements. Each one calls for a different presentation and marketing of the system, as well. If they look alike when they're done . . . well, a shark looks like a dolphin, and they both look like a submarine, but the insides are different.

Common Elements

Any multigenre game system should, by definition, be able to cover a wide variety of backgrounds. Not necessarily *any* background -- though that's a worthy goal. The basic idea is to let players (and sometimes more importantly, Game Masters) learn a single set of rules which they can then apply to any campaign they want to play.

From the player's and GM's point of view, this means they can spend more time gaming, and less time *learning* to game. They can also get more for their money; they don't have to buy the basic rules over and over! From the writer's and publisher's point of view, a multigenre system means they can spend more time writing *neat stuff*, and less time reinventing the wheel by creating new rule systems to do the same thing.

Universal Multigenre

The first type of system is the basic multigenre one. My own ***GURPS*** is an example here. The rules are designed to cover all contingencies, from sticks and stones to laser guns and magic.

No particular allowance is made for crossing genres . . . if the system works properly, genre-crossing is supported automatically. To the extent that the system is not completely integrated, rough edges will be found when a character switches genres. In ***GURPS***, most of these rough edges are seen in problems with point values for special skills and abilities. Some of this is unavoidable, and can be rationalized with mechanisms like the Unusual Background cost in ***Supers***. Other problems can arise from insufficient playtesting when new rules are added -- especially insufficient *cross-genre* playtesting. When problems are discovered, the designers must decide whether to revise the system seriously, paper over the problem, or just ignore it and accept an inconsistency . . . and that decision would make a whole separate article.

The advantage of a universal system is that, once the players know the basic rules, they can do anything. The game mechanics, if they're well-written, recede into the background. A related advantage is that any number of supplements and sourcebooks can be presented . . . between history and fiction, you'll never run out of genres. We've published over 150 ***GURPS*** worldbooks to date, and we're still rolling. Better yet, with a good universal system, players can do anything they want *without* a sourcebook.

The *disadvantage* of a universal system is that it has to cover all contingencies. Otherwise, it's not universal! This means that there will either be a lot of rules (as in ***GURPS***) or the rules will be incredibly simplified (as in ***TWERPS***, The World's Easiest Roleplaying System, which does it all in a very few pages and *one* character stat).

And sometimes that dooms a system, as it did my own miniatures project, the ill-fated ***Hot Lead***. It was intended to be a multigenre system, and it *did* take the "universal" approach. If ***Hot Lead*** had worked the way I wanted it to, it would have supported skirmish-scale miniatures combat -- that is, one figure equals one fighter -- for any period from Stone Age to space fantasy.

The problem came from that basic vulnerability of universal systems . . . the huge number of possible combinations of abilities, and their interactions. For instance: A hundred Space Knights were worth a lot more points than an army of Zulus -- but then, they should be! The question was: can a thousand points of Space Knights have a fair battle against a thousand points of Zulus? If not, the points don't mean much. But arguably, *no* number of spear-wielding tribesmen should be able to bring down a man in a battlesuit, even if he doesn't bother to roast them all with his Holy Flame-O-Matic. And if a battlesuit is fully invulnerable to spears, then, *relative to a battlesuit*, the point value of a Zulu is 0. But a battlesuit would *not* be invulnerable to, say, enough Rangers with modern automatic weapons. Yet those same Rangers, if outnumbered enough by Zulus, would be in trouble. Interesting problem, no? Yes.

This was one reason, though not the only one, why I eventually put ***Hot Lead*** on the shelf. I don't think the problem was insoluble, but it was insoluble in the time that I had. When you try to create a truly universal game, you're biting off a lot.

Cross-Genre

Three Ways To Skin A Cat

A cross-genre system, by contrast, is designed specifically to support **transfer** of characters between specified different backgrounds, or combinations of different backgrounds to create unique game worlds. A perfect example was West End's ***Torg*** (not to be confused with the hero of **Sluggy Freelance**), in which characters spend their time traveling between the different "cosms." (Come to think of it, the Torg in **Sluggy** tends to get lost in alternate dimensions a lot. Coincidence? Gotta be.)

For a cross-genre system to work, the overall story behind it has to be interesting. Ideally, the story should enable different types of roleplaying, rather than tie the players down. I see this as a weakness in ***Torg***. The background story is interesting, but players who don't want to become Storm Knights, bravely battling invaders, have few other options. Nevertheless, the ***Torg*** background is interesting and contains a lot of detail, so players who like the basic idea can keep busy hopping from cosm to cosm.

The cross-genre system has some of the same advantages that the basic multigenre system does. Players can learn one rules set and stick with it. If the background is well-chosen, there will be plenty of room for supplements . . . and players *like* supplements. Likewise, with the right background, GMs can fit their own scenarios into it. Although ***Torg*** doesn't have an official "French Revolution" cosm, one could exist somewhere, and a GM could easily write it up for a swashbuckling adventure!

Modular Multigenre

This is the term I use to designate games like ***Champions*** and ***Dangerous Journeys*** Such a game starts with a core rules system. Each supported genre adds other rules specialized to fit that genre. This may be a deliberate design decision, as it was for ***DJ***. It may also arise when a very successful single-genre system is expanded past its original

intent; this is what happened with ***Champions***.

These genre-specific rules are not necessarily mutually compatible, though they all build from the same base. Thus, a character created for one genre would not necessarily be transportable to a campaign set in another genre . . . at least, not without some changes. And players would have to learn some new rules for each new background. Now, any system will have to add new rules whenever a new background is introduced. But in a universal system, the rules are all -- theoretically -- compatible. In a modular system, they may not be.

Some players will dislike this; others won't. After all, a new background is supposed to present new situations and challenges. Fully compatible rules are easier to learn . . . but in the process of making rules fully compatible, some flavor is often lost. This is the strength of single-genre systems, and modular systems can borrow some of that strength. What would ***Toon*** be without Falling Down, or ***Call of Cthulhu*** without Sanity Checks? What would ***Paranoia*** be without treason points? (Why do you ask, citizen?) But none of those systems would make any sense in -- for instance -- a generic fantasy game. And building them into a universal multigenre system would be excess baggage. Therefore, the advantage of a modular system is that it can introduce customized rules to capture the flavor of each specific background. This helps in writing and marketing, as well; a system can be released *without* checking every possible rules interaction, which can save literally years of playtesting!

Now, learning a few new rules is no great hardship . . . but players must also forget some of the **old** rules, which can be confusing and annoying. Additionally, characters may not be freely transportable between campaigns. But it can work. (It can work for boardgames too. SPI's classic ***Strategy I*** was a modular multigenre wargame, with a core rules set and different add-ons for different periods, and it worked.)

So What's Best?

There is no "best." It depends on the campaign, and the play style of the GM. With a good GM, the players hardly need to know the rules anyway. After long thought, I still have a personal preference for the universal type of design. Not that I think it's necessarily "better" . . . as much as anything, it just seems to be a question of personal style. But, for those who play RPGs as well as those who design them, it's always worthwhile to think about the different ways that game systems can achieve the same goals . . . and to ask how we can do it better.

A Feng Shui Adventure

by Chris Pramas

Art by ArtToday

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The Premise: The PCs find a map in 1850 China that leads to hidden Ming Dynasty treasure.

The Twist: The real map has been replaced by a forgery that leads the PCs and members of the Guiding Hand into an Ascended trap.

The Climax: The PCs and the Hand clash in the ruins of an ancient pagoda. Then a Manchu army shows up . . .

Backstory

The Manchus invaded China in 1644, and by 1681 had succeeded in completely deposing the Ming Dynasty. Even after the Manchus were ensconced in power, rebellious groups continued to spring up, many set on reviving the Ming Dynasty and ousting the foreign Manchus. For the next two centuries, rumors of hidden Ming treasure ran rampant, but the truth of this rumor always seemed in doubt. Until now.

In China in 1850 a notorious pirate named Big Cannon Kung acquired a map purporting to show the location of hidden Ming treasure. Unfortunately for Big Cannon, he has a rather large mouth and word spread all over the docks of Shanghai. Agents of the Prof picked up the rumor, as did members of the Guiding Hand and the Ascended. All three factions are keen to acquire the treasure, if it really does exist.

The Ascended Plot

The local leadership of the Jade Wheel Society realized that Big Cannon Kung had handed them a golden opportunity to root out some of their enemies. Rather than simply killing Kung and taking the map, they came up with an altogether more sinister plan. They had a forgery of the map made and used one of their agents to steal the real map and plant the fake one aboard Big Cannon's ship. The fake map leads to the ruins of the Pagoda of Six Harmonies in Hangchow and a large Manchu force awaits there to ambush any Secret Warriors who show up. If all goes to plan, the Ascended will not only get the treasure, but also eliminate members of the Guiding Hand and/or the Dragons.

Involving the PCs

The easiest way to get the PCs involved is through the Prof. This assumes, of course, that the PCs have joined the Dragon cause and are working, at least

occasionally, with the Prof or Kar Fai. If that is the case, the setup is easy enough. The Prof sends word to the PCs to meet her at the Junkyard ASAP. When they arrive she gets right to the point.

"Our agents in Shanghai in 1850 have picked up an interesting rumor," she begins. "Supposedly, the pirate captain Big Cannon Kung has recently acquired an old map said to lead to hidden treasure of the Ming Dynasty. I don't need to tell you how much it would help us to get our hands on that treasure. The money we could generate is potentially staggering. So, I want you to go to Shanghai, find this Big Cannon Kung, and get the map from him. Follow it if you can and secure the treasure.

"You should go as soon as possible. And remember, if our agents heard about it, you can bet that the Jade Wheel Society has heard about it too. Watch your ass out there."

If the PCs are not involved with the Dragons, then lure them to Canton with a red herring. While they are investigating, the PCs hear the rumor about Big Cannon Kung and his map. When they realize that their original mission is pointless, they may decide to follow up on the rumor. Even heroes need money sometimes, right?

The Docks of Shanghai

The Prof gives the PCs directions to a nearby portal that leads to Shanghai in 1850. They emerge into a dark and narrow alley in the Chinese section of town (sections of the city are controlled by the British and other Europeans in the wake of the Opium War). The streets here are a maze, and the PCs best bet is to hire a local to guide them to the docks on the Huangpu River. PCs from the contemporary juncture who make no attempt to disguise themselves are bound to attract attention. Feel free to sic some constables on those who insist on sticking out in the crowd.

Once at the docks, it is easy enough to find Kung's ship. As mention previously, Big Cannon Kung has a big mouth and everyone knows where to find him. The PCs locate his ship as the sun goes down. Unbeknownst to them, a Jade Wheel agent has just switched the maps on Kung's junk.

The ship is a two mast junk with a high stern and Big Cannon's namesake in the prow. When the PCs arrive, only eight members of the crew are aboard. Big Cannon and his girlfriend "Little Dove" have just returned from carousing and are relaxing in his cabin. The PCs have a couple of options at this point. They can simply storm the ship with guns blazing, or they could try the sneaky approach. Since Kung is in his cabin and the map is with him, the sneaky approach will only take them so far. Also note that Little Dove has Hair-Trigger Neck Hairs. Eventually, it's going to turn into a big ole fight on the junk.

Big Cannon and Little Dove

Big Cannon is a notorious pirate, but since he bribes the right people he can dock in Shanghai. He is not the savviest of men, but he more than makes for that with his casual brutality. Due to his successes on the high seas, he has an unshakable faith in his own prowess. If the PCs whoop his ass, he should either go down fighting or jump into the river and escape to plot his revenge.

Little Dove is Big Cannon's girlfriend and partner in crime. She acts as his second in command on the ship and her shooting skills have saved the crew on more than one occasion. She also has smarts and tries to temper Big Cannon's worst excesses. It is only because of her that they have steered clear of British ships, which has no doubt saved them from the fate of many other local pirates. Little Dove also knows when to retreat and will do so if the situation onboard becomes untenable.

Big Cannon Kung

Sample Dialogue: "I will feed your entrails to the sharks!"
Attributes: Bod 7, Chi 0 (Fu 2), Mnd 5 (Cha 7), Ref 6
Skills: Drive/ Junks 13, Guns 12, Info/Pirate Gangs 13, Intimidation 12, Leadership 13, Martial Arts 14
Unique Schtick: Big Cannon suffers no penalties for fighting aboard ships, no matter what the conditions.
Schticks: [Fu Powers]: Prodigious Leap
Weapons: fist (8), kick (9), sword (11), black powder pistol (7/3/1)

Little Dove

Sample Dialogue: "Don't let my name deceive you!"
Attributes: Bod 5, Chi 0 (For 2), Mnd 6, Ref 7
Skills: Deceit 14, Guns 14, Info/Shanghai 12, Martial Arts 12
Schticks: [Gun Powers]: Fast Draw (x2), Hair-Trigger Neck Hairs, Signature Weapon (Pepper-Box Pistol with gold-inlaid lion designs)
Weapons: fist (6), kick (7), knife (7), Pepper-Box Pistol (10/3/6)

Pirates

Sample Dialogue: "Kill the dogs!"
Attributes: Bod 5, Chi 0, Mnd 5, Ref 6
Skills: Drive/Junk 10, Martial Arts 8
Weapons: fist (6), kick (7), sword (9)

Cool Things That Could Happen

1) The big cannon is in the prow and it is loaded. Anyone can fire it with an AV equal to their Ref. Characters with Guns can use that instead, at a -1 penalty. Its damage is 18.

2) There are plenty of ropes for swinging and swashbuckling. They can also be used to string people up.

3) Fighting on the masts is always entertaining. It also allows people to use the sails for cover and transport.

4) Flying kung fu moves are bound to knock people overboard. Fighting in the water can also be fun.

5) For added mayhem, a group of constables could show up in mid-fight.

Aftermath

Once Big Cannon and his crew have been dealt with, the PCs can raid his cabin. Here they find a chest with a some silver coins, some objects d'art, and a tube with the map. The value of all this is up to the GM. For our purposes only the map is important.

The map indicates that the treasure is in the "capital of the Southern Sung." An Int or appropriate Info roll of 8+ reveals that this is the city of Hangchow in the Chekiang Province. The map itself shows the ruins of a large pagoda, identified as the Pagoda of Six Harmonies. Characters from the contemporary juncture might be familiar with the Pagoda, since it is a major tourist attraction in Hangchow, but the modern version was only rebuilt in 1899.

The PCs now need to get to Hangchow. It's about 135 miles from Shanghai and it will take the PCs between three to five days to get there depending on how they travel. If any of them can sail, they could simply commandeer Big Cannon's junk (assuming it's still afloat). Otherwise, they'll have to purchase horses or walk. What the PCs do not

know is that three agents of the Guiding Hand watched the fight on the junk and will follow them however they travel. Road and sea traffic is busy enough that a few monks traveling in the same direction should not arouse suspicion.

The journey itself is uneventful, at least in relation to this story. If you have continuing plot threads playing out in your campaign, this would be a good time to work something in. It's never a bad time to have an old nemesis show up, especially when the PCs are on an important mission.

The Pagoda of Six Harmonies

The pagoda was originally built in 970 AD and soared to a height of 500 feet. Sadly, a foreign army burned it down in 1121 and it has been in ruins ever since. Now only the interior walls of brick are standing, and then only to 75 feet. Sections of the second floor are still standing, though there is no way up there except climbing or leaping. The rest of the bricks have fallen around the pagoda, or been carried off by local builders. The ruins are on a heavily wooded hill that overlooks the beautiful Quintang River and are about five miles from the city proper.

According to the map, there is a hidden trapdoor under a pile of masonry along the Northeast wall of the pagoda, which is octagonal in shape. The map also details three traps which guard the secret basement and shows how to disarm them. These traps include a hidden pit, moving walls that crush would-be robbers, and spring-loaded swords that come up from the floor.

Shaolin Surprise

The agents of the Guiding Hand make their move soon after the PCs arrive at the Pagoda of Six Harmonies. The forest makes it easy for them to evade detection until they leap out of the trees and attack.

The group is lead by a young Shaolin Master named Li Chung So. He is acting on orders from Quan Lo himself. Due to his youth and desire to prove himself, Li has a tendency to act recklessly. He is accompanied by Bolo Hung, a hulking student of the Resistance Principle, and Yen Su, a crack archer.

On their arrival in Hangchow, Li sent Yen Su to find the local cell of the Golden Candle Society. He did so successfully and the cell members went out to recruit some local help in the form of the Young Cows, a secret society that resists local tax collectors and bureaucrats. The Young Cow Society will become important shortly.

Li Chung So

Sample Dialogue: "This treasure belongs to China!"
Attributes: Bod 6, Chi 6 (For 3), Mnd 5 (Cha 6), Ref 7
Skills: Info/Neo-Confucianism 15, Leadership 12, Medicine 12, Martial Arts 15
Schticks: [Fu Powers]: Armored in Life, Clothed in Life, Dim Mak, Hands Without Shadow, Lightning Fist, Natural Order, Walk of a Thousand Steps, Willow Step
Weapons: fist (7), kick (8), staff (9)

Bolo Hung

Sample Dialogue: "Your guns are useless against me."
Attributes: Bod 9 (Tgh 12), Chi 2 (Fu 6), Mnd 5, Ref 6
Skills: Info/Neo-Confucianism 13, Medicine 13, Martial Arts 13
Unique Schtick: Immobility of the Turtle (see ***Back for Seconds,*** p. 35)
Schticks: [Fu Powers]: Backlash of the Turtle, Bite of the Dragon, Creative Thunder, Mirror of the Turtle, Natural Order
Weapons: fist (10), kick (11), iron shod club (12)

Yen Su

Sample Dialogue: "I will send you to hell!"
Attributes: Bod 6, Chi 4 (Fu 7), Mnd 5, Ref 8
Skills: Deceit 10, Guns 14, Info/Neo-Confucianism 14, Leadership 11, Medicine 11, Martial Arts 12
Unique Schtick: Like many Guiding Hand archers, Yen So has learned how to project his chi energy through his arrows. He can use the following fu schticks with his bow, using Guns instead of Martial Arts for all relevant checks. Chi is paid as normal. Permitted fu powers include: Bite of the Dragon, Breath of the Dragon, Dark's Soft Whisper, Fire Strike.
Schticks: [Fu Powers]: Bite of the Dragon, Breath of the Dragon, Dark's Soft Whisper, Fire Strike, Friend of Darkness, the Fox's Retreat, Prodigious Leap [Gun Powers]: Fast Draw, Signature Weapon (bow), Versatile Ammo
Weapons: fist (7), kick (8), bow (10/5/1)

Pagoda Stand-Off

Soon after the PCs arrive, Li Chung So leads his men to the attack. This should happen before the PCs finish clearing away the masonry above the supposed trapdoor. Li and Bolo jump into the pagoda, while Yen Su prodigious leaps on top of one of the crumbling walls. Li Chung So says, "You have no right to this treasure. It belongs to the true Chinese, not a gaggle of ne'er- do-wells from the future. Hand over the map and we will show you mercy."

The PCs will no doubt have a different view. Li Chung So will not back down and a fight is sure to ensue. Let this fight go on for one or two sequences. The idea here is to show the Guiding Hand monks are tough, skillful, and honorable opponents, but not to cause too much damage to either side. The PCs will need their strength soon enough, so try to ensure that they don't get beat on too badly in this fight.

A Bigger Problem

Once the Guiding Hand monks are inside and the fighting starts, the Ascended are ready to spring their trap. Lin Baio, a Transformed Fox and the Lodge mastermind behind this plan, is hidden in the forest with a small army. Once he gets the signal from his scouts, the army surrounds the pagoda. The PCs, who are most likely busy fighting the Guiding Hand, will probably not realize what is going on until the noose is firmly around their necks.

When the army has taken its positions, Lin Baio signals his drummers to announce their presence. The rolling beats of a half dozen kettle drums are the first sign that something else is going on here. When they hear this, the Guiding Hand monks will back away from the PCs and try to see what's going on outside. Wise PCs will do the same.

Outside are about 100 soldiers, a mix of infantry and cavalry. Matchlockmen, swordsmen, Manchu cavalry, and Mongol horse archers are all in view. Riding in front of the cavalry is a Manchu man in general's armor. He addresses the occupants of the pagoda.

"Enemies of the Qing Dynasty, the Emperor demands your surrender. Come out peacefully or be destroyed!"

Li Chung So says, "That's Lin Baio out there." If asked just who Lin Baio is, Li confirms the PCs worst suspicions by answering, "A high ranking member of the Jade Wheel Society."

Comrades in Arms?

The PCs now have some important decisions to make. With the odds against them and the Ascended after everyone in the pagoda, some kind of alliance with the Guiding Hand is the best option. Li Chung So is impetuous, but he's no fool. He will agree to an alliance, but insist on an even split of the treasure if they are successful. The PCs may now doubt that such a treasure really exists, but Li Chung So is clinging to his hopes.

At this point, give the PCs some time to discuss tactics. Trying to break out is certainly an option, but would mean

leaving the pagoda behind and never finding out if there is treasure or not. If asked, Li Chung So suggests fighting in areas where only a few opponents can get at them. If not asked, he and Bolo simply pick a doorway to defend and wait for the attack. Yen leaps up to the ruins of the second floor and readies his arrows.

PC Advantages

Things may look grim for the PCs but they do have certain advantages. Namely:

1) Morale: Most of the opposing army has extremely poor morale. Only the cavalry has any esprit de corps. If faced with blatant shows of powerful magic or strange technology, the infantry may well flee. The Difficulty of Intimidation checks versus the infantry is only 3.

2) Position: The PCs and their allies have the advantage of position. The ruins of the pagoda ensure that the full numbers of the Manchus cannot be brought to bear at once.

3) Allies: As the PCs should know, the Guiding Hand monks are no slouches. Each is a Shaolin Master and can kick some serious ass. As a bonus, they really hate the Manchus.

4) Sorcery: Lin Baio did not investigate his ambush site very thoroughly and chose it mainly due to the availability of a local garrison. The ruins of the pagoda predate the rise of the Ascended and retain a bit of their former magic. The Sorcery Juncture Modifier here is 0, similar to Hong Kong in the modern juncture.

The Name Custer Springs to Mind . . .

This is an enormous battle by ***Feng Shui*** standards and requires special handling to ensure that it is dramatic and fun for the players. For sake of ease, it is broken up into three phases: the infantry attack, the cavalry attack, and the Young Cow counter-attack. You never can tell just what your players will do, so be ready to improvise if they get wacky. And don't feel you need to stick too closely to the script if a dramatic opportunity presents itself. The idea here is simulate an epic battle, not to bore your players with hours and hours of dice rolling.

Special care should be taken with the Guiding Hand monks. They should not upstage the PCs under any circumstances. It's best to describe their actions in general, but not to actual roll dice for them. Tell the players how Yen Su is pouring arrows into the oncoming soldiers and how Li Chung So is fighting off six men with his twirling staff. You can also set up situations where one of the monks is about to be overwhelmed and let one of the PCs bail him out. If one of the PCs is really in trouble, you can also have Bolo or Li show up to help out before leaping back into the fray elsewhere.

Cool Things That Could Happen

1) The remaining walls of the pagoda are old and shaky. Knocking over these walls onto attacking troops is an excellent way to kill multiple mooks at once. The top most parts of the walls, on the ruins of the second floor, are the easiest to push over. When rocks fall on your head, there isn't much you can do about it, so PCs who chose this method of attack can take out one mook for each three points of strength brought to bear on a section of tottering wall. Bolo Hung can be of great help here. If this tactic is used versus a named character, treat it as a stunt and give the bricks a damage of 15.

2) Ropes can be used to trip up charging horses.

3) The trees sheltering the Manchu missile troops can be set alight with sorcery or technology. While this isn't exactly eco-friendly, it would drive the missile troops back and remove the danger of sniping, at least partially.

4) Flying kicks are great for dismounting riders. Riderless horses running amuck are also a must.

5) When the press gets really tight, PCs can cross the room quickly by running on top of their enemies' heads.

The Manchu Army

Lin Baio did the best he could under short notice. His own Manchu cavalry are crack troops, as are the Mongols, but the infantry comes from the local garrison and they are poorly trained and led. Lin hopes that his numbers will prove sufficient to complete his plan. The army consists of 55 swordsmen, 20 Matchlockmen, 10 Manchu Banner cavalry, and 12 Mongol cavalry. Lin Baio leads the Manchu cavalry and Prince Berke the Mongol.

Lin Baio is a cunning man. He did not become a general just because he was a Lodge member. His clever strategies have won more than one battle, and he has been equally successful in the field of politics. With so many troops, he feels he has little to fear. Normally he wouldn't expose himself in such a way, but what are the odds that a small band could resist his army?

Prince Berke is a loyal soldier, and has a very personal code of honor. He is not Pledged, he is just a soldier doing his job. He curbs the brutality of his men, and PCs may find him an opponent worthy of respect.

Lin Baio

Sample Dialogue: "I will crush you like insects."
Attributes: Bod 5 (Str 6), Chi 6 (For 9), Mnd 8, Ref 7
Skills: Deceit 15, Driving/horse 12, Gambling 13, Info/Secret War 13, Leadership 12, Martial Arts 14
Schticks: [Fu Powers]: The Fox's Retreat, Prodigious Leap [Transformed Animal Powers]: Borrow, Embezzle, Mockery, Swindle (fu and creature powers)
Weapons: fist (7), kick (8), sword (10)

Manchu Banner Cavalry

Sample Dialogue: "Death to the rebels!"
Attributes: Bod 6, Chi 0, Mnd 5, Ref 6
Skills: Drive/horse 9, Intimidation 8, Martial Arts 8
Weapons: spear (9), sword (10)

Prince Berke

Sample Dialogue: "My honor is my life."
Attributes: Bod 7, Chi 0, Mnd 5, Ref 7
Skills: Drive/horse 15, Guns 14, Martial Arts 13
Unique Schtick: Prince Berke was born in the saddle. He suffers no penalties when attempting stunts related to horsemanship.
Schticks: [Gun Powers]: Both Guns Blazing, Fast Draw, Signature Weapon (bow), Versatile Ammo
Weapons: bow (10/5/1), fist (8), sword (11)

Mongol Cavalry

Sample Dialogue: "For Prince Berke!"
Attributes: Bod 5, Chi 0, Mnd 5, Ref 6
Skills: Drive/horse 10, Guns 9, Martial Arts 7
Weapons: bow (7/5/1), sword (9)

Swordsmen

Sample Dialogue: "Attack!"
Attributes: Bod 6, Chi 0, Mnd 4, Ref 5

Skills: Martial Arts 6
Weapons: sword (10)

Matchlockmen

Sample Dialogue: "Steady, steady . . . fire."
Attributes: Bod 5, Chi 0, Mnd 5, Ref 6
Skills: Guns 8, Martial Arts 6
Weapons: Chinese matchlock musket (7/5/1, and takes 6 shots to reload), sword (10)

The Infantry Attack

Once the PCs have defied Lin Baio, the Manchu commander yells, "So be it. Prepare to be destroyed!" With that, he points at the pagoda and shouts, "Attack!"

The swordsmen leap to the attack, while the matchlockmen snipe at any available targets. It takes them one sequence to reach the pagoda, and they present easy targets to PCs with missile weapons or sorcery. The cavalry stay in reserve. Lin Baio is planning on using them for a crushing blow once the infantry has worn down the defenders.

This combat should be run for two sequences (one for approach and one for assault), or three if your players are really enjoying themselves. The only advantage the mooks have is numbers, so your PCs should be able to rip into them. Even mooks land a couple of lucky blows, however, so feel free to slap your players if they get too cocky. After two sequences, chances are the PCs and their allies will have taken down a large number of the attackers, likely with sorcery and modern weapons. At this point, the attack falters and the mooks retreat in disorder, despite Lin Baio's shouted orders to the contrary. PCs who follow them outside the pagoda will be the targets of missile fire.

Cavalry Attack

Once the retreating infantry have streamed by him, Lin Baio orders the cavalry to attack. The Mongols fan out in front, firing their bows as they charge forward (they do this at no penalty because hey, they're Mongols). The Manchu Bannermen lead by Lin Baio himself follow closely behind. Just before they hit the pagoda, the Mongols break off and circle around the back, firing at available targets. Meanwhile, the Bannermen charge inside. Again, the approach to the pagoda takes one sequence.

With Lin Baio and Prince Berke on the scene, things get serious. The Mongols will try to flank the PCs while they are busy beating off the Bannermen and flood in from the rear. The whole pagoda will become a churning sea of horses and men, screaming and dying amongst the casualties of the infantry attack. Play this combat out for at least once sequence. At this point, the PCs hear dozens of voices shouting "attack." Those who spare a look outside see that the swordsmen have reformed and they and the matchlockmen are advancing up the hill.

Young Cow Counter Attack

Let the sheer size of the army sink in at this point. Let a few shots go by as the infantry march up the hill. At this point, cries of "Death to the Manchus" erupt from the woods. Charging out from the trees are masked peasants and townspeople armed with spears and other makeshift weapons. Li Chung So jumps on to a wall and shouts, "Young Cows, smite down the enemies of China!"

The rest of the fight is best described in cinematic terms. The Young Cows charge into the rear of the advancing infantry, taking them by surprise. The already disheartened infantry fall before the roused peasantry and the Young Cows stream into the pagoda. Lin Baio will curse the PCs and attempt to escape. The PCs can concentrate on taking him down and it is in their best interest to do so. By the time the battle is finished, the pagoda is awash in blood and the dead and dying are strewn everywhere. This war wasn't so secret.

Treasure? What Treasure?

Sooner or later, the minds of the PCs will turn to the treasure. It doesn't take long to figure out that the map they have is a fake. Removing the masonry from the Northeast corner reveals only dirt. The Pagoda of Six Harmonies was nothing but a death trap.

Those who search the body of Lin Baio, however, will find a tube tucked into his belt. Inside is the real map, lifted from Big Cannon's junk days before. If the PCs are going to let Lin Baio escape, you might want to call for Perception checks to notice the tube sticking out of his belt. Depending on how the PCs handle this, they can include the Guiding Hand monks or not. It wouldn't be all that difficult to conceal the discovery from them, though honorable PCs might object. If the discovery is made public, Li Chung So wants to leave immediately and follow the map. Details of this uneasy alliance are up the PCs, though they may be feeling well-disposed towards the Guiding Hand after their heroic stand together. If the PCs handled themselves well and treated the monks honorably, they will have friends amongst the Guiding Hand.

Legacy of the Ming

The real map shows a hidden underground complex near the city of Amoy in the Fukien Province. Amoy was the home base for Cheng Ch'eng-kung, known as Koxinga to Europeans, in the 17th century. Cheng was a Ming loyalist who resisted the Manchus with his sizable fleet long after the rest of the country had been conquered. He eventually drove the Dutch off Taiwan and established himself there, where his family ruled until 1683 when the Qing finally conquered this last bit of free territory.

Even after hundreds of years, the map is easy enough to follow. The complex is built into a low hillock and the entrance marked by a jagged boulder. Inside is a large complex, with dozens of interconnected rooms. And filling all these rooms are thousands upon thousands of books, lying in precise order on floor to ceiling shelves. PCs may be disappointed that there is no gold or even Ming vases. However, if they investigate their find they will realize they have unearthed something far more valuable.

In 1403 the Emperor ordered the compilation of an encyclopedia of all knowledge. Over 2000 scholars worked on this epic for five years and the result was known as the *Yung-lo ta-tien.* The finish product consisted of 11,095 volumes and due to its sheer size only three copies were ever made. Two disappeared during the Manchu conquest and the third will be almost entirely destroyed in a fire in 1900 during the Boxer Rebellion. What the PCs have found is one of the two missing copies, long thought destroyed. It is a priceless cultural treasure, especially if the PCs can get it back to the contemporary juncture.

How the PCs proceed from here is up to them. Hauling nearly 12,000 fragile books out of a country firmly in the Ascended's grip will not be easy and should be an adventure in itself, as will finding buyers for the collection who will not screw the PCs over. Another option is to go to the contemporary juncture and try to excavate the complex there. Of course, then they'd have to deal with the Communist government of China, but it's a possibility. And naturally, the Guiding Hand would love to get their hands on this product of Chinese genius, so they are not to be discounted. By the time they are through, the PCs may wish they never found the lost treasure of the Ming Dynasty.

Further Adventures

1) Li Chung So finds the PCs and says he's quit the Guiding Hand and wants to join the Dragons. Is he sincere or is this a ruse?

2) Prince Berke feels dishonored by his defeat. He concocts a scheme to take vengeance on the PCs.

3) The encyclopedia is the sum knowledge of the Ming. It could contain clues that lead to many adventures. PCs could find out about feng shui sites, forbidden magics, or further hidden sites.

4) If the PCs hoodwinked the Guiding Hand, they would be most displeased if the truth came to light. For more info on the Guiding Hand, see ***Blood of the Valiant,*** a sourcebook on the Hand by Ronin Publishing.

by Brian Reeves

Art by Keith Johnson

Introduction

Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Arcadius Maximus, Professor Emeritus at the University for Advanced Machinist Study, in Grefton City. The subject of my lecture tonight will be the often misunderstood and maligned practice of *Machine Magic*, which, as some of you may know, has rapidly grown and added new believers over the last few years, thanks in part to the completion of the giant perpetual clock in the courtyard of our college. I don't know if any of you have had an opportunity to visit the college over in Grefton, but it far outstrips the earlier school that originated to the south. We can, in part, thank the recent conversion of the King over to the truer faith. Getting him to see the light was not easy.

But I know at least all of you have had *some* introduction to the idea of machine magic, if not studied it on your own. As you probably know, Machine Magic is not magic at all, but the careful application of real-world machinery to manipulate the matter controlling our universe. Matter? Controlling out universe? Of course! I'm referring to *Netherworld gears* when I speak of matter, but of course the extent to which they are real matter is still hotly debated even within our own halls. But I'll get to theory later.

The rudiments work like this: a Machinist (or anyone else, for that matter, who has the knowledge and a working *apparati*) can, through careful positioning and logical reasoning, connect specially designed machines in our own reality to the multitudinous and timeless gears in a parallel plane. This plane, and the gears, exist solely to power the mundane physicality of our own universe. It controls us, so we use a little know-how to control even a little bit of it. Simple as that.

And yet, those *Elementalists*, among others, would have you believe the Netherworld, and especially the Netherworld gears, do not exist. They like to pull out fancy element wheels and point to fire faeries to explain their superstitious nonsense. They are rightly afraid, because Machine magic can easily disprove their ramblings, and show the average man or woman that the unexplainable universe we think we know is really *very* basic.

The History

But first, a little history. What we know of Machine magic originated with two major events, both of which took place quite some time ago. The first was the accidental discovery of a Netherworld gear by Tantalivus, about one thousand years ago. Tantalivus was a weapon smith, but a certified genius. He felt there had to be a way of marking how much time elapsed, and hoped to invent some sort of machine, principally for sale to mariners and merchants. He constructed the first basic clock, and I know most of you have seen a drawing of it somewhere. It had a row of gears around a central core, and required winding for power. However, after losing one of the gears over and over again to metal fatigue, he decided to strengthen it with an iron alloy he made. The exact composition of this alloy is a secret, but in

some of your later classes it will be revealed to you.

Tantalivus activated the clock and suddenly the newly coated gear ground to a stop, shuddered, then started the other way, moving faster and faster. The machine began to heat up, and Tantalivus began to see the ghosts of gears of every shape and size materializing out of the empty air. After a minute of this, he looked down at his hands and found his skin was wrinkled and sagging. He was aging! He stumbled away from there, but not until he had managed to lose nearly 20 years off his life. That old clock would still be whirring away somewhere today, but it created such a rapidly advancing field of time around it that it ended up corroding in about two weeks as if it had sat in a field for a hundred years. The *Connector gear* finally sprung, and that was that.

The second important event was the voyage of Urian, the ship wright. I'm sure some of you have heard that story, but the popular version isn't quite accurate. The way it really went was this:

Urian had a successful business for quite some time, but most of his sales went to private traders. When the wars started up in the islands, trading by sea fell off drastically. Urian was completely out of business. He had been reading quite a bit of theory from the early masters of logic, and had once seen a map on a bit of parchment left over from an early civilization (which, incidentally, occupied an area just a few hundred miles south of here.) This civilization -- the name escapes me at the moment -- had been founded upon the religious principal that their world was an experiment, performed by a . . . god, I suppose. Although the name doesn't translate directly, it came out to roughly mean "pupil." Anyway, Urian gradually had developed theories that these ancient philosophers had been on to something, so he decided to construct a boat that, with the help of some mundane magic, would be able to fly higher than the clouds or birds. He wanted to get a look at the world from the eyes of a god.

So, having constructed the ship, he paid his last savings to the dean of a local sorcery college to enchant the ship with the ability to fly. He took off, and the ship worked better than he could have imagined. As he rose higher, the features of the world began to look smaller and smaller, until even the mountains to the east, which had always been too large for him to consider crossing, now looked like lumps on the ground. He could even see to the opposite end of the desert. As he rose higher, he noticed the apparent roundness of the earth began to decrease, and he could see farther and farther. Eventually, after a few hours of flight, he could see a straight edge at the far end of the oceans in all directions. The world was flat! Nobody had ever taught him this! With a combined state of awe struck terror and childlike wonder, he continued rising, until he began to make out a most unusual feature of our world: The stars above were affixed to large arcing bands of metal, and as he grew closer, he could see numbers along them, marking degrees and minutes, just like an astrolabe.

Finally, just before he touched ground -- yes, touched ground -- he realized he had not been getting farther away from the ground, but actually growing *larger,* causing the perspective to change. The earth was now just a flat plane balanced upon a great pillar. The base of the pillar rose from a pool of water which was constantly refilled from the draining of the oceans over the edge. The world was actually nothing more than a colorful diorama.

Then what was behind him? Well, he found he had left the confines of the metal bands arching over the world. The sun was ticking along a track, as was the moon, which was below the little flat planet on the day leg of its journey. And behind him was a bare, marble chamber draped with ornate cloth. And there was an archway. He got out of his ship, followed the hall, and found himself in a chamber filled with paintings. The paintings depicted the gods of our world, and somehow he instinctively *knew* that what they had always been was nothing more than paintings. Rumors. Gods designed to give the populace something to keep them in line.

But it was his final finding that made this the single most important discovery in our world's long history: on a pedestal rested a book, in which was inscribed, in a language we have dated back several hundred years, the details of an experiment in world building. His suspicions were true: we were a long-abandoned experiment, left to its own devices in an empty room in the infinite hall of the gods.

Needless to say, the Elementalists have never again agreed to help build a flying ship.

The Theory

Machine Magic is based upon the idea of *Netherworld gears.* Nobody has ever seen the Netherworld in its true form; only every once in a long while has a machinist even managed to see vague outlines or shadows of the gears themselves. The general theory is that the Netherworld is a lightless place, full of abstract matter. Machinist professors and practitioners believe the matter makes up the gears, forming an infinite clockwork which runs parallel to the space and time of our own world. If you can master the gears, you can master anything: there are gears to regulate the functioning of light, heat, sound, time, waves, solidity, magnets, ad infinitum. Anything you can think of, and maybe even some you can't. Netherworld gears come in every size, from the infinitely small up to the mountain-sized mammoths. Up until now, we have only found a handful we could practically manipulate. It's a difficult task, but with the proper training, anyone should eventually be able to master it.

As you can see, the Theory is actually quite simple, despite there being several dozen scholarly texts written about it. Quite lengthy ones, I might add. The simple fact is that nobody knows truly how it works, other than what we can perceive. We are still waiting for someone to perfect an apparatus which would allow us to *see* the Netherworld and ascertain its mysteries. Until then, all we have is:

The Practice

Machinism made simple -- the Machinist has an apparati. The apparati has, among other things, a Connector gear. The Machinist calibrates the apparati, making sure it is balanced and tuned, then fiddles with the Connector gear until he *feels* it catch. It will start spinning. The apparati will modify the rotation of the Netherworld gear. The Netherworld gear is now being manipulated as per the construction of the apparati, and any number of effects might arise. The thing to remember is that Connector gears can only hook into some types of Netherworld gears, and that it depends on size and orientation of the Connector gear. Is that clear?

A Machinist's most important tools -- in fact, pretty much his only tools -- are the apparati. Most can reasonably be carried around with the Machinist wherever he goes, but there are some that simply have to be far larger, like our perpetual clock, for instance. These apparati usually look like little metal boxes, about the size of a lantern.

The Machinist, when he wishes to use an apparati, simply takes it out and unlatches the doors. Almost all apparati swing open on two hinges to allow easier access to all the gears, springs, and chains. The Machinist then, assuming he or she has kept the apparati oiled and repaired, must calibrate it. This means he must readjust balances and weights thrown off by having the delicate piece of machinery carted around everywhere; although most machines will eventually be thrown out of order even if left still on a shelf. It is a simple fact that there are gears for entropy in the Netherworld, and they play havoc on our lives every day.

Once calibrated, which takes anywhere from a second to minute, depending on the state of the apparatus, the Machinist then holds the Connector gear in place, and manipulates it with his fingers for a space of several seconds. It should, assuming he has calculated his positioning, calibrated his apparati, and tweaked the gear enough, catch onto its component Netherworld gear, and be off on its own.

The effects will always be unbelievable, sometimes be difficult to predict, and never simply magic, which the Elementalists would have you believe.

If an apparatus is moved -- even nudged -- during this time, the Connector gear will slip off, and the effects will cease instantly. Anyone who wants to be a true Machinist needs to have steady hands and a lot of patience. And don't be too surprised to find yourself carrying around 20 or so of these apparati, with them swinging from every part of your body like ghost hunter's spirit wards. That is the mark of a true Machinist.

The Apparati

The Light Flower

The first of these apparati is one we call the Light Flower, because it contains a fist-sized piece of blown glass designed to look like a flower. The glass is sealed and filled with sand. Upon opening the apparatus doors, the flower will rise out on a telescoping arm to be held a foot or so above the apparatus. At this point, when the Connector gear makes the connection, the sand inside the glass flower will begin to glow, which usually illuminates a 30 foot radius.

The Portable Door

While not a real door, the Portable Door certainly acts as one. This apparatus is wide, but not very tall, and very heavy. Only the top opens on a hinge. Inside is a mess of gears and bars confusing even to a classically trained Machinist. The Connector gear is hard to catch, but when it finally does, it will cause all matter to convert to oxygen in a tunnel -- a 20 foot long, 10 foot wide cylinder -- directly in front of the apparatus (the front is carefully marked to prevent gruesome accidents, like the famous occurrence marking the initial discovery of this gear.)

The Sound Resistor

As its name might imply, this apparatus connects to the Netherworld gear in charge of sound amplitude. Put into layman's terms, it stops sound in a certain radius. This one is usually a cube about the size of a fist, and connects relatively easy. The net effect is that sound waves cease moving within a 30 foot radius, more for larger apparati. However, the user should be warned that upon disconnection of the gear, all the sound waves originally stopped will be able once more to move, but now they will be joined by *all* the sounds generated in the meantime, to form quite a cacophony.

The Seeing Eye

This one was invented by a rather paranoid Machinist, who believed a secret society of Elementalists were infiltrating the ranks of the Dermagor University for Machine Magic. The apparatus is composed of two disks of blown glass, arranged like a pair of spectacles. However, they look down into the apparatus itself. The Connector gear in this one is often quite feisty, but once it catches, the two glass lenses will allow the Machinist to see another place as if his or her eyes were actually there. A trio of dials on the front of the apparatus allow one to move the Netherworld Eye up or down, side to side, or forward and back. To focus on one certain place requires the Machinist to physically manipulate the dials to slowly pan over (at a rate of about 10 feet per second.) The view is usually from above, although positioning the apparatus in another direction (for instance, with the Machinist *below* to look *up*) would be possible. Prototypes of Seeing Eyes affixed to the face always end up in failure due to the restriction that the Connector gear must remain motionless at all times to remain connected.

The Sound Channeler

This apparatus is normal size, that is, about the size of a lantern. When it is opened, one will see a cone or funnel pointing forward, seemingly into nothing. However, once the Connector gear hits its mark, any and all noise audible to the Machinist will also be funneled through the cone and sent to a receiver funnel, which is sometimes about ten or 20 times as large to amplify the sound. The receiver funnel must also be connected to a gear to work. Note: sound is not picky, and if the Machinist does not position his or her Sound Channeler correctly, it may be picked up by parties other than to which the sound was intended.

The Liquidator

About the size of a helmet, this perfect cube is designed to do one thing: turn matter into water. This is quite a trick, and requires nearly quadruple the time (about two minutes) that the typical mobile apparatus takes to operate. This one has three Connector gears, and all must be working at the same time for the effect to occur (tough, considering they have a frustrating tendency to slip out.) The apparatus must be set near the object to be turned to water, and a slide inside the machine allows

the Machinist to inform the apparatus of the three-foot-square space which is to be liquidated. The water is almost always pure, but for some reason, this apparatus is incapable of turning lead and, strangely, iron, so impurities will likely exist in the water.

The Aerator

Companion to the Liquidator, the Aerator is designed to make air seemingly from nothing. It is a fortunate circumstance that the resultant mixture is a breathable oxygen/carbon dioxide/hydrogen mix -- however, careless calibration of the instrument can result in greater or lesser quantities of any of these three gasses, perhaps with explosive results! There are three Connector gears again, but these usually do not slip. The application of this apparatus can put out one cubic foot of air every five seconds. It has been lauded in certain Machinist circles as a lifesaver.

The Negator

Oddly named, and often mispronounced, this apparatus results in the negation of gravity. The apparatus is taller than it is wide, with such a confusion of gears as to make it twice as hard to fix when broken, and it takes over a minute to calibrate. When the Connector gear clicks into place, a 20-foot-radius sphere will appear in which gravity is null. The sphere will never appear in an area occupied by the apparatus itself (a fail-safe device inside the apparatus does not permit this,) as this would result in the automatic disconnection of the Netherworld gear. The sphere will become attached to a certain object and move with that object for some time. This aspect is capricious and unpredictable, and sometimes results in no little humor for those not directly involved. However, it can also prove to be most effective -- in addition, Machinists of great skill can tweak the gears inside the apparatus to *reverse* gravity, sending an object skyward.

The Thermometer

The final apparatus discussed here, but by no means the last one in existence, is another poorly-named one called the Thermometer. True, it does contain an actual quicksilver thermometer, but its effect is far more decisive: upon connecting the gear, the Machinist can, through the use of a weight/slide measure, raise or lower the temperature of the environs dramatically and almost instantly. The change occurs at about one degree per second, and has a range of about 200 degrees in either direction. There are a couple of drawbacks to this apparatus: for one, it is fragile, and *often* needs repairs or replacements. It will affect an area in a ten-foot radius at full power. Attempting to use this device on an area larger than this (or especially one outside) will drastically reduce the effects.

In Closing

Apparati are expensive and very, very tough to make. On top of this, it takes quite a bit of schooling in both theory and practice to be able to work apparati to any ability. Those interested in Machine magic have quite a trial ahead of them: on top of having to spend at least a couple of years in a school, they will forever be carrying around a number of large and unwieldy machines, and taking the time, under perhaps dangerous circumstances, to calibrate them. However, the theory of Machine Magic is a new one, and an intelligent Machinist might be able to make great strides in the field, shrinking the size necessary, as well as improving the reliability and effect of the gears. Perhaps they might, after years

of field research, accidentally stumble upon the secret to the Netherworld gears or even see the Netherworld in person. It might even be possible to partially manifest some of the gears into our reality, making them far easier to manipulate, but at the same time running the risk of being overwhelmed or killed by their unstoppable power.

I wish all of you much success in pursuing your Machinist schooling, and watch for my further lectures on the Netherworld and the emerging theory of corpuscles. Thank you, and good night.

-- *lecture from Arcadius Maximus, speaking at the University of Advanced Machinist Study, transcribed year 450.*

Note to the Gamemaster:

Machine Magic fits perfectly into a fantasy campaign based upon esoteric learning and minimal magic: by forcing the characters to master these machines, the gamemaster can keep a firm grip on how much or how little magic the characters can wield. It prevents fireball-slingers from wading into a crowd of enemies and reducing them to ashes before the hapless gamemasters very eyes. At the same time, the power available through the Netherworld is theoretically infinite, assuming the characters can master the skills. In addition, exploring how the Netherworld fits into the religions and other types of magic within the game world can lead to some interesting discoveries on the part of the characters. For example, why is there another dimension full of nothing but gears, huge and infinitesimal, that controls the physical aspects of the fantasy world? How does this affect other types of magic, like Elementalism? Where does life fit into this? Who is making sure the Netherworld gears function properly? Where are the gods in all this? What are the gears made of? What happens when a Netherworld gear snaps or grinds to a halt?

by David Edelstein

Cover Art by Steve Gardner

When I first started writing for ***In Nomine,*** it was in the middle of finishing my Master's thesis project, while teaching high school full time. As I finished the ***Corporeal Player's Guide,*** it was in the middle of getting married, while teaching at a university full time. Certainly, writing for ***In Nomine*** has been a lot more fun than those other things. (Don't misunderstand -- *being* married is absolutely wonderful. I could have done without all the photo shoots and tuxedo-fittings and the like, though . . .) But it's a hobby, something I do for fun, and which happens to provide me with a supplement to my income. I'm not sure how much this sets me apart from professional game writers, who do this for a living. But I did feel a bit intimidated, at first, being asked to write an entire book for ***In Nomine*** line, the first book to be written by a single author since Derek Pearcy wrote the original rulebook. It's a large chunk of the ***In Nomine*** universe I'm writing . . . and my first-draft deadline was exactly one week before my wedding.

The purpose of the ***Corporeal Player's Guide*** is to make human characters viable and interesting in ***In Nomine,*** something that's not that easy in a game where most PCs are angels and demons with vast supernatural abilities. In order to do this, I took the position that while individual humans may not be very powerful, *humanity* as a whole is. One of my clearest mandates was that ***In Nomine*** shall not become a game of human puppets manipulated by powerful unseen forces. So while a celestial can usually push around a single human with ease, Heaven and Hell find it surprisingly difficult to push large groups of people anywhere.

One thing that I hate, when I buy an RPG supplement, is to find that it's full of the author's musings on how to play the game, and maybe some sample characters and new artifacts which I could probably write myself. I like supplements that are packed full of *stuff*; new rules, new character types, new resources and plot seeds, things I can use right "out of the box." I tried to do that with the ***CPG***; I wanted it to be a book players and GMs would both consider a must-have.

Discords, Attunements, and character types from several books are now collected in one place (and I got to fix the drug rules so that six cups of coffee will no longer turn you into Spider Man). Soldiers and undead, touched upon in the basic rulebook and expanded somewhat in ***Night Music,*** are described in great detail now, as are Saints (from ***Night Music***), and sorcerers (from ***The Marches***). The Sorcery rules from ***The Marches,*** which were frankly a bit incoherent and formulaic, have been greatly revised. Sorcery is now distinct from Enchantment, which is the art of imbuing corporeal objects with Symphonic powers. This includes alchemy, necromancy (now you don't have to be a Servitor of Saminga to make Zombis), and making artifacts and golems.

You will also find rules for human souls in Heaven and Hell, ghosts, Dream Shades (ghosts bound to the ethereal rather than the corporeal plane), Dream Soldiers, Pagan Soldiers (who serve ethereal deities), "rogues" (exceptional humans who haven't joined *any* side), prophets, mortal offspring of ethereals and celestials, and Remnants. One thing I *wanted* to present in detail was the Children of the Grigori and the Nephilim, but unfortunately Higher Powers ruled that they are to be reserved for a future supplement, and so you will find only a few tantalizing hints about them here.

The chapters on human agencies and humans in the War will be of the most use to GMs. How do celestials infiltrate an organization, and what organizations do they find worthwhile? How can humans credibly *threaten* celestials? And how can you run a humans-only or mixed humans-and-celestials campaign? Naturally, there are some sample organizations included, ranging from groups of Soldiers to sorcerous cabals.

I learned a lot in the playtesting of this book. The playtest discussions were often a bit heated, particularly over the sections on religion. (Surprise!) Religion, of course, couldn't possibly be done full justice in one chapter. The interesting thing about ***In Nomine*** is that there are so *many* different ways to play it . . . and so many people feel neglected if published materials don't cater sufficiently to their vision of the game. Striking a balance between trying to be all things to all people (and thus becoming hopelessly bland and generic), and pursuing one person's interpretation so narrowly that the setting becomes useless to anyone else, is not always easy. Some people want things explicitly stated about the nature of souls and the role and history of religion in ***In Nomine*** . . . others want these things to go untouched, so that individual GMs are free to develop their own ideas.

Of course, not all debates were about metaphysics . . . there were also disagreements between people who thought equipment lists, including high-tech gadgets, are a vital resource, and those who thought they're a waste of space. The equipment chapter ended up being fairly small, but you will find a few more weapons, including heavy weapons and explosives, security systems, and of course, revised rules for disease, poison, and drugs. What you will *not* find is a big list of guns. Nor will you find mundane hazards such as falling, freezing, vehicular collisions, starvation, and the like . . . threats to human characters, but too mundane for a game like In Nomine to make the final cut.

Finally, I'd like to note here that Kris Overstreet wrote a yet-unpublished article for *Pyramid* magazine that was the basis of the rules for ghosts in the ***CPG.*** Unfortunately, his name was left out of the credits in the first printing of the book, for which I would like to apologize.

New Spells for AD&D

by Lloyd Brown III

Art by andi jones

The *Book of Charms* is a pair of spellbooks in the care of the elves of the Ulek states on Oerth. They seem to be freely traded among the elves and have been seen among no less than a dozen clans in the past 20 years. Apparently each clan adds one or more unique spells to the collection, copies those that they find valuable, and passes the book on to another friendly clan.

Each is a massive tome, at least 24" tall by 14" wide, and no less than six inches thick. The covers are made out of a smooth unidentified wood the color of mahogany with a sweet, natural odor, despite their obvious age. The covers bear mithral elven runes naming the title of the book, the binder, the pagemaker, and the original enchanter who owned them. The style of writing dates the tomes at something over 300 years old. The tomes' pages are buttery yellow, the color of falling leaves. The writing inside is delicate and flowing, inscribed mostly in jet inks. Some pages display a deep violet script which contrasts richly with the golden pages. One or two spells are written in a vibrant cerulean that virtually stand out from the page, capitalizing on graphic illustrations and glyphs to present a bold appearance. Each spell is signed by the wizard who added it to the tome, as well as the creator (when known), if different from the contributor. Since the Book of Charms has been in the custody of the elves, no spells of the highest levels are included, and only rarely are spells of 7th level added, since elves don't often become powerful enough to use them. The Book is replete with lower level spells, however, and contains all enchantment/charm spells of 1st, 2nd and 3rd level, as well as *charm monster, enchanted weapon, domination, feeblemind, hold monster, enchant an item, geas,* and *mass suggestion* from among the higher levels.

The Book's spells are exclusively from the schools of enchantment/charm for good reason: the book itself is enchanted so that only these spells can be written on its pages. An introduction inside the first of the two tomes alludes to a set of nine similar books, one for each school of magic, but no trace has been discovered of the others. Whether they were unfinished projects of the same creator, lost on different worlds, or destroyed is unknown.

New Spells in the Book of Charms

Level One

Awaken (Enchantment/Charm)

Range: 60 yards +10 yards/level
Components: V, S, M
Duration: Instantaneous

Casting Time: 3
Area of Effect: Special
Saving Throw: Special

Awaken alerts sleeping creatures within the area of affect, waking them from normal or even magical sleep. If the caster makes a saving throw vs. spells, the magic can also be used to awaken a single creature under the influence of *feign death* or under a normal or magical coma. The creatures are fully alert and ready to engage in combat or cast spells at the beginning of the next round. The spell affects one person per level if the people are normally sleeping, half that number if they are magically sleeping, or only one target under a *feign death* or coma.

The spell has no effect on the ninth-level spell *temporal stasis.*

The material component is a small copper bell, which can be reused.

Dizzy (Enchantment/Charm)

Range: 120 yards
Components: V, S
Duration: 1 turn + 1 round/level
Casting Time: 1
Area of Effect: 20' cube
Saving Throw: Neg. (-2 on roll)

Targets of this charm spell become dizzy and disoriented. They cannot use spells like *dimension door* and *teleport* because they cannot properly target the "exit" end of the spell. All creatures affected lose two points of Dexterity (if characters) or suffer a -1 AC penalty (if monsters).

Jumpdart (Enchantment)

Range: Touch
Components: S
Duration: 1 round/level, one use only
Casting Time: 1
Area of Effect: 1 dart/level
Saving Throw: None

Jumpdart allows the caster to enchant one or more darts with the ability to leap forward and attack an enemy without being thrown by the caster. The dart leaves the caster's hand and flies toward the target specified by the caster, causing maximum damage to the target. The dart automatically hits at short range, hits any AC 90% of the time at medium

range, and 75% of the time at long range. Only one dart per round may be fired by this spell, and the caster has no time left over for throwing other missiles. The *jumpdart* uses the dart's statistics, except for rate of fire.

Magical darts cannot be affected by this spell.

Level Two

Channel (Enchantment/Charm)

Range: Touch
Components: S, M
Duration: 1 spell/3 levels or 1 turn/level
Casting Time: 2
Area of Effect: 1 item
Saving Throw: None

Channel allows the caster to cast spells through an item held, rather than causing the spell to emanate from the caster's hand. Only ranged spells can be channeled; spells that require a touch still require the caster to physically touch the target (or use *spectral hand*). The spell confers no permanent abilities and does not change the magic of the subsequent spells. For example, if a 9th level caster channels a *fireball* through a non-magical wand, the *fireball* is cast at 9th level, not the normal 6th level for a wand.

The item must be no longer than a staff (6'), weigh no more than five pounds, and cannot be magical, although it can bear a *Nystul's magic aura.* Only one item is enchanted to channel the spells, and only the caster can use it. Note that the channeled spells are not cast all at once into the item; it cannot be picked up and used by another creature. The spells are cast by the caster normally, and all of the possible spells might not be used.

The material component is a wooden, silver-chased wand, value 25 gp.

Charm Mammal (Enchantment/Charm)

Range: 120 yards
Components: V, S
Duration: Special
Casting Time: 2
Area of Effect: 1 mammal
Saving Throw: Neg.

With *charm mammal,* the wizard can charm a single real-world animal with up to twice the caster's own HD. The spell can also be used to charm a human or demihuman, as the first level spell *charm person.* The chance of breaking the spell depends on the mammal's hit dice, as indicated below.

Mammal HD	% chance/week of breaking spell
up to 2	5%
up to 3+2	10%
up to 4+4	15%
up to 6	25%
up to 7+2	35%
up to 8+4	45%
up to 10	60%
up to 12	75%

over 12 90%

Leadership (Enchantment/Charm)

Range: Touch
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 hour/level
Casting Time: 2
Area of Effect: Person touched
Saving Throw: None

Leadership is akin to the alteration spell *strength.* It adds temporary ability points to the target's Charisma score, dependent on class. Priests gain 1d8 points of Charisma, rogues and warriors gain 1d6, and wizards gain 1d4. Creatures without a Charisma score have their Reaction Adjustment improved by +1.

The material component is a lock of hair from any of the nymphs -- nymph, dryad, sylph, or nereid.

Level Three

Charm Animal (Enchantment/Charm)

Range: 180 yards
Components: V, S
Duration: Special
Casting Time: 3
Area of Effect: 1 animal
Saving Throw: Neg.

Charm animal is a more potent form of *charm mammal* that allows the caster to charm all natural animals. Reptiles, amphibians, fish, and other animals can be charmed, including mammals and persons, as defined under *charm person.* If animals other than mammals are charmed, the spell affects 2 HD per level of the caster. Any hit dice of mammals may be charmed, as long as only a single mammal is targeted.

The duration of the spell depends on the subject. If the spell is used to charm a person, then the duration depends on the creature's Intelligence, as with *charm person.* If the spell is used to charm an animal (including mammal), then the table under *charm mammal* is used to determine the weekly chance that the creature resists the spell (the chances are the same as for *charm monster*).

Forget Spells (Enchantment/Charm)

Range: 10 yards/level
Components: V, S, M
Duration: Special
Casting Time: 3
Area of Effect: 1 spellcaster
Saving Throw: Neg.
Forget spells has no effect on non-spellcasters, but it can cause severe distress to those who rely on magic. The target forgets which spells he has prayed for or memorized. Remembering which spells are available requires 1d4 rounds each, and the spells return to memory in order of level, starting with the lowest. All spells of the same level have an equal chance of being remembered first, so a target cannot try to remember "an attack spell" before a miscellaneous spell. Even if a comrade tells the target which spells are available, or the target reads the spells from a list, the words mean nothing until he remembers the spell on his own.

The material component is a set of at least three keys of any kind.

Rebellious Weapon (Enchantment)

Range: 10 yards/level
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 2d4 rounds
Casting Time: 3
Area of Effect: 1 weapon/4 caster levels
Saving Throw: Neg.
This spell causes one or more creatures' hand-held weapons under 10 pounds to fly into the air and attack their owner. All weapons attack as a 3rd level warrior (THAC0 18) once per round for normal damage, plus magic bonuses, if any.

Someone attempting to retrieve the weapon must make both a Strength check and a Dexterity check. If the Dexterity check fails, the creature is automatically hit by the weapon. If the Strength check fails, the creature grabs the weapon but cannot hold on; the weapon loses one attack.

If characters or monsters attack the weapons in an attempt to destroy them, consider all wooden weapons to have an AC of 4, metal weapons have AC 2. Each non-magical weapon can take damage equal to twice its weight in hp before being destroyed. Magic weapons should be unharmed by most attacks, but might be forced to save vs. blows if the attacker has ogre strength (18/00) or greater.

The material component is a fang from any snake or dragon.

Semi-Magic (Enchantment/Charm)

Range: 10 yards
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 3 rounds/level
Casting Time: 1 round
Area of Effect: 1 or more weapons
Saving Throw: None

Semi-magic allows a weapon to strike creatures that can only by harmed by magic weapons, although no bonus to attack or damage rolls is bestowed on the weapon. The spell only bestows the equivalent of a +1 for purposes of which creatures can be hit, so that an elemental (which requires a +2 weapon to attack) can not be struck.

If missile weapons are targeted by the spell, one missile for every level of the caster over four is enchanted. Thus, a 9th level caster can affect five arrows or sling bullets.

The material component is a fine or exceptional quality dagger, dirk, or knife.

Torpor (Enchantment/Charm)

Range: 60 yards
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 turn + 2 rounds/level
Casting Time: 3
Area of Effect: 30' radius
Saving Throw: None
Torpor causes all cold-blooded creatures in the area of effect to become dormant, lying still unless attacked. If attacked, the attackers gain one free round of attacks, then the creatures fight normally. Creatures with more than 4 HD or Int Very (13) or better are not affected. No more than a total 2 HD/level of the caster may be affected.

The material component is a simple wooden flute with exactly seven stops.

Level Four

Charm Trigger (Enchantment/Charm)

Range: Touch
Components: V, S
Duration: Special
Casting Time: 4
Area of Effect: 1 item
Saving Throw: Neg.

Charm trigger prepares an item for a contingency, much like *magic mouth* in which creatures or conditions trigger it. When the intended victim touches the item, however, it is *charmed* by the caster unless it make a saving throw vs. spells. The trigger lasts up to one day/level or until triggered. The *charm person* effect lasts the full normal duration according to the target's Intelligence. The caster knows when the spell takes effect if he is on the same plane at the time. Otherwise, he knows as soon as he returns to that plane.

Only one *charm trigger* can be set for any one creature, although any number can be set for different creatures (one can be set for an orc, one for a one-eyed goblin with leather armor, and one for a female halfling with a certain holy symbol, for example).

Coma (Enchantment/Charm)

Range: 60 yards
Components: V, S, M
Duration: Special
Casting Time: 4
Area of Effect: 1 creature
Saving Throw: Neg.

This insidious spell has no immediate effect. When the target next goes to sleep, however, it does not awaken. The coma can be lifted by the first-level spell *awaken, limited wish, wish,* or by the priest spell *heal.*

The material component is a slice of pomegranate.

Enchanted Armor (Enchantment/Charm)

Range: Touch
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 5 rounds/level
Casting Time: 1 turn
Area of Effect: 1 suit of armor
Saving Throw: None

This enchantment allows a suit of non-magical armor or a shield to act as a +1 magic item for the spell's duration. It can also increase the protective value of a +1 or +2 armor or shield by +1. Even normal clothing can be magicked to provide +1 protection. The armor is treated as magic for purposes of compatibility with rings, cloaks, etc. and might not function if other items are worn.

The material component is a link from a suit of chain mail.

Hunger (Enchantment/Charm)

Range: 40 yards + 10 yards/level
Components: V, S, M
Duration: Special
Casting Time: 4
Area of Effect: 30' radius circle
Saving Throw: Special
Any creature targeted by hunger is immediately overwhelmed by a desire to eat. Characters tear into backpacks for rations, horses wander in search of good grass, unintelligent monsters may turn on their comrades, lizard men may fall on dead bodies, etc.

No saving throw is allowed for one round, then each creature is allowed a saving throw each round to see if its hunger is sated. Once a creature saves, the spell is broken for that particular creature.

The material component is a piece of candy.

Level Five

Animate Carpet (Enchantment/Charm)

Range: 10 yards
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 turn/level
Casting Time: 5
Area of Effect: 1 carpet
Saving Throw: None

Any rug, carpet, tapestry, blanket, or other rectangular piece of cloth can be affected by this spell, as long as it approximates the standard size (6' x 9'). Excess material is not magicked to become rigid and support weight; slightly smaller (5' x 8') pieces of cloth or canvas are enlarged. The carpet supports up to 50 pounds per caster level in living or unliving material and has a maximum speed in the air of 24.

At the time of casting, the caster can also choose to create a *floating carpet* which travels over water as a raft and can carry double the listed weight, or a *swimming carpet* which travels underwater at half normal speed.

The material components are a spool of thread and a feather.

Level Six

Command Word (Enchantment/Charm)

Range: Touch
Components: V, S, M
Duration: Permanent
Casting Time: 6
Area of Effect: One item
Saving Throw: None

When a character finds, purchases, or otherwise acquires a magic item, learning the command word is often necessary to use the item. Finding the command word might involve a physical search, an additional fee, or divination magic. Prudent characters change the command word most often to keep prior owners or strangers from being able to use the item. Sometimes the new owner wishes to use a command word that is easier to remember or pronounce or has special

meaning in the character's faith, clan, or society.

Command word allows the caster to change the command word of an item that relies on one. If the previous command word is known, the change is automatic. If it is not known, the spell has a 25% chance of failing, causing the command word to change to a random word or phrase that must be discovered anew. If this spell is used to change the command word of an item in another's possession, the creature holding the item gains a saving throw to resist the spell's effects.

The material component is a carefully prepared piece of parchment or paper with no less than 2,000 words, alphabetically listed, and all unknown to the caster.

Tenser's Barge (Enchantment)

Range: 30 yards
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 hour/level
Casting Time: 6
Area of Effect: One item
Saving Throw: None

Tenser's Barge enables the caster to provide motive force for a small transportation device. It can be a raft, sled, cart, wagon, chariot, etc., as long as the device is not longer than 12' long or more than 6' high. The device obeys spoken commands from the caster, including "faster/slower", "forward/backward", "left/right", "start/stop". The caster can command the device as long as he is within 30 feet.

Movement rate is a maximum of 6, and carrying capacity is normal for the device enchanted. Other factors, including movement over obstacles and stability are not improved by the enchantment.

The material component is a bone from a common draft animal, such as a horse or ox.

Level Seven

Enchanted Tools (Enchantment/Charm)

Range: Touch
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 7 days
Casting Time: 1 turn
Area of Effect: 1 set of tools
Saving Throw: None

The layman's variation of *enchanted weapon* is important in delicate crafts and dangerous works. A single tool or a set of tools can be enchanted to provide a bonus of +1 to proficiency checks or +5 percent chance of success. The bonus applies to any user, not just a single character. A thief's lockpicks, a blacksmith's hammers and anvil, or a weaver's loom can be enchanted to help aid the tradesman in his craft.

The material component is a tiny gold hammer and anvil, worth 250 gp.

by David L. Pulver

Cover art by Alan Rabinowitz

If the radiance of a thousand suns would burst at once into the sky, that would be the splendor of the mighty one. I am become death, the shatterer of worlds.
-- Bhagavad-Gita, as quoted by Dr. Robert Oppenheimer upon witnessing Gadget, the first atom bomb, in 1945

The genesis of ***Technomancer*** was "Soulburner," a scenario that appeared in ***GURPS Time Travel Adventures*** (1992). "Soulburner" was set in an alternative Earth in which the first test detonation of the first atomic bomb in New Mexico caused a fundamental change in basic reality: magic worked. "Soulburner" sketched the outlines of the technomagical civilization that evolved from the 1950s to the present.

"Soulburner's" vision of fox girls with walkmages, magical defense contractors, Dupont Kevlar flying carpets, necronium bombs and undead snuff films seemed to hit a nerve, and over the years it remained one of the adventures that people meeting me at conventions liked to mention favorably. So, naturally, I thought of doing a sequel . . . an entire worldbook in that setting.

Do not meddle in the affairs of wizards for they are soggy and hard to light.
-- P.E.I. Bonewits, *Real Magic*

Technomancer is the old sf writer's game of alternate history. Change one thing, then follow the rules and see what happens. In this setting, the "rules" were ***GURPS Magic.*** Unlike many other roleplaying settings that mix magic and technology, I postulated magic would not remain an arcane force outside of the mainstream, but would rather be embraced by it. By treating magic as a new branch of physics, I may have lost some of the mystery, but I have always felt that this is an element that some game designers place too much attention on. In many real-world occult systems, magic follows well defined (if fictional) laws -- so why not make it that way in a game? In this particular respect, the mechanistic systems in ***GURPS Magic*** worked better than something like ***GURPS Voodoo*** would have, much as I admire that system.

Another issue I spent a lot of time on was the chronology. When I'm doing historicals, I tend to over-research, and get obsessive about details and interconnections. This is especially true with alternative history; many of the incidents in the timeline actually happened, but just in a different way. I can't really help it -- I went to graduate school to study military and medieval history before deciding to become a game designer. I tried to match technomagical progress with actual scientific discoveries (especially in particle physics and nuclear energy). Many of the unusual events are also parallels of real life occurrences, such as the fate of John Wayne . . . in both realities, he may have died fighting nuclear-spawned demons. Its just that in

Technomancer, things are a lot more literal.

Technomancer Out-Takes

For once, I didn't end up chopping large chunks out of the finished draft at the last minute -- the manuscript that saw press is the book I wanted to write. I did come up with a few ideas that never made it into the first draft, though. Most of these were frenzied gun-bunny stuff that I decided was way too self-indulgent, such as extensive ***GURPS Vehicles*** statistics for the U.S. Army, Argentina and Russia's combat vehicles. (For example, I originally intended to drop a note that the USAF in this reality would use the B-70 Valkyrie.) There was also a lengthy write-up of the Seelie, until Sean Punch convinced me that it would be better to leave them a mystery. A few bits that I did regret dropping are described below, though.

Pet Warehouses

Many humane societies now place unwanted pets in suspended animation, stacking them in rented warehouses. This provides a low maintenance, low cost solution to the problem; if anyone wants them, they can be awakened. These are very creepy places to visit. In 1994, a New Jersey "pet freezer" was the scene of a tragedy when an unknown vandal cast an area-effect Drain Mana, awakening the animals within. Stacked six deep inside the warehouse, the seething mass of 2,000 cats and dogs died in agony. Due to the no mana area, the tragedy was not sensed by local diviners. Emergency teams were late in responding, and only two animals survived. In New Jersey, pet warehouses are now required to install sensors that alert the maintainers if the animals inadvertently awaken.

Necrotech Spirit Evacuator

This "spirit vacuum" is a powerful industrial-strength vacuum cleaner whose hose and bag are lined with ectoweave. The device is intended for use against skull-spirits and similar vaporous undead. The device is used as a ranged weapon. It has SS 4, Acc 1, 1/2D --, Max 2, RoF 1. If a skull-spirit is hit and fails to Dodge, it will be sucked into the device's bag and trapped.

Elemental Propellant Slugthrowers

These weapons resemble conventional pistols, rifles and machine guns. However, they use a binary elemental fusion action. Developed by Guy Gavriel Fawkes for Colt Firearms and later copied worldwide, these weapons imprison doped fire and water elementals within an ectite combustion chamber similar to that used in elemental engine power plants. Pulling the trigger allows the elementals to partially combine, resulting in a brief but powerful steam explosion that smoothly propels the bullet.

The primary advantage of elemental propulsion slugthrower (EPS) is reduced ammunition weight and volume as bullets do not require cartridges, allowing many more rounds to be packed into a magazine. Eventually the elementals will tire out and be unable to fire other bullets, but if the weapon is unused they will recover at a rate of one shot every 10 minutes.

Elemental slugthrowers have a few minor disadvantages. First, they are somewhat expensive. Second, they do not function in no-mana areas. Third, on any "firearm breaks" or "explodes" result on the Firearm Critical Miss table (3-4 and 16-18) the containment chamber fails, releasing a pair of angry elementals with ST = dice of damage weapon inflicts, HT 12 and DX and IQ 1.

Manufacture of elemental slugthrowers requires a wizard using Create Elemental to build the elementals within the ectite chamber, which is immediately sealed, imprisoning them. Two wizards will work on a production line, one creating fire and one water elementals; the chambers are joined together when the rest of the weapon is assembled.

Colt M-66, 5.56 X 25mm

The M66 was the first production EPS to be developed. It was designed in the early 1960s as a replacement for the M-14 rifle, after the DoD rejected the earlier AR-15. A revolutionary design using spell-age light alloys and manaplastics, the M-66's 125-round magazine and full automatic fire capability gave each soldier the firepower of a squad machine gun. The weapon can fire two magazines before the elementals are exhausted, but regains the ability to fire 25 shots for every 10 minutes that the weapon is unused. The EC chamber can be recharged more rapidly by using a Lend ST spell: each point of ST transferred to the weapon counts as ten minutes of recharging. Early M-66s gained a bad reputation due to problems with barrel overheating and cracks in the ectite chamber leading to hostile elemental escape but this was fixed in the A1 version. In 1970 the design had matured into a weapon that was very popular with the troops. (Some original M-66s can still be found, especially in markets in S.E. Asia. These have Malf 16.)

S&W M-7 9X9mm

The United States Army stuck with the venerable and reliable Colt M1911 through the Vietnam war, but in the 1980s embarked on a leisurely search for a replacement. Eventually they accepted the Smith & Wesson M-7, an elemental-powered version of an Austrian handgun, with a high-capacity 30-shot magazine. The M-7 has since been adopted by many North American police departments. The weapon can fire 420 rounds (14 magazines) before the elementals are exhausted, but regains the ability to fire 42 shots for every 10 minutes that the weapon is unused. The EC chamber can be recharged more rapidly by using a Lend ST spell: each point of ST transferred to the weapon counts as ten minutes of recharging.

Weapon	Malf Type	Damage	SS	Acc	1/2D	Max	Wt	RoF	Shots	ST	Rcl	Cost	Hld	TL
Colt M-66	crit	5d	12	11	500	3,800	9	12*	125	9	-1	1,500	-6	7
S&W M-7 9X9mm	crit	2d+2	10	3	150	1,900	2.5	3~	30	9	-1	1,000	0	7

M2-A3 Westmoreland

Entering U.S. service in 1982, the M2A3 was the first Magical Infantry Fighting Vehicle (MIFV) to be adopted by the U.S. Army replacing the earlier M-113 APC. It is designed to carry a squad of infantry into combat on the magical battlefield and support them with cannon and missile fire.

The Westy has an armored tracked body and a small weapons turret. Access is provided by two top hatches and a large rear ramp. The MIFV has a crew of three (commander/gunner, driver and wizzo) and carries a squad of eight infantry soldiers.

An M2A3 is armed with two turret-mounted weapons: a Manadynamics M456 "Godsfire" shaped-charge homing fireball wand and a more mundane Hughes 25mm "Bushmaster" automatic cannon (as 25mm chaingun, 400 rounds) with a mix of H.E. and spell-piercing depleted necronium warheads.

Electronics include a radio (30 mile range, scrambled) and GPS receiver. No night vision systems are provided, as it is assumed to be incorporated into crew helmets and goggles.

The most revolutionary aspect of the M2 is its 300-kW harmonic convertor mana-engine, which frees the vehicle from dependence on fuel. This vastly simplifies the logistics of supporting a mechanized infantry advance, as proven in the Desert Saber campaign where M2 battalions were able to advance nearly non-stop to Baghdad. An advanced battery stores 7,200 kWS (2 kWH) for use by mages.

The M2 has spawned a number of variants including ambulance, anti-aircraft, electronic warfare and command vehicles. Two of the most important of the many M2 variants are described below.

Cost: $460,000. Loaded Weight: 22 tons. Size Modifier: +4. Health: 12. PD/DR: 5/75 on front, 4/20 elsewhere. HP: Body 2,400, turret 150, tracks 750 each. Performance: Top Speed 45 mph. Acc: 3 mph/s. Dec: 20 mph/s. MR 0.25. SR: 6. End: unlimited.

M13 Gandalf

The M13 Gandalf is a Wizardly Combat Vehicle designed to provide mobility, protection and for five U.S. Army wizards in battlefield conditions. WCVs are designed to enable a circle of mages to coordinate their efforts. In the U.S. Army combat battalions one WCV is usually assigned to each tank or mechanized infantry company, with specialized all-WCV companies serving as brigade assets. WCVs are also used by wizards in Combat Engineering, Infowar and Meterological Warfare units.

An M13 uses the M2 chassis with these modifications:

1. The 12 cramped passenger seats are replaced by five standard crew stations arranged in a rough circle around 80 cf (about 1 hex) empty space.
2. A pentagram (1 hex, power 15) is inscribed there.
3. Infantry weapons lockers are replaced with cabinets for holding elixirs, spell components and personal magic items.
4. An A/SZ-84 Crystal Ball Display is installed so as to be accessible to the wizard crew stations.
5. An IBM-Manastar mini-computer (complexity 2, high- capacity, hardened, awakened).
6. Six computer terminals and five Virtual Reality helmets.

Statistics are broadly similar to the M2A3, but it costs about $720,000.

M777 Zeus OTAS

The M777 Zeus OTAS (Ordinance Teleportation Artillery System) is the US Army's primary magical bombardment system. It was adopted by the U.S. army in 1984 and is also used by several allied nations. The Zeus uses the M2 chassis with these modifications:

1. 11 of the 12 passenger seats are removed, replaced by a 220 cf cubic feet ammunition magazine.
2. The M456 Godsfire is removed, replaced with a Sephiroth M-101 EATR (Energy-Augmented Teleportation Rod). This consists of a wand connected by a heavy cable to the vehicle's auxiliary battery pack and turbine engine. The wand is enchanted with Teleport Other-18 and Draw Power-15 spells. Army doctrine treats the system as reliable out to about 99.99 miles, but it can reach more distant places at increased energy cost. This has led the Russians to try and categorize the OTAS as both a "strategic bombardment" and "ASAT" system and demand it be counted as such in SALT negotiations.
3. The commander's crystal ball also enchanted with Seek Machine, Seek Power, Seek Fuel and Seek Metal spells.
4. The vehicle is issued an M497 camouflage net (a camouflage net enchanted with Teleport Shield).

The Zeus is crewed by four people: a commander (who also operates the sensors), a driver, a 'porter and a loader. The gunner must be a mage, but no particular spells are needed. The loader's job is to locate the correct ordnance for the gunner and ensure it is properly fused prior to its teleportation.

The 'porter will usually teleport ordnance carried within the vehicle, locating a destination point with the aid of a forward observer or space platform transmitting a real-time TV or telepathic image to the gunner (for a -2 skill penalty). Of course, it can teleport munitions to points actually in line of sight with much greater accuracy, even teleporting ordnance inside an enemy vehicle or structure, but due to the expense of the system, doctrine is to fire from miles away if possible.

A very wide variety of ordnance can be delivered by the M101 since basically anything the gunner can point the wand at can be teleported, including objects outside the vehicle. (This can include hostiles if necessary). However, Zeus units normally rely on a mix of artillery bombs carried within the vehicle, including high explosive, cluster bombs, mines and skull-spirit warheads. Unlike a conventional artillery vehicle various bomb sizes are carried to trade power for range allowing servicing of a target with anything from a 10-pound explosive charge to a 500-lb. bomb.

Statistics of the Zeus are similar to the M2A3, but usual loaded weight is closer to 24 tons, and cost about $890,000.

by Mark Slattery

Art by ArtToday

"It is the spring of 1942. The world is at war. Five world powers are struggling for supremacy. You and your opponents control the military and economical destiny of one or more of these countries. The Axis powers are Germany and Japan. Challenging their expansionism are the Allied powers of the United Kingdom, the USSR and the United States."
-- ***Axis & Allies*** game play manual

Axis & Allies is a brilliant and very strategic board game, but all games need a little change from time-to-time; Just to keep things interesting. This article presents seven new rules and four additional units to spice-up your battle-plans. All of these rules may be used separately or together if you really like your war unpredictable.

New Units

The object of war is not to die for your country but to make the other bastard die for his."
-- General G. C. Patton (1885-1945)

Artillery Batteries

Rules of Warfare

The military has used artillery in warfare since the discovery of gunpowder, from the early cast-iron cannons to the giant guns that fired hundred-pound shells during WWII. Artillery batteries are purchased for 8 IPCs during the Purchase New Units/Develop New Weapons phase and are deployed in the same way as standard land units. Artillery batteries may only move one territory per turn and may only move during the Non-Combat Movement phase. They are also subject to the same transport restrictions as antiaircraft guns. Like antiaircraft guns, there may only be one artillery battery per territory, but there may be an artillery battery and an antiaircraft gun in the same territory.

The long range of artillery batteries is represented by the unit's ability to participate in battles in adjacent land territories or sea zones. Artillery batteries may fire once into battles you initiate, in an adjacent zone or territory, hitting on a roll of a 3 or less. Any units hit by artillery fire are sill eligible to counterattack during defensive fire. Artillery batteries can not be forfeited during a battle in an adjacent territory or zone. After the artillery battery has fired in this manner, it is no longer considered to be participating in the battle. If involved in a battle in its own territory, it attacks on a 3 and defends on a 1.

An artillery battery may perform a form of Strategic Bombing Raid on industrial complexes in adjacent territories, instead of participating in a battle that turn. Roll a die for each artillery battery performing a raid -- the controller of

the industrial unit must lose IPCs equal to the sum of the dice. Use anti-aircraft gun figures to represent an artillery battery, marking them in some way to distinguish them from actual anti-aircraft gun units.

Destroyers

Destroyers were used as escorts for convoys and support for battleships during WWII and, while much smaller than battleships, they where instrumental in winning many naval battles. Destroyers are purchased for 15 IPCs during the Purchase New Units/Develop New Weapons phase and are deployed in the same manner as standard naval units. Destroyers can move two sea zones and are subject to the same movement restrictions as battleships.

Destroyers have an attack and defensive value of 3. Due to the shorter range of their weapons, destroyers can not participate in Amphibious Assaults. At the beginning of the game, a player may exchange a battleship for two destroyers; these units must be placed into the same zone as the replaced battleship. Use transport figures to represent destroyers, marking them in some way to distinguish them from actual transport units.

Resistance Cells

During WWII, patriotic citizens in occupied territories formed resistance cells to supply allied troops with information and to sabotage enemy supplies. Resistance cells are purchased for 5 IPCs during the Purchase New Units/Develop New Weapons phase and are deployed during the Place New Units phase. Resistance cells may only be placed in territories that were under your control at the beginning of the game and have been captured by enemy powers. (For example: If Germany captures India, this becomes legal territory for the UK to place a resistance cell, since the UK controlled India at the start of the game) Cells do not have to be deployed in to the same territory as an industrial complex and may not move by any means.

To represent the resistance members sabotaging equipment and relaying vital information, roll a die for each resistance cell during the Combat Movement phase. On a roll of a 1, the occupying enemy force takes must discard a unit in that territory; if the territory contains no enemy units, it is liberated and returns to its original controller at the end of the Combat phase. If a 6 is rolled, the resistance cell has been discovered and captured. Discard the cell immediately. Resistance cells may not participate in battles in any way. If a territory containing a resistance cell ever returns to its original owner's control the resistance cell is discarded. Use one of your own control markers to represent your resistance cells in enemy territories.

Sea Mines

During WWII naval units laid sea mines to block enemy routes and to protect their own naval yards from enemy attacks. To represent this you may use your transports to lay sea mines in sea zones. Sea mines are purchased for 5 IPCs during the Purchase New Units/Develop New Weapons phase and may be loaded onto a transport adjacent to one of your industrial complexes, during the Place New Units phase. A transport may carry up to two sea mines at a time.

Transports may deposit one sea mine into a friendly sea zone, one that contains no enemy units, during the Non-Combat Movement phase. Place one of your control markers on the sea zone to represent the sea mine; a sea zone may only contain one sea mine at a time. Laying sea mines takes the remainder of the transport's movement. Therefore, a transport laying sea mines may either: move one sea zone and lay one sea mine; move two sea zones and lay one sea mine; but can not move one sea zone, lay a mine and then move another sea zone.

If an enemy naval unit, including submarines, passes through or stops in a sea zone containing one of your sea mines, roll a die for each enemy unit. On a roll of 1 the enemy unit is hit and that unit is discarded; the sea mine is also discarded after all rolls have been resolved. Otherwise, the vessels evade the sea mine and may continue their movement as normal. Naval units are immune to the effects of their own and their allies' sea mines.

Table of New Units

Type of Unit	Cost	Movement	Attack	Defense
Artillery Battery	8	1	3	1
Destroyer	15	2	3	3
Resistance Cell	5	--	1	--
Sea Mine	5	--	1	--

New Rules

"To secure peace is to prepare for war."
-- Carl Von Clausewitz

Battleships

At a cost of 24 IPCs, battleships are very expensive. To compensate for this expense and to reflect the sturdiness of their design battleships, can now take two hits. When a battleship is hit for the first time it becomes severely damaged. Instead of discarding it, place the unit place it on its side. Its attack and defensive capabilities are reduced to 2 and its movement is reduced to 1. If a damaged battleship is in a friendly sea zone, one that contains no enemy naval vessels, and adjacent to one of your industrial complexes at the beginning of your turn, it may be repaired. To repair a battleship you must pay 8 IPCs during your Purchase New Units/Develop New Weapons phase; the battleship's attack, defensive and movement values are reduced to zero for the remainder of this turn. The repairs are completed during the Place New Units phase; turn the unit upright to represent this. Its attack, defensive and movement values return to normal. If a battleship is hit again while severely damaged, it is discarded.

Elite Units

During every war there are heroes, those who accomplish amazing feats for king and country. Each player may choose one of their starting units to be an elite unit; this unit should be marked in some manner to distinguish it from its comrades. Once during each battle an elite unit participates in, it may reroll one of its attack or defensive dice. If a player's elite unit is lost in battle, he may send out a new one during his next Deploy New Unit phase, for the same price a standard unit of its type.

Kamikaze Pilots

Japanese Kamikaze pilots would fly into battles with no hope of returning, deliberately crashing their aircraft into enemy vessels when their fuel was spent. To represent this, Japanese fighter planes may now move during the Combat Movement phase without allowing for a possible return to friendly territory or an aircraft carrier. Planes taking advantage of this special movement are discarded at the end of the Combat phase, whether they are hit or not.

Lost Transports

During the war, transport ships were used to carry much needed supplies and equipment to allied countries and forces abroad, and not as simple cannon fodder for naval battles. Therefore, whenever a transport not carrying another military unit is lost during a battle, the owning player's income is reduced by 1 IPC for each transport lost, during his next Collect Income phase only. This represents the loss of the supplies the ship was carrying.

Monetary Aid

Friendly countries may now loan or give IPCs to each other using the following rules. The player donating the IPCs must allocate them during the Purchase/Develop New Weapons phase; these IPCs may not be used to purchase anything else. One player on the opposing side rolls one die -- on a roll of 1, *that* player receives the IPCs instead, during their next Collect Income phase. The funds were captured in transit! How the opponents determine who gets to make the roll is entirely up to them. If the funds are not captured, the receiving player gets the IPCs during the Collect Income phase of his next turn, after which they may be spent as usual.

Paratroopers

During WWII, soldiers would parachute into enemy territory to form beachheads for advancing troops and to perform strategic strikes. To represent this, bombers may transport infantry units. Each bomber can carry one infantry unit, which may be loaded at the beginning of either the Combat Movement or the Non-Combat Movement phase. The bomber may then move, following its normal movement rules, and deposit the infantry unit into any territory it passes over. If the bomber lands in a friendly territory the infantry unit must be unloaded. Being transported by a bomber constitutes the infantry unit's entire move for this turn.

If the infantry unit is unloaded into enemy territory that is controlled but not occupied the territory is automatically captured at the end of the Combat phase. If the territory is occupied, the unit must fight the enemy units as normal. Both of these maneuvers may only be performed during the Combat Movement phase. If an anti-aircraft gun hits the bomber, the infantry unit aboard is also lost. A bomber can not attack or perform a Strategic Bombing Raid during the same turn it transports an infantry unit.

Warehouses

Units no longer have to be deployed on the turn they are purchased. Instead, they may be stored in warehouses, which are considered to be within your industrial complexes. Naval vessels and anti-aircraft guns that cannot be placed, due to enemy units or an existing anti-aircraft gun present in the adjacent sea zone or territory, are automatically placed into a warehouse instead of being discarded. These units may not move or participate in battles in any way. The units may be deployed during subsequent Deploy Units phases as normal, from any eligible industrial complex. If an industrial complex is targeted by a Strategic Bombing Raid a stored unit must be discarded (owner's choice) for each 5 or 6 rolled on the raid dice.

by Elizabeth McCoy, editor

Cover Design by Jack Elmy

"He's ever so nice, that Mr. March." The cleaner leaned on her mop, sloshing the soapy water round in the bucket. Her blonde hair hung in a loose bell round her face, and her flowered nylon dress flapped round her legs in the breeze as the door shut.

"I don't know." The young man with the pile of letters stacked in his arms chuckled, and kept on stacking them into mail slots. "Johnson, Jones, Jother . . . no, he looks nice enough, but have you seen the way he acts at meetings?"

"And how likely am I to get invited to meetings?" the cleaner snorted.

Outside, the policemen were climbing into their car. The street lights glittered in the growing dusk of evening. One policeman snapped at his colleague as he slammed the car door. None of them looked happy.

"Okay, okay." The mail-sorter shrugged. "Matthews, Merton, I think that's Mittons -- did they spot anything?"

The cleaner's voice didn't change tone. "I don't think so. They just spent a while poking around, requisitioned some of the sets of files that dealt with the arson cases, and said they'd be back tomorrow."

There was a clattering sound from the stairs, and the cleaner lifted her mop out of the bucket and began scrubbing at the floor as a young woman in a crisp business suit turned the corner of the landing, and came running down the last flight. She nodded absently to the cleaner and the mail-sorter as she walked past them, and the door clicked shut as she stepped out onto the street.

"Is that the last?" the mail-sorter asked.

The cleaner nodded. "It'll be two hours now before the night-watchman comes to sign us out."

"Good." He slid the last few letters into their slots. "All right, you take the upper room, I'll take the lower room, and we'll see if we can work out what the Tether-potential here is that Bridget was going on about. We've got all night to work, and the Game won't be back till morning . . ."

-- *Vignette by Genevieve Cogman*

"We want a book of Tethers."

That's how the ***Liber Castellorum*** started. I admit, my first reaction was, "A whole book? Isn't that overkill?" But I got to work, preparing an outline that would satisfy people. First, we needed the *rules* of Tethers -- that was clear enough, since there were a lot of questions raised in the short section on them, in the main ***In Nomine*** book. As the book was pulled into shape, though, I became a convert. Even the sample Tethers, which I'd previously been a bit dubious about

-- for couldn't a GM just come up with his or her own? -- became valuable, since they weren't just places, they were examples of how to interpret a Superior's Word and personality.

Unusual Tethers, such as Michael's *The Burning Grounds* (***Liber Castellorum***, p. 86), were the most helpful -- while a Major Tether was obvious, the Unusual ones often cast light on the *edges* of a Word. The Burning Grounds didn't have much to do with actual *combat,* but the humans whose deaths created it never yielded or broke.

It wasn't always easy to keep a dozen authors consistent. For instance, I got Jo Hart to give me a Tether for the "Castella Mundi" chapter (and somehow she got left off the Table of Contents list!), and then made her rewrite it -- twice, which she put up with, with good grace. Here's one of the original versions . . .

Major Tether

Liber Castellorum Designer's Notes

Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Atlanta, GA

Originally attached to the U.S. Public Health Service, this laboratory in downtown Atlanta struck a natural resonance with Hell in 1932, when researchers based there signed the first releases for what was to become known as the Tuskegee study. This research marked a shameful milestone in the history of human experimentation, and involved doctors deliberately lying to patients and withholding treatments which were known to relieve syphilis, to better study the effects of the disease.

After stabilizing the Tether, Vapula professed his personal approval of its ambiance, and has taken close interest in the studies and methods pioneered within. Generations of researchers have felt an uncomfortable change in the emotional atmosphere when one *particular* professor enters the lab, despite never exchanging more than a couple of words with him.

Erg, the Shedite Seneschal, constantly strives to insert Technology's infernal influence into the mundane functions of the CDC. This major Tether is also responsible for facilitating the provision of human test-subjects to properly authorized demons worldwide.

***

As the material was written, it became clear that a single page was too short for the sample Tethers. I expanded this to 750 words as the ideal, and blessed anyone who came in under that. This did, however, eat pages, which were primarily stolen from the Adventure Seeds chapter. So, partly to trim down there (and partly because it fit better in the Castella Mundi chapter), James Cambias' evocative House of the Morning Star was moved (to p. 113), and lost a paragraph of adventure seeds . . .

(For those who don't know, the House of the Morning Star is a Tether -- to Lucifer directly. Within it, is a woman who . . . loves him. But no one knows she's there, not even the Tether's Seneschal, a Habbalite named Ramilo, who has been forbidden to ever enter the building that is a part of him.)

There are several ways a group of angels or demons could learn about the house.

** They might come across a reference to the old legend in a tour guide or book of folklore, and decide to follow it up; alternatively a Superior might order them to investigate the matter. Given that success is likely to be more dangerous*

than failure, this simple mission can easily become very complicated.

** Celestials in New Orleans might come across Ramilo and his "Satanist" servants in the course of some other operation. They're obviously guarding something pretty important, but what is it?*

** A group of Infernals might be drafted for emergency service by Ramilo, especially if a powerful bunch of angels are in town and are getting too close. Ramilo won't want to tell them what it is they're guarding, only that it's important to someone very powerful.*

** If another Prince is getting close to learning about the house, Lucifer might take some unusual steps to preserve his secret. He might even approach some Outcasts or Renegades with an offer: stop the Infernal agents and gain a really powerful ally. Of course, they don't call him the Father of Lies for nothing.*

***

Alain Dawson (now Managing Editor) informed me that they'd like to use more "pull-quotes," such as debuted in ***The Final Trumpet***. I suggested "letters" to or from various Seneschals and solicited some from the various authors. I think the one for Jordi is most entertaining, on p. 82. (When I saw these later, I was vastly impressed by what Alain did. I'd been thinking "suitable borders" but she made some really neat designs.) Genevieve Cogman was especially helpful with providing entertaining letters. Of course, we gathered enough that not all of them could be used . . .

For Jean's Tethers

Files on testing of 01-5777-TH3 attached. Please read and comment; Ithuriel believes we may have exceeded our safety margin on coolant front. Ithuriel also notes that we had three attempts by hypothesized Vapulans to access our server. Therefore request highest priority of security. Note that War requisitioned newest taser design for defense during recent attempt by Servitors of Fleurity on town water supply. Weapons testing notes should be included in next report. Please clarify last report of yours on discovery of empty box bearing Makatiel sigil.
-- *Hadad@Lab16634*

For Yves' Tethers

. . . yes, I would be delighted to get my hands on the sixteenth century Olaus Wormius translation. Thank you for looking out for it. I enclose the latest microfiches of children's fiction, and will be glad to supply whatever you think will be useful for your library. How are you doing with that policeman you mentioned? It has struck me that somebody with the destiny you saw is quite likely to have demonic interference -- especially considering the tenement fire you talked about -- so please don't hesitate to call in help if you need it. A last note; Sithriel has Fallen to Kronos. Grieve for her, and make sure that any of your operations she knew about are changed or guarded.
In faith and hope -- Besodaiah, at the Bodleian

For Andrealphus' Tethers

. . . the bearer of this letter has been trained, and should be ready to serve you in any way you want. Let me know how she behaves. Otherwise, I've been told there are a couple of Mercurians of Creation coming your way as part of a traveling sculpture exhibition -- lecturers or whatever, both male vessels. If you could get hold of them or corrupt them, I'm sure our Master would be pleased. Oh, and let me know if that preacher you complained about is still making trouble. I may be able to pull a string or two with one of the people funding him.
Till we touch again -- Berothai, Seneschal of Esseintes

For Kronos' Tethers

Yes, I have seen that the senator's wife is due to come in shortly for an eye operation -- we'll see to it that she comes out again adjusted as you've requested. If in return you can swing the medical funding for the area, it'll allow us to

expand our range. We've been considering linking up with a couple of Servitors of Beleth who approached us, to allow for more effect on the patients -- have you any comment on this as a strategy? Oh, and I've directed an Impudite of Belial your way, one Semiramis; she's interested in something largescale, and I remembered what you were saying about that annoying local charity. Let me know how it goes.
Watching -- Mibzar, at the Hospital

***

The table of contents was easy (though Jo Hart somehow slipped through a crack, drat it), but the index was a royal pain. Armed with the resources of the World Wide Web, I dug up the country or state of each listed Tether -- whether that data was in the Tether-description or not -- and put an index-entry in for that country or state, so that GMs could find all the listed Tethers for an area easily. Need to know how many Tethers are in London? Look in the index, under England. How many in California? It's in the index, under C. This is where the Nutshell gets many of its playtest credits for, as I talked online with friends, augmenting my braindead geographical knowledge. (And while writing this article, I discovered non-harmful errata in the index, at Jean's entry -- hurrah for the errata coordinator!)

Once everything is done, I sat back and pant, thinking that the whole process was kind of exhilarating. When I held my "first-born" in my hands, a few weeks later, I was even more giddy -- the cover looks great, the interior art is overall lovely. Oh, yeah, there's text in there -- though by that time, I could have recited half of it by memory.

Maybe I'll do it again sometime . . .

by Glen Barnett

Art by Marc Sherman and Keith Johnson

A Handcrafted Conspiracy, Part I

Players of card games have always had great ideas for cards. Quite a few have gone the next step and made them. Ever since the original ***Illuminati*** card game came out way back in 1982, people have been snorting the paper megabucks all over the table and making up their own cards. Then ***Deluxe Illuminati*** came to the party with three blank group cards and a blank Illuminati (and megabucks that wouldn't snort everywhere -- some people have no sense of tradition). ***INWO*** makes it much easier by having packs of blank cards (plot and group backs) available. Thousands of homemade cards can be found on the Internet. Almost everyone has at least one good card they have thought about and perhaps made, and some people have come up with several cards on a single theme -- their own mini-expansion.

This article describes how to design ***INWO*** cards you and your friends will want to play with, how to make ***INWO*** and ***Deluxe Illuminati*** cards look reasonably attractive, and finally, suggests ways to introduce your own cards into ***INWO*** games.

What Makes a Good Card, Anyway?

The perfect homemade card would have a funny spin on a real-world concept, and a special ability that simultaneously plays well, is balanced compared to other cards in the game, yet relates thematically to the card's concept.

A card ought to have an interesting subject -- and for ***INWO***, that's something strange, topical or funny. Coming up with the subject is often the starting point for a card. One great source for ideas is the Daily Illuminator's Illuminated Site of the Week. On February 26, 1999, it featured the Institute of Noetic Sciences. They say of themselves: "We are a nonprofit membership organization that both conducts and sponsors research into the workings and powers of the mind, including perceptions, beliefs, attention, intention, and intuition. We are bold enough to inquire about phenomena that don't fit into the conventional scientific model."

They sound like great fodder for a bit of Illuminated conspiracy. If you made a card out of them, you'd make them a Group, right? Let's look at it more closely.

INWO cards come in several varieties: Groups can be Personalities, Organizations, Places or Illuminati; Plots can have

one-time or continuing effects. In a way Resources span the gap between the Groups and Plots. Groups represent individual people, places and organizations -- they "do things," Plots are generally "stuff that happens," and Resources are often objects, creatures or special places -- things you use. Something that seems like a Resource may be better as a Plot, or a Plot could be reworked into a Group . . . O.J.'s gloves, for example, could become a Resource ("O.J.'s Gloves"), or they could be turned into a Plot; that gives you a lot more flexibility with how much they cost to play. Similarly a card based on the Institute of Noetic Sciences could be a Group, but it could also lead to a Plot -- perhaps one called "Ultimate Human Potential," or it could be a Resource -- a book, for example, or perhaps a device of some kind.

A Handcrafted Conspiracy, Part I

"Bigger than Ben Hur's Mom's Underpants"

Choosing a card's name and what category it fits into are only the start. Writing the card's text can be trickier than it looks. A card needs to be short and clear. A long, rambling description of five different things the card does would need a card bigger than Ben Hur's Mom's underpants. If you want everyone to appreciate your brilliant card and remember what it does while they play with it, make sure they can read it in a few seconds, not minutes. Pick one essential thing about what your card represents and do that.

Make sure your card text makes sense. You might know what you want a card to do but other people can't read your mind, so it's important to spell it out. Use short sentences where possible. Good grammar and spelling help avoid confusion. It's good to have a friend who plays ***INWO*** look over your card and see if it makes sense to them. If you have to explain it, it needs rewriting.

Try to anticipate what can happen in play. For example, if you have a Resource that makes a linked Group immune to attacks to destroy, does that include Assassinations and Disasters? What about other Instant attacks? Consider the implications for the rest of the game when you design your card.

Make your card balanced relative to other cards in the game, and make sure its cost is reasonable. Super-powerful cards are not actually fun. Any decent system for getting homemade cards into play will cull game-wreckers at the outset, but there's always a temptation to try to beat the system. There are a few milestone cards you can compare with your card for balance. If you give a group Power above three, ask yourself if your group is really more powerful than France. You can use Meteor Strike for Disasters, and Sniper for Assassinations. Remember that ***INWO*** is a game of subtlety and trickery, and that brute force is a less satisfying way to win. Your friends will appreciate a clever trick more than a fast stomping.

On the other hand, balanced doesn't mean weak. More powerful abilities are less of a problem if they affect everyone or are easily removed. Imagine "The Magic Goes Away" (a red New World Order card which disables Magic Resources, reduces the power of Magic Groups, and removes Automatic Takeovers) as a Plot that only affected one person! It would need to have a very large cost, but as a New World Order it is free. By comparison, "Fickle Finger of Fate" removes Automatic Takeovers from one victim, but it costs a valuable Illuminati action, gives its victim +10 for an attack in compensation, and is restricted -- it can't be used in a two-player game. If you do make something nasty into a New World Order that you'll be playing yourself, you just have to design your deck around not being too badly hurt by it, just as people who play "The Magic Goes Away" avoid having Magic Groups and Resources, and find ways to make up for the loss of their Automatic Takeover.

As much as possible, there should be a thematic connection between the card concept and the ability. The Recycling Centres card from the Assassins expansion, with its ability to "recycle" discards is a case in point. Some years ago I designed a card called "Jesuits," concentrating on one thing associated with the Jesuits -- casuistry. Attempting to implement that lead to an ability to temporarily reverse up to two alignments on a Personality. See Sam Kington's "Evil Jesuits for a Better Tomorrow" on the homebrew cards site (http://www.illuminated.co.uk/inwo) for an even

better version of this kind of ability.

Notice how the various basic mechanics in ***INWO*** -- alignment and attribute changes, card draws, exposure, fiddling with rivals' hands or decks, spying, and so on -- relate to the corresponding real life concepts. For example, making others forget things is variously implemented as removal of tokens ('Frop Farm), loss of an alignment (Drug Companies), and hiding of exposed plots (Fast Food Chains).

When there's a good connection between the thing the card represents and the way the card works in terms of game mechanics, the card becomes much more interesting. It is not so easy to explain how to do this well, but you know it when you see it. I would heartily recommend many cards from the homebrew site on this score. Here's a few you might like to take a look at:
Scott McNair's "Dyslexia Cannot Remove the Terror of the Dogs!" has a neat game mechanic representing dyslexia; David Schwartz' "James Cameron", an epic which tells us just what can happen when a film is too big for its plot; Robert Dubisch's "April Fools Day" is a time when hoaxes abound; and lastly there's Carter Cliff's "Shibboleth" which shows how tricky things can become if you're not "one of us".

Your card ability should be novel. The "Gives +4 on any attack to control Violent groups"-style ability has been done to death. Do something different! Card abilities that depend on die rolls are a temptation best avoided. It works okay on Bill Clinton, but generally random abilities make for dull cards. In any case, with the limited size of ***INWO*** decks, putting cards in your deck that only work part of the time can hurt you more than it helps.

The official cards implement a great variety of card abilities, and yet there are hundreds of different possible game mechanics they don't cover. Sometimes finding an ability that is both new and balanced is hard. If you can't come up with an entirely new mechanic, try a twist on an old one. For example, while there are cards that increase the maximum size of your plot hand, I don't think I've seen a card that reduced it! If it reduced the maximum size of a rival's plot hand by one, that would be a relatively weakish plot, depending on how easy it was to remove. If it reduced the hand size *to* one, that would be nasty enough to work as a Zap. How would it be as a New World Order? I think it would work very nicely for an endgame coup-de-grace!

If you're going to make a card of a specific type, make it fit the pattern for that kind of card -- it helps to have a couple handy. Zaps have continuous single-player effects with fixed ways to remove them, New World Orders have no cost to play, Disasters give a roll to devastate and a margin of victory for destruction, and so on.

New World Order Cards

New World Order cards must also have a color. There's no trick to choosing the color of a New World Order -- find a card that does something similar to, or opposite to your card, and make yours the same color -- there are really no other requirements. If two New World Order cards shouldn't both be in effect at the same time, they should be the same color.

Here is a brief list of the various major themes that current New World Order cards cover:

- *Red New World Orders* affect attack conditions -- they make attacks harder, easier or more worthwhile. They mainly affect the Criminal, Violent, Liberal, and Peaceful alignments. They also affect the Magic attribute and Resource cards.
- *Yellow New World Orders* affect rules governing Corporate groups. They mainly affect the Conservative, Straight, Corporate, Government and Fanatic alignments, and the Church and Nation attributes.
- *Blue New World Orders* change the effects of alignments on attacks. They affect Goals. They mainly affect Corporate aligned groups, Places, and the Green, Bank, Coastal, and Communist attributes.

There are some relationships between those themes as well.

A NWO card that gave two automatic takeovers per turn would be Red, because The Magic Goes Away is Red, and affects automatic takeovers. If you make a batch of New World Order cards, the other thing you should do is try to balance the numbers of each color.

Resources

How do I decide if something should be a gadget? I ask myself "Can Deasil Engine make it run backwards and thus destroy it?" If the Resource is a clock, say, then clearly the answer is "yes." If it is a cauldron, you'd have to say it was highly unlikely at best, unless it was an electronic cauldron! It is a pretty simple criterion to apply. Things which are vaguely sort of gadgety, but which fail this test (possibly a cauldron fits here) should usually be artifacts. In fact an artifact is pretty much anything which is a product of artifice -- something that's "made," though the ***INWO*** meaning seems a little more restricted than this. The Magic and Unique Resource attributes are easier -- you can probably figure those out for yourself.

Consider how your card would work in a One Big Deck (OBD) or SubGenius game. OBD games are one of the best ways to introduce homemade cards into play, especially a set of cards with a theme. If everyone has a chance to use a card, not only will it be fairer, but your friends can more readily help you work the bugs out of the card text.

Lastly, take a look at the Card of the Week Contest Guidelines (http://www.pharmacy.umab.edu/~terram/staff/cohen/contest.html). These are the guidelines for cards posted to the inwo-cards mailing list (a mailing list for discussing homemade card ideas -- see the Steve Jackson Games ***INWO*** web pages for information on subscribing). Cards posted to the list that follow the guidelines are considered for the Card of the Week award. You may find the guidelines helpful in writing your own cards.

A Little of This, A Little of That . . .

Let's see some of these ideas in action. I recently designed a Plot card based on Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI). MRI gives an idea of "spying" on people -- perhaps looking at a rival's group deck. But that can be done already with X-Ray Specs and The Prescriptures -- both Resource cards. What if MRI also scrambled as it examined you? Now we have a more interesting possibility. So the MRI card lets you rearrange the cards you examine. MRI is a Plot, so it should generally be weaker than a similar Resource. X-Ray Specs lets you examine the top three cards from any deck, either Plot or Group (more if it is linked to a Weird Science group), at the cost of the action of the linked group. So MRI only lets you examine the top two cards, and only of a rival's Group deck; but it lets you reorder the two cards before you replace them, at the cost of a Science Action. This seems perhaps a little weak, so that ability needs to be improved just a little more -- if it finds a Resource, MRI makes it public knowledge, by turning it face up. So, with the addition of a picture and a funny bit of color text, we have:

Type: Plot
Name: MRI
Graphic: A swirly multicolored picture of a person's body. Various Eye-in-the-Pyramids, alien visages, bits of suspect technology, barcodes and so forth can be discerned.
Quote: It used to be called NMR but they changed it. Try saying "I'm supposed to have an NMR" next time you're in hospital, and you'll see why . . .
Card Text: Choose one rival. You may look at the top two cards of their Group deck, and replace them in any order. If the top returned card is a Resource, you may replace it face up. You must spend an action from a Science group.
Requirements: Requires Science Action

Here's a great card by Marc Sherman -- Power Behind The Throne. This is the best implementation of the "build a new Illuminati" type of card I've seen, and illustrates well the point about having a good thematic connection between the card concept and the actual ability.

The Daily Illuminator recently had the website of the Voluntary Human Extinction Movement as its Illuminated Site of the Week. I just can't resist doing a complete card on them, so here's my take on them. Their alignments and attributes are reasonably straightforward, but the ability is the tricky part. I took their central philosophy (nobody should have more children) as my starting point. In the game, the nearest thing I could think of to children were puppets . . . and "bing!" I saw the light. I'll let the card speak for itself.

Type: Group (Organization)
Name: Voluntary Human Extinction Movement
Graphic: The VHEMT logo -- an "upside-down" earth over the top of a huge V, with "VHEMT" in a curved banner across it. However, the tip of the V (the part below the North Pole) has an eye in it ... looking "up" at the earth.
Quote: "May we live long and die out"
Card Text: While individual membership doesn't tend to run in families, enough people join the Movement to keep it viable.
The VHEMT may attack to permanently remove an outgoing control arrow from any non-Illuminati group. Roll exactly as for an Attack to Destroy or Control (your choice), with a bonus of +7 to the roll. If it succeeds, the only result is the loss of whichever unoccupied arrow the attacker chooses. Place something (such as a sticky note or small object) over the lost arrow.
Power: 1 **Resistance:** 3
Alignments: Fanatic, Liberal, Peaceful
Attributes: Green
Control Arrows: In: B Out: none

Thanks to Seth Cohen, Marc Sherman, and Sam Kington for their advice and assistance.

A Hot Time in the City

by Andrew J. Lucas

Running the Adventure

This ***Marvel Super Heroes*** adventure is best suited for beginning players and lower powered heroes, especially crime fighters and champions of the common man like Daredevil or Spider-Man. The scenario can be played with a gamemaster and a single player/hero or with a team of players each with their own character. When playing with multiple heroes it may be necessary to adjust the scenario so that the heroes don't completely overwhelm their opposition. If there are five or more heroes or the heroes are experienced (have an edge over 2) adjust the adventure to balance the odds. For each hero with an edge of 3 or more add either the Rhino (***Roster Book #0,*** pg. 47) or Electro (***Roster Book #0,*** pg. 39) these villains have worked together in the past and it is not inconceivable that Doc Ock would invite them to share in his master plan. If there are more than five heroes in any one scene, double the number of New Order and Mafia thugs in the scene to increase the challenge.

The Nefarious Plot

Doctor Octopus has broken out of jail and organized a crime syndicate called the New Order. The New Order consists of young street wise punks who are being controlled by a shadowy crime lord, whom only their leader, Johnny Payne, has met. Doc Ock has outfitted the gang with the very latest in energy weapons and is using them to finance his master plan -- the destruction of the Kingpin. Simply outfitting his gang with superior weaponry has proven inadequate to the task, so the Doc Ock plans to deal with the Kingpin by stealing a shipment of tactical missiles and simply nuking him out of the picture. Of course the heroes fall hip-deep into this mess, and what starts as a simple if violent gang war escalates into a city-wide threat.

Scene One: Block Party!

In Scene One, the heroes stumble across a jewelry heist by this new gang. During the heist the heroes are surprised by a second group of criminals who try to attack the first group. The second group are controlled by the Kingpin who is trying to discover the identity of the person running the New Order. The Kingpin's men are more traditional mob enforcers who take their job very, very seriously.

As the heroes are patrolling the city, taking in the night air or simply relaxing at home, they will hear the distinctive sound of glass breaking and an alarm sounding. If they move fast they will be able to beat the cops to the scene of the crime, they will find a gang of five teens breaking the glass display cases, stuffing expensive jewelry into sacks which they then throw into a minivan parked behind the store. The youths are obviously rushing to make a quick getaway and unless the heroes are blatantly obvious their arrival will go unnoticed. At this point the players have a couple of options, rush in to break up the burglary or let them succeed and follow the gang to their home turf.

If the players decide to break up the heist, play out the battle, emphasizing the fact that the punks are packing serious

and sophisticated firepower. During the fight the gang's blasters will melt streetlamps, concrete sidewalks and punch fist sized holes in parked cars. The players should be wondering where punks like the New Order got major league energy weapons. After the battle, any heroes with the appropriate intellect skills such as Scientific Genius, Radiology or Weapons Systems may make a Challenging Intellect test to determine the origin of these weapons. The action will fail to reveal the maker of the weapons but will reveal that they were made by a Scientific Genius (gifted in Electronics and Radiology).

If the heroes decide to let them get away and follow the gang to their hideout, let them make an Average test to discover that they are not the only ones watching the heist from the shadows. In the shelter of a nearby alley is a black sedan holding four of the Kingpin's Mafioso thugs. The quartet of enforcers have orders to stop the New Order from encroaching on their territory by any means. If the heroes go after the enforcers first, there is a chance that the New Order get away. If they go after the New Order, the enforcers will simply watch the action and report their findings to the Kingpin. If the players fail to detect the Kingpin's men and decide to follow the New Order thugs, they will be surprised as the enforcer's sedan rams into the New Order's van and a running gun battle through the streets of Manhattan ensues.

In any battle, the enforcers and New Order will see each other as their primary threat and if left to their own devices, will spray lead and energy bolts at each other with little regard for bystanders or the heroes. Only when the heroes become involved will they attack them. It's obvious that the two groups have an intense hatred for each other.

After the battle the heroes may be allowed to interrogate the New Order and the Enforcers. Vigilante groups may have difficulty accomplishing this, while official law enforcement agents like the Avengers will easily be able to take a suspect aside for a little impromptu "debriefing." Heroes with high Intimidation, Law Enforcement, Leadership or Manipulation skills should be allowed to take the initiative here, perhaps indulging in a session of "good cop, bad cop" with their hapless captives. In the course of the interrogation the following facts are revealed:

* The New Order street gang have been around for a number of years, but have always been small fish.
* Recently, the New Order has been outfitted with high tech weaponry by the new crimelord who has taken control of their gang.
* Only the leader of the gang, Johnny Payne, has met the new crimelord, who calls himself The Overlord of Crime, apparently as a direct affront to the Kingpin who rules the New York criminal underworld.
* Johnny occasionally calls the Overlord "Stretch," and he is the only one of the gang who has met the Overlord.

Heroes with police contacts can discover the following information:

* Police reports indicate that the New Order gang first started burglarizing electronic supply houses about two months ago. Before then they were a small time street gang that ran numbers for the Kingpin and occasionally extorted the residents of their turf.
* A week after that first break in, the gang appeared on the street with laser pistol-type weapons. The gang then proceeded to attack high profile-targets outside of their area. Word on the street is the Kingpin of crime sent men to bring them under control and the New Order stopped, but not before their clubhouse was burned to the ground.
* Three weeks ago, a titanium supply house and a high density battery manufacturer were hit. Two weeks ago, the New Order resurfaced, sporting high yield energy weapons and began attacking shops and buildings suspected of paying extortion money to the kingpin. Since then all hell has broken loose and the New Order and Kingpin enforcers are engaged in a bloody gang war.
* The New Order have much better weaponry, but the Kingpin's men have far more experience it's only a matter of time before the New Order surrender or are destroyed.
* Last week the New Order raided a train depot and stole a shipment of precious jewels being shipped by a local importer, Fisk's Import/Export. They also stole the month's schedule from the station master, and security has been tightened up around the station.

Discussing the situation with the Mafia enforcers reveals little:

* The Mafia enforcers have been sent by the Kingpin of crime to ferret out his new rival and "deal" with him -- permanent-like.

* The Kingpin knows his rival and isn't scared of him, but no one else in the organization does.
* One of the New Order punks is an informant for the Kingpin and he says something big is about to go down something to do with a hit they made last week.

New Order punk

Strength 4x, Agility 4d, Intellect 2c, Willpower 3d, Health 20
Typical skills:
Marksmanship, Martial arts Weapons
Equipment:
Energy blaster + 3
Energy sword + 3

Mafia thug

Strength 5d, Agility 3d, Intellect 2c, Willpower 3d, Health 30
Typical skills:
Marksmanship, Boxing, Intimidation
Equipment: Uzi + 2

Scene Two: Boxcar Blues

Johnny Payne leads the New Order gang in an attack on a military train to steal a shipment of nuclear weapons for the Overlord. In the aftermath of Scene One, the heroes should have been able to realize that the New Order have taken an interest in the New Jersey train yards. In fact, they have a complete rail schedule for the next month. They should be able to put two and two together and decide to stake out or at least patrol the New Jersey yards. If they don't get this information from Scene One or they decide not to act on it, then simply proceed to Scene Three. No blood, no foul, right? . . .

If, on the other hand, they do stake out the train yard, describe the following:

It's cold and boring and dark and cold. You wish you'd taken that cop up on his offer of a nice cup of Java down at the station, but in your profession it doesn't pay to get too chummy with the boys in blue. Just as you see the yard boss completing what had to be his millionth tour of the yard, you see something that piques your interest. Over on one of the unused rail spurs is a dark green and brown rail car, surrounded by three, no ten men in khaki parkas. You bet those are warm, warmer than the union suit you're wearing. Wait a moment! That's not green and brown, that's camouflage! You check the rail schedule again. That car's supposed to be carrying a shipment of condensed milk to Stark industries. Condensed milk your frozen superpowered butt. Just as you begin heading that way you see the headlights of four mini vans turn the corner into the yard. Here we go again!

Four vans arrive carrying five New Order thugs in each. That's 20 people, folks. Two for each soldier (use the stats from ***Roster Book #0,*** pg. 54) guarding the train. Each of the thugs is seriously kitted out for this raid with one energy blaster and energy sword each. In addition one gangster in each van (4 total) has an energy cannon (+ 5, fired every other round). Most of the gang attack the soldiers, while five bolt into the train and busy themselves preparing to move their cargo. During the fight it is obvious that one member of the gang is the leader (Johnny Payne). After issuing orders to attack the soldiers, he bolts into the rail car to oversee the preparations.

If the heroes break through the New Order punks protecting their leader, they will see that the train is filled with pallets of missiles, each holding four missiles. It is an Easy Intellect test to realize that these are nuclear warheads and that any discharge of energy weapons or powers could detonate them (opposed challenge using the intensity of energy verses the missile's fire control system: 10). During the battle a large helicopter will be heard approaching (seen if any heroes are outside the rail car). The players may presume this is the police, military or media, when in fact it is actually Doc Ock. At a dramatic moment during the battle, perhaps just as Johnny Payne surrenders or is knocked

unconscious, a quartet of metal tentacles rip apart the roof of the rail car. Two tentacles pick up the nearest pallet of missiles. One snakes around Payne's waist, lifting him to safety, while the fourth will viciously strike at any hero within the rail car.

The helicopter will then attempt to escape with it's cargo. At this point, the heroes may try to pursue or attack the helicopter. Persuade them that shooting at the craft and its load of missiles may detonate them, perhaps a critically injured soldier could gasp this out as he faints, obviously in need of immediate medical attention. If the heroes pursue, Doc Ock will try to evade them, using as many doom cards you've accumulated so far to do so. If worse come to worst, Doc Ock will fire an energy blast at the rail car, causing it to burst into flames, he will then gloat that the heroes can either capture him or watch their city go up on a radioactive cloud. Drat!

Johnny Payne, gang leader

Strength 4x, Agility 4d, Intellect 3b, Willpower 3c, Health 25
Typical skills:
Leadership, Marksmanship, Martial Arts Weapons
Equipment:
Energy blaster + 3
Energy sword + 3

If the heroes have any way of tracking the missiles, perhaps with some sort of tracing device used during the fight, or mutant senses, then proceed to Scene Four. If not, proceed to Scene Three.

Scene Three: Strange Bedfellows?

The Kingpin sets up a meeting. After the events of the past few days, especially the raid on the military train, it is understandable if the heroes are a little frustrated, perhaps even jumpy. The next evening, they will hear a burglar alarm rip through the night, much like their first meeting with the New Order a few days ago. This time however, it's different. When they arrive on the scene they will not find a robbery in progress, but a huge limousine parked outside a small retail store. The door of the limousine is open and a huge man in a white suit is standing beside it, obviously waiting for something. When the Heroes arrive he will beckon them to join him and send the chauffeur into the store to shut off the alarm. As the heroes get closer to the limousine, they will notice that the store's sign reads "Fisk's Uptown Spices." The man introduces himself as Wilson Fisk, a humble purveyor of spices and asks if he might have a moment of their time. When the players have all piled into the limousine, he will offer them refreshments, then announce the following.

"I am the chairman of a local . . . consortium of sorts. A group of businesses with similar concerns . . . an unofficial chamber of commerce for New York, if you will, with an exclusive membership to say the least. We have been approached by the madman Dr. Octavius. He demands that we pay him five million dollars by the end of the day or he will, quote, "Destroy all that is precious to us," unquote. While I myself have little in the way of influence amongst defenders of the city such as yourselves, I and my . . . associates believe it is our civic duty to stop that madman. I . . . we believe that we can help you find Octavius, though stopping him will be up to you.

If the players accept Fisk's help he will give them an experimental radiation detector which should indicate where the missiles have been taken. When the heroes turn the device on, they will see that the device is registering five separate sources of radiation. (It's never easy, is it?) If the players use the experimental Geiger counter, go to Scene Four.

If the players ask how the ransom is to be delivered or how the message from Doc Ock was sent, Fisk will produce a small tape recorder, which has been crushed somehow. An Easy test is required to get the device operating again. A Challenging test is required to notice that the device is manufactured by Triton Electronics. If the players decide to check out the Triton Electronics angle, proceed to Scene Six. Playing the tape reveals that the five million is to be delivered in the form of bearer's bonds, in a yellow suitcase, placed in the Sheep Meadow of Central Park. Fisk will refuse to pay the ransom. If the heroes decide to fake paying the ransom, go to Scene Five.

Scene Four: Release the Hounds!

The heroes' device gives them five locations where the radiation is strongest.

The first leads to the Fantastic Four headquarters, where it is discovered that the device is picking up on the famous quartets technological marvels. Foolish players that attempt to break into the FF's home will be rewarded with Amazing strength stun blasts, titanium tentacles, and a severe chastisement from a small robot that tells them to make an appointment. Prudent heroes that make an appointment will be given one next month when the Fantastic Four are scheduled to return from their visit to Atlantis.

The second leads them to Empire University's particle accelerator, where a physics class is conducting an experiment.

The third is the rail car where a very serious U.S. army brigade is conducting a thorough if futile investigation.

The fourth is an abandoned tenement house near a subway track. Here, two of the four missiles have been prepared with timed detonators (not yet activated), as well as four New Order punks. The detonators are constructed from Triton Electronics components; a Moderate challenge at this point determines the significance of this, and an Easy Research task allows the heroes to proceed to Scene Six. The heroes will learn from one of the New Order punks, eager to avoid a beating or strike a plea bargain, that one of the missiles warheads has been stripped down and is being carried on the subway by Johnny Payne to the Fisk building. He doesn't know where the final missile is.

The fifth location is a backpack worn by Johnny Payne as he carries the stripped down warhead to the Fisk Building, the seat of the Kingpin's power. Payne believes he is carrying the warhead to Wilson Fisk (whom he knows is the Kingpin, as he has been secretly working for him since the beginning) to emphasize the fact to Fisk that Octavius does have the power to back up his threats. Doc Ock has told the gang leader to take the warhead to Fisk and leave it simply to demonstrate that if he has one warhead, he surely has the other three. Payne is to call Doc Ock once he gets there, using a Triton electronics cell phone no less. Little does he know Doctor Octopus knows he is a spy for the Kingpin, and the phone is really a detonator which will initiate a 5 minute countdown in the warhead.

Doc Ock has no intention of collecting the ransom; he does intend to nuke the Fisk building and the Kingpin, though. If the players stop Payne and demonstrate that the cell phone is really a detonator, and that Doc Ock is using him as a two legged guided missile, Payne will spill the beans. He won't tell them about being a spy for the Kingpin (he knows better than that), but he will tell everything he knows about Doctor Octopus, which unfortunately doesn't include his present whereabouts, as all his meetings have been arranged by Octavius on his terms and never at the same place twice.

Scene Five: Payday!

Doctor Octopus does not believe that the Kingpin (Fisk) will pay him five million dollars. On the other hand, he won't turn it down if the fool decides to pay him, and better that the money be his than incinerated in the fireball that will soon be the Fisk building. Doc Ock has dispatched a trio of punks in a minivan to pick up the neon yellow case. They are then to report in, using the Triton Electronics cell phone he gave them. By now, the heroes should have clued into the Triton Electronics angle and researched the company. If they do this, take them to Scene Six already. If the punks are deceived/tricked/threatened into calling Octopus and reporting that they have the suitcase of bearer bonds, Doc Ock will ecstatically direct them to the old Triton Electronics warehouse in Queens. He will then giggle slightly and tell them to hurry, as they might be able to get out of the blast radius by then. Laughing maniacally, he hangs up. If the players haven't dealt with Johnny Payne on the subway yet, they should do so quickly. The punks will tell the heroes of Johnny and his backpack nuke and urge them to stop him (go to Scene Four).

Scene Six: To Arms!

Examining the bomb, or the tape recorder the Kingpin has, or the third location in Scene Four, reveals that the triggering mechanism were constructed utilizing parts manufactured by Triton Electronics. Triton Electronics has been out of business for five years now, until Doc Ock set up shop in their abandoned manufacturing plant in Queens. The building is quite warm for a deserted warehouse. Space heaters are clustered around the work benches, and it appears that only one person has been living here. There is a small assembly line producing energy weapons, and crates of loot that the New Order have recently moved her are strewn about the warehouse. There is a barrel filled with lead and a huge kiln to melt it with. During the combat, the players should notice New Order punks using the barrel for cover, or they may use it to attack the punks or Doctor Octopus. In either instance, emphasize that the barrel is incredible heavy, as if it was filled with lead. The warehouse consists of one floor and a basement/boiler room. There are three minivans and ten New Order punks inside the warehouse, unloading crates of loot into the warehouse. Doc Ock is in the basement, putting the finishing touches on the fourth and final warhead, but is inside the lead-lined boiler, unaware of the combat above.

In the basement is a huge steel boiler used to heat the pipes and the air of the warehouse, though for some reason the boiler is not being used. Doc Ock has coated the inside of the boiler with lead to stop the military from detecting his stockpile of nukes before he is ready, but has only moved one of the warheads here so far. The players will notice that the door of the boiler has lead drippings around it. Opening the boiler reveals the final warhead, with Doc Ock leaning over it. As Doc Ock turns, the heroes can see a small electronic device strapped to his chest. Doc Ock tells the heroes that the bio-monitor will automatically detonate the warhead if he is killed, or even loses consciousness. Doc Ock then picks up his nuclear bomb, saying, "You can't stop me, so you fools better just move out of my way!" The heroes aren't going to take that, are they?

Dr. Octopus' main motivation here, as with all super-villains, is to run away to live to fight another day. If backed into a corner, he will leave the warhead behind to cover his escape. Perhaps he could start a fire or otherwise put the warhead in danger of detonation, forcing the heroes to deal with that crisis while he makes his getaway. If the heroes just let him walk away with the warhead . . . make sure it comes back to haunt them, and soon.

Epilogue

If the heroes are not radioactive ashes drifting across the city by this time, they should be given their just rewards. In addition to the + 1 response for completing the adventure, give them one street contact within the underworld. This may be a mob enforcer or New Order punk that they consistently shake down for information or a sympathetic DA or street cop in the know. If somehow they find out that the Kingpin is really Wilson Fisk, make them regret it, as he takes an interest in the heroes. And remember that Doc Ock rarely stays in prison for long and now he knows the heroes, and he'll have plenty of time to plan for the next reunion. "You've done a good job, and Doc Ock knows it as well as you do. Sleep tight, heroes."

Dr. Octopus is a trademark of Marvel Characters, Inc.

Contact: The Hlanssai

by Phil Masters

Art by andi jones

Editor's Note: A large part of this article originally appeared in issue 22 of *The Journal of the Travellers' Aid Society*, in 1985. The ***GURPS*** stats, of course, are new.)

The Hlanssai are a humanoid minor race, originating in the Vargr Extents but now to be encountered throughout much of the Imperium and other areas. They are widely admired for their artistic talents, grace, and dexterity, but many members of other races distrust the Hlanssai because of their justified reputation for emotional instability. Nonetheless, sheer wanderlust and versatility has carried the species far.

Background

The Hlanssai evolved on Vrirhlanz, in the Vargr Extents, a planet not totally unlike Terra. Their ancestors were intermittent/gatherer types, adapted for a semi-nocturnal existence in moderately forested areas. This species already possessed a fair level of intelligence when tectonic shifts created a "land bridge" between two continents, allowing a large number of different -- and frequently dangerous -- species to invade the proto-Hlanssai's home environment. The resulting evolutionary pressure encouraged flexible, intelligent behavior, but this was only part of the result. The new dangers confronting the Hlanssai demanded the ability to perceive situations quickly and in detail, and an awareness of all possible subtleties in a given situation. The race already possessed the acute senses of the sometime night-dweller; evolution now enhanced these to exceptional levels. Hlanssai intelligence was the product of the need to analyze and comprehend these sensory inputs; Hlanssai psychology is therefore oriented overwhelmingly towards immediate sensual awareness and possible responses, and the species' philosophies are generally sensualistic, frequently dismissive of the long term, and notoriously sybaritic and hedonistic. A Hlanssai will usually respond to each situation as it occurs, with little regard to long-term consequences, and often, therefore, dramatically.

This is not to say that Hlanssai are psychopathic or vicious; they are capable of personal loyalty and affection, and their capacity for empathy is quite phenomenal, but enduring trust is alien to them.

Physically, Hlanssai are tall, but very light and slender of build. The race is homeothermic, bisexual, and viviparous, producing one or two young after an eight month gestation period. Hlanssai bodies are about 50% covered with a silky, glossy yellow fur, and the race seldom bothers with clothing; the most striking visual feature is the head, with its two large eyes and two even larger ears. The former are sensitive to a range of frequencies extending into the ultra-violet; the external flaps of the latter serve to detect thermal radiation and air currents with considerable efficiency, as well as focusing sound into a highly sensitive inner ear. The race's hands have three three-jointed fingers and a stubby, un-jointed "thumb" each; their feet are similar, and can provide some limited grip, especially when climbing.

Society

Hlanssai culture had achieved a kind of static equilibrium (and a kind of elegant Bronze Age technology) when the race was first contacted by the Vargr, and the systems then used have changed only slightly since. Hlanssai psychology dictates that complex, rigid social systems and long-range planning are impossible, and even familial or tribal bonds are weak; balancing this, the species' drive to co-operation in the face of immediate danger is fairly powerful. The result is a system of administration by a system of self-interested cliques and participant democracy, anarchic to most non-human eyes but acceptable to most Hlanssai. (A Hlanssai who finds it unacceptable usually either forms his own clique or takes to demagogic politics.)

Personal violence and theft are quite common, but can represent a sufficient immediate personal danger to Hlanssai in general to trigger the co-operation instinct. Larger-scale organization for long-term aims is rare, generally only occurring when an unusually capable and charismatic Hlanssai perceives a particularly strong racial need, and persuades his people to work together to meet it.

Normally, the Vargr have poor relations with minor races within their territory unless they are strong enough to stand up for themselves, but the Hlanssai are an exception to this rule. The species' immense versatility, subtlety, and talent for empathy enable them to persuade most other races of their usefulness, and Hlanssai social scientists, servants, traders and spies have traveled virtually everywhere that the Vargr have gone (and sometimes beyond). The Vargr generally regard the Hlanssai as useful, dangerous, and fortunately weak; the Hlanssai regard the Vargr as graceless and unsubtle, but interesting and useful. Beyond the Vargr Extents, Hlanssai are widely seen as enigmatic, unstable, intelligent and interesting; Hlanssai attitudes toward other races vary, but generally involve curiosity mixed with ironic humor.

Incidentally, when humans hear Vargr describe the Hlanssai as "unpredictable" or "unstable," they often react with surprise or hilarity; the Vargr are themselves, after all, a by-word for instability among Humaniti. This is, of course, a foolish error. Vargr behavior is strongly based on the race's perceptions of charisma, status, and ambition; on its own terms, it is consistent and even logical. The Hlanssai, on the other hand, react in complex and rather less predictable ways to their perceptions of everything around them, including stimuli that seem trivial to other races. A few humans have come to understand and empathize with Vargr; it is probably physically impossible to achieve the same relationship with Hlanssai.

In fact, even a Hlanssai cannot necessarily predict another Hlanssai's actions more than a few minutes ahead; seemingly trivial stimuli can cause accelerating changes in responses over even this short a time. Human psychologists describe Hlanssai behavior as "chaotic" in a mathematical sense. Hlanssai must be continually cajoled, rewarded, or threatened to keep them on a particular course of action.

A final important concept to note when dealing with Hlanssai is that of "N'tarronth," and its converse, "N'tarronchii'a" -- a further consequence of Hlanssai sensualism. "N'tarronth" is usually translated as "shaping" or "manufacturing," but it can best be expressed in human terms as "imposing arbitrary form upon the universe." Hlanssai are acutely aware of the distinction between the natural and the artificial, and regard one of the most important aspects of individual behavior to be the extent to which a being accepts external reality and acts within existing limitations. A being who rejects things-as-they-are and seeks to shape reality to his or her will is N'tarronth and displays N'tarronth; a being who takes a passive, accepting view is N'tarronchii'a. Despite the fact that other races view them as mercurial and unstable, Hlanssai tend -- by their own terms -- to be highly consistent in being either N'tarronchii'a or N'tarronth, and regard an inability to choose between the two modes of behavior as decidedly odd, perhaps comparable with a refusal to eat or drink. This does not imply any question of good or evil in Hlanssai terms; simply a matter of normal sentient behavior. (So this is the one aspect in which well-trained xeno-psychologists can predict Hlanssai behavior.)

In general, music, applied science, law, manufacturing industry and exploration are classed as N'tarronth, whereas mathematics, figurative art and hedonism are N'tarronchii'a. To the Hlanssai, therefore, most other races tend to N'tarronth -- which is, the Hlanssai would say, their business -- but display an odd tendency to mix in elements of N'tarronchii'a. In other words, Hlanssai understand other species almost as little as other races understand Hlanssai.

Hlanssai in Play

Hlanssai characters may be encountered throughout the ***Traveller*** universe, particularly in Spinward and Coreward regions, and in a wide variety of circumstances. Many of the race, afflicted with wanderlust, become roving artists, entertainers, animal-handlers or adventurers, and a strong disinclination to settle anywhere for long -- and a matching inability to remain on perfect terms with one employer for extended periods -- generally keeps these beings on the move. Some Hlanssai become "liaison specialists" in the employ of organizations of merchant starships engaged in exploratory work, in which role their immense capacity for analyzing others' behavior is extremely useful, but Hlanssai cannot accept discipline, and so rarely find work in large, formal organizations, and never in military service. Referees should find it possible to operate Hlanssai, once their racial peculiarities are understood, and adventurous players might consider using such as player-characters, although if Hlanssai are being properly roleplayed, no other PC will trust them, and no long term aims will be pursued, which might prove an intolerable limitation.

In ***GURPS*** terms, a Hlanssai character has the following racial package: -2 ST [-15], +2 DX [20], +1 Fatigue [3], +2 to Artistic skills [12], +1 to Climbing skill (strictly speaking only when barefoot, but Hlanssai don't often go in for shoes) [1], +4 Alertness [20], Ambidexterity [10], one level of Less Sleep [3], Night Vision [10], Ultrahearing [5], Odious Personal Habits (whimsical and unpredictable behavior) [-5], Absent-Mindedness [-15], Broad-Minded [-1], Dreamer [-1], Imaginative [-1], and the racial quirk of Co-Operative Under Heavy Stress [-1]. They also have a mixed racial reputation; almost all Vargr regard them as erratic, and react at -1 [-2], while almost anyone may see them as crazy, or Vargr minions, or both, reacting -2 on 10 or less [-5]; however, there is a small class of devotees of the arts who have a high appreciation of the race's work, reacting to them at +2 [3]. The base cost to play a Hlanssai is therefore 41 points.

(This package assumes that the character will be operating in human society, not too far from the Vargr Extents; for a campaign based in other regions, the Reputations may be modified, and the Odious Personal Habit may also have a different value. Note also that a Hlanssai's sensitivities to heat and air currents, while useful, are by no means equivalent to Infravision or Faz Sense, and are treated for game purposes as "special effect" aspects of its Night Vision and Alertness.)

Having created a Hlanssai character, calculate height and weight as for a human of equivalent ST, then add 1' to the height and subtract 15 lbs. from the weight. Hlanssai are rarely Overweight, and almost never Fat; they enjoy food, but prefer variety to quantity, and usually seem to burn any excess off by becoming even more energetic than usual. (This is probably an evolved biological response; in the unpredictable environment of ancient Vrirhlanz, a presentient Hlanssai which found a large supply of food was better off using the extra energy straight away than storing it against an uncertain future. Anyway, a Hlanssai who doesn't like what it sees in the mirror tends to become morose and go off its food.) Hlanssai cannot take better-than-average Appearance; among themselves, aesthetics are vastly complex and personal, while they all look rather similar to members of other races (and are easy enough for non-xenophobic humans and Vargr to tolerate). Unattractive or worse Appearance is rare, usually being the result of disfiguring injury or disease.

The first concern when designing a Hlanssai is whether it is N'tarronth or N'tarronchii'a. NPC Hlanssai are equally likely to be either, although some jobs are more likely to be taken up by adherents of one attitude than those of the other; if players are operating Hlanssai, they have free choice, but must always act in accordance with their choice.

(In fact, any Hlanssai character acting in a fashion contrary to his or her choice for any significant period is probably in the process of going insane; if players refuse to work within the chosen mind-set, GMs are fully entitled, after

issuing fair warnings, to take over the mad Hlanssai, operating such characters as totally unstable paranoids, psychopaths, schizophrenics, or suchlike.)

Other advantages, disadvantages, quirks, and skills must be determined on an individual basis, with reference to the character's chosen mind-set; Hlanssai usually have plenty of each. However, anything requiring extended, concentrated effort or consistency -- whether a high level in a Hard skill or a disadvantage such as Megalomania or Truthfulness -- is highly unlikely. On the other hand, a Hlanssai without at least -20 points of extra Mental Disadvantages, from Bad Temper through Compulsive Behavior to Kleptomania, will be regarded as horribly dull by others of the race. Optionally, the GM may even permit Hlanssai characters to shift mental disadvantage assignments around over time -- by, say, 5 points per game month -- to represent long-term changes in the overall pattern of the character's behavior. Optionally, non-military packages from ***GURPS Traveller*** may possibly be applied to Hlanssai, but a semi-random mix of abilities is more appropriate; few Hlanssai have careers as such. Combat skills are possible, though rarely high; some of the race indulge in an amount of rough-and-tumble Brawling, or learn enough about guns to protect themselves in their wanderings.

As a guideline rather than a firm rule, N'tarronth Hlanssai often have Greed, Craft skills, Architecture, Chemistry, Scrounging, and Vehicle skills, while their N'tarronchii'a relatives may display Laziness, knowledge of several languages, Astronomy, History, Mathematics, and so on. Combat Reflexes, Empathy, Curious, Impulsiveness, Nosy, Short Attention Span, Artistic skills, Intelligence Analysis (intuitive rather than trained), Savoir Faire and Survival are common among both groups (but by no means universal).

by Dave Steele

Art by Art Today

Many fantasy game systems fall victim to the myth that medieval armor is both heavy and cumbersome. While ***GURPS*** made the leap that armor is not particularly cumbersome, the myth of its excessive weight continues to exist. Some study will reveal, however, that the weight of medieval armor has been badly blown out of proportion. Also, a couple of armor types that were common in the medieval period have been ignored.

Ancient and Fantasy Armor Revisited

While in some cases estimates had to be made, the chart below provides a reasonably accurate system for gaming. The GM could alter some things, depending on the "true" tech level of his world. For instance, in our modern society leather is relatively expensive (several dollars a square foot for armor-weight leather), whereas steel can be purchased at a scrap yard for pennies per pound. The expensive part of producing body armor with these two materials in a modern setting is the labor. In a medieval or equivalent setting, labor was cheap and plentiful. Leather was used more extensively, and was much cheaper as well. Iron or steel, on the other hand, could be very expensive, depending on the time period in question. In early medieval times, iron was scarce and hard to come by, and was very expensive. It's also difficult to work; there were no handy steel mills to produce a sheet of 16 gauge to use for armor. Instead, a smith was needed to beat the steel into a sheet by hand.

The same was true of mail (often mislabeled "chainmail"). The wire drawing machine hadn't been invented, and a smith or his apprentice had to beat pieces of iron into wire, then wrap, cut and assemble the rings. So the price of mail could vary widely, depending on whether wire-drawing technology was available or not. It's also possible that some areas of a world would have the technology and others would not.

Some of the armor types in the table may be unfamiliar. Please see the descriptions below the table for more detail.

Item	TL	PD	DR	Cost	Weight (lbs.)
Clothing	any	0	0	~$20	2+
Winter clothing	any	0	1	~$60	7+
Padded cloth armor	1-4	1	1	~$100	14
Light leather	1-4	1	1	~$150	10
Heavy leather	1-4	2	2	~$200	25
Jack (see notes)	3	2	3	~$375	17
Light Mail	3-4	2	3	~$1750	18
Med. Mail	3-4	3	4	~$1100	30
Heavy Mail	2-4	3	4	~$550	45

Medium Banded Mail	3	3	4	~$1650	35
Heavy Banded Mail	3	3	4	~$825	50
Scale armor	2-3	3	4	~$750	40
Brigantine	3-4	3	4	$1250+	35
Half plate	3-4	4	5	$2000+	40
Light plate	3-4	4	6	$4000+	35
Heavy plate	3-4	4	7	$6000+	55
Jousting plate	3-4	4	8	$10000+	110+

Ancient and Fantasy Armor Revisited

Armor pieces: Use the following formula to get the price & weight of individual pieces of armor: Torso 42%, Legs 38%, Arms 20%. In reality, these pieces tend to vary widely, depending on armor type and period (a late medieval plate torso might be cheaper than mail, for instance), but this provides a reasonably quick and dirty system. Armor prices are estimates. If an area of a world was iron-ore poor, the price for iron and steel should go up. Japan is a good example of a culture that used other materials, like hardened leather, for a majority of their armor, because iron was in very short supply and swords can't be made from anything else.

Mail: Mail comes in three "weights": light, medium and heavy. PD/DR shown is versus a cut; vs. an impaling attack, subtract 1 from PD and DR. Against a crushing attack, subtract 2 from PD and DR. All suits are assumed to have a layer of light padding, weighing approximately 5 lb.. underneath the mail. Sans padding, subtract 5 lbs. and 1 from DR, before any other adjustments.

Banded Mail: This is mail reinforced by leather thongs run through every other row of rings to stiffen and reinforce the mail. PD/DR shown is vs. a cut; vs. an impaling or crushing attack, subtract 1 from PD and DR. All banded mail is assumed to have a layer of light padding, weighing approximately 5 lbs. underneath the mail. As with regular mail, subtract 5 lbs. and 1 from DR, before any other adjustments, for no padding.

Some other mail notes: Why the cost difference? Also, shouldn't "Heavy" mail be more protective and cost more? No, the difference lies in the weight, the quality of the wire used, and most importantly, the size of ring used. Heavy mail is made of large, cheap iron rings, which are butted together. It could be produced anywhere, by most any smith. Medium mail is made of slightly smaller rings, made from better wire, requiring a wire-drawing machine of some type. Medium mail rings are typically riveted as well. Light mail is made from fine steel rings, that are very tiny. It would take at least four times as many rings for a suit of Light mail than for Heavy, and maybe more! Only a few shops could, or would, produce Light mail. The only "period" examples surviving come from Japanese suits of armor.

Jack: Jack is a form of Brigantine (see below), using horn instead of steel plates, with a cord passing through a hole in each plate that replaces the rivets of brigantine. It is more commonly available than brigantine. It may be ordered with more expensive outer cloth, though this appears to have been rare in period. Base price assumes standard canvas or other sturdy, cheap material.

Brigantine: This is essentially a development of scale armor, consisting of hundreds of small plates (one surviving example has 1,650 plates!). It is one of the more flexible and comfortable types of armor to wear for extended periods of time. The plates are enclosed in a cloth garment and riveted into place, with padding built in or worn underneath. It would be found in the armor shops of cities or large towns. The price given would be for a "bare-bones" suit; however this armor normally is covered in velvet, silk, etc. Increase the price appropriately, using Upper class or Noble class clothes as a guideline. (Brigantine $1,250 + Upper class clothes $200 = $1,450). A brigantine jacket is what you'd find

the understandably paranoid nobles in a treacherous court wearing . . .

Jousting Armor: It's just that -- *jousting* armor. It is designed for that sole purpose, and is *not* good for adventuring! Many of the misconceptions about field armor come from this heavy, highly specialized form of armor, which was developed very late in the medieval period or slightly after. It is heavy, it is cumbersome, and a rider "unseated" from a mount would take several rounds to get up. It wouldn't be unfair to disallow the use of hand weapons with this armor -- it was designed to carry a lance, and nothing else. It does, however, help the owner use the lance, providing a place for the end of the lance to rest against the breastplate. Giving a +1 (or even more) to lance skill when jousting armor is used by an experienced character would be entirely appropriate.

Final Notes

It should be noted that the weight of some armor, and of plate in particular, has dropped to a fraction of that given in the ***GURPS Basic Set*** or ***AD&D*** (at least the old ***AD&D*** books that I have). These weights are consistent with actual medieval pieces still in existence, or extrapolated from these pieces.

The GM should feel free to disallow characters from buying any kind of armor if doing so would unbalance the game. The GM can simply make the armor unavailable, or perhaps impose extreme taxes for buyers who have not sworn fealty to the local ruler -- and did we mention that if you're not one of the king's vassals, wearing such armor is illegal on his lands?

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by Will McDermott and The Duelist Staff

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At its heart, **Magic** is about money...no...*card combinations*, and discovering combos is both the thrill and the agony of the game (depending on which side of the table you're on when the combo goes off). So, feeling a little nostalgic after our "Five Year Anniversary" issue, we decided to take another trip down **Magic** memory lane. Herein, you'll find the most powerful or influential combos the game has ever seen (except for that upstart Tolarian Blue; it needs to prove itself yet).

This list is the result of minutes...no, hours...er...days of research and the best statistical analysis we could afford (Microsoft Excel - it came bundled with our machines). We even asked top men (really, top men) for their input; actually, I'm not joking about this. Our panel included *Mark Rosewater* and *the Duelist editorial staff*, Pro Tour judge *Jeff Donais*, Pro Tour player *Alan Comer*, and Wizards' AOL netrep (and creator of "The Mage's Workshop" database program) *Edward Fewell*.

25. Land Tax & Library of Alexandria

You can't discuss card advantage without talking about Land Tax and Library of Alexandria. Land Tax may well be the best combo card ever created since it helps fuel so many other combos. It lets you dig land out of your library, thinning your deck and giving you ammo for effects that trigger off cards (or lands) in hand. Combined with Library of Alexandria, the top card-drawing card in the game, Land Tax nets you up to four cards per turn by using the lands drawn to ensure you can activate the Library.

24. Lure & Thicket Basilisk

In the old days (before R&D started hating green), green decks were extremely powerful. However, they still had trouble getting rid of creatures. White had Wrath of God. Red had Fireball. Black had Pestilence. But green only had Hurricane, which didn't take out ground-pounders. Green did have Lure and Thicket Basilisk, which could clear away your opponent's defenders, open a path for your horde, and leave the bulk of your creatures in good health to attack again next turn.

23. Stampeding Wildebeests & Wall of Blossoms

Stampeding Wildebeests was on the verge of fading away as a fun theme-deck card you could combine with Pyknite or Striped Bears to draw a card every turn. But these two creatures were expensive and too easily destroyed. Then came Wall of Blossoms and the Stupid Green deck. Stampeding Wildebeests instantly became a viable tournament card, mostly because Wall of Blossoms stood on its own as a great early defensive card that, when combined with Wildebeests, provided huge card advantage as well as beatdown.

22. Fallen Angel & Living Death

Fallen Angel has been used in a variety of decks because it combines so well with other cards (like Enduring Renewal). The Fallen Angel-Living Death combo works like this: Attack, and sacrifice any blocked creatures to Fallen Angel. After combat, sacrifice the rest of your creatures to the Angel and then sacrifice the Angel to itself. With all your creatures in the graveyard, cast Living Death to bring them all back out and destroy all of your opponent'screatures on the table.

21. Living Plane & The Tabernacle at Pendrell Vale

This nasty combo provided mass land destruction to green (until Type II banished the *Legends* card set from the tournament scene). Living Plane turns all lands into 1/1 creatures that still count as lands. The Tabernacle at Pendrell Vale then forces your opponent to tap all these newly created creatures or sacrifice them on his or her next upkeep. With all your opponent's creatures either tapped or destroyed, you can sacrifice the Tabernacle (instead of paying its upkeep) on your turn, thus saving the rest of your land/creatures to attack.

20. Animate Artifact, Instill Energy, & Time Vault

The combo that got Time Vault banned weighs in at number 20. When it was originally printed, you could tap Time Vault to gain an extra turn, but had to skip a turn to untap it. Some ingenious player figured out you could animate Time Vault and then enchant it with Instill Energy to untap it every turn (and thus keep taking turns until your opponent started screaming). Time Vault was banned, and later reinstated with errata that nullified this combo. (You now add a counter to Time Vault when you skip that turn. Hmm, how about Giant Fan?)

19. Awakening & Tradewind Rider

You don't often see two-color, eight-mana combos, but the power of this one made it work despite the double-green mana requirement in Awakening. Tradewind Rider had already made its presence known as a supreme control card by the time *Stronghold* brought Awakening to the scene. What Awakening added was the ability to use the Rider's bounce effect twice as often, which could wreak havoc on any deck that relied on permanents to win. And it's hard to win with nothing on the table.

18. Necropotence & Drain Life

Necropotence so dominated **Magic** that the 1996 summer tournament season was dubbed "Necro Summer." This card is so powerful it appears twice on this list, since the Necro deck contained multiple parts. Another premier card-drawing card, Necropotence lets you trade life for cards. Drain Life serves two purposes here: it's the kill-card for this deck, and it helps recoup life lost to cards drawn via Necropotence. Drain Life would reappear the next Spring as the kill-card of choice in the quick and deadly ProsBloom deck.

17. Black Vise & Winter Orb

Black Vise has been called "three free Lightning Bolts" because you can cast it on turn one and deal up to nine damage over the next three turns. Backed up by land destruction or other control elements, Black Vise is a sure killer. The classic resource denial card is, of course, Winter Orb. After a Power Sink or Mana Short, Winter Orb and an Icy Manipulator (see below) can keep your opponent in Black Vise range for the rest of his or her (very short) life. Because of its power, Black Vise went the way of Channel (and the Dodo) getting banned in Standard and Extended.

16. Bottle Gnomes & Corpse Dance

This combo was so good, the deck built around it bore the name "Dancing Gnomes." This recursion deck that appeared at Pro Tour-Los Angeles in 1997 used Corpse Dance with buyback to bring Bottle Gnomes (and other creatures you could sacrifice for an effect) back into play. The toughness of the 1/3 Gnomes made them great blockers. Plus you could sacrifice the Gnomes to gain 3 life and avoid having it removed from the game...and then do it all over again next turn, dancing them into and out of play as needed.

15. Necropotence & Ivory Tower

The second Necro combo to make the list, this was truly the cornerstone of the original Necro deck. You pay life to keep your hand-size as large as possible every turn, and then Ivory Tower rewards you with life for every card in your hand over four - effectively giving you back the life you paid the previous turn. Once you got the restricted Tower in your hand (perhaps via a Demonic Tutor or Vampiric Tutor), you were set. You could just keep drawing cards until you were ready to kill your opponent.

14. Icy Manipulator & Royal Assassin

Often dubbed the Royal "Pain in the" Assassin, this black creature could kill any creature your opponent was stupid enough to attack with, since you can tap it to destroy a tapped creature. But how do you get rid of Walls and Serra Angels? Why, with Icy Manipulator, of course. This extremely powerful artifact can tap any creature, land, or artifact. This two-card combo can destroy about 99 percent of the creatures in the game (only creatures with protection from black or that can't be targeted are immune).

13. Berserk & Fork & Giant Growth

Probably the most damage you can deal for four mana (excluding mana generators like Cadaverous Bloom and Channel), this combo was a mainstay of the first generation of speed decks - the red/green monsters with eight Bolt spells, Blood Lusts, and the long-forgotten Kird Ape. With a Kird Ape and a forest in play (or better, a Taiga because it provided both mana colors you needed *and* counted as a forest), you could Giant Growth the now 2/3 Ape to make it a 5-power creature. Then just Berserk the Ape to 10 and Fork the Berserk to make your Kird Ape a 20-power mage killer. I loved that deck!

12. Armageddon & Erhnam Djinn

Shortly after "Ernie" was reprinted in *Chronicles*, **Magic** saw the rise of the "ErhnaGeddon" deck, named for the combo. These fast-mana decks could devastate most opponents by easily dropping the 4/5 monster Djinn on turn three and destroying all lands on turn four. By the time opponents recovered enough to handle the Djinn, it was too late. A nice byproduct was that Armageddon basically nullified Erhnam Djinn's drawback, since you no longer had any forests in play. Another trick to play with Ernie was to wait until your opponent attacked with his Forestwalker, and then sacrifice your forests to Zuran Orb and block the now forestless attacker.

11. Fastbond & Storm Cauldron

Another combo that got a card banned, Fastbond and Storm Cauldron almost cracks the top 10 with its Channel-esque mana generator. Fastbond, banned after this combo became popular, is an enchantment that lets you pay 1 life each to put extra lands into play. Storm Cauldron bounces land back to your hand after you tap them. Used together, you can play and tap the same lands over and over until you run out of life. You can use that mana to pump up the heat on a Fireball or suck your opponent's life away with a Drain

Life. What keeps this combo out of the Top 10 is the cost of Storm Cauldron. At , you need to stay alive too long to make this trick pay off very often.

10. Enduring Renewal, Goblin Bombardment, & Shield Sphere

Dubbed "Fruity Pebbles," the five-color Extended deck that surrounds this combo blasted onto the tournament scene at Pro Tour Qualifiers in late 1997 and early 1998. *Tempest* brought players Goblin Bombardment, which allows you to sacrifice creatures to deal 1 damage to a target creature or player. Bombardment appeared just as Enduring Renewal left the Standard environment. But in Extended, this powerful damage engine still shines. The zero-cost Shield Sphere provides early defense and then drives the engine as you sacrifice it to Bombardment and recast it for free over and over until your opponent is dead.

9. Ivory Tower & Library of Alexandria

The second appearance for both of these cards, this combo does it all for you (as long as you remain at or near seven cards in hand), and was perfectly suited for control decks that held cards and tended to run low on life before gaining control. Ivory Tower provides 3 life per turn while Library of Alexandria gives you an extra draw every turn (to help you find more countermagic or that critical Wrath of God). With life and cards to spare, players using this combo usually had no trouble controlling and then dispatching opponents (sometimes with a single Serra Angel, as in Weismann's "The Deck"). It's no wonder both of these cards were restricted.

8. Stasis & Kismet

Stasis-Kismet was the cornerstone lock of the original Prison-style deck. Both Stasis decks and Turbo Stasis decks used Stasis to lock tapped cards into a perpetual tapped state, while Kismet forced opponents to put all permanents into play tapped. With all land, artifacts, and creatures tapped, opponents were helpless unless they could break the lock. But keeping the lock in play was also tough. Different versions of Stasis decks used Birds of Paradise and Instill Energy to pay the upkeep every turn; Time Elemental to bounce Stasis back to your hand so you could recast it, and Squandered Resources to find more land to help pay the upkeep cost once your lands were tapped.

7. Icy Manipulator & Winter Orb

Other Prison decks preferred our number seven combo to Stasis because it was easier to keep the lock in place. Winter Orb locked down most of your opponent's land because players can only untap one land per turn. You could then tap one land (or a Mox or a Diamond) and the Icy Manipulator during your opponent's upkeep phase to tap the one land he or she untapped that turn. A second Icy could then take care of any land your opponent played that turn. About the only key to this lock was Crumble. At least one very cruel player added Vodalian Mage to this mix to make sure opponents couldn't even cast crumble or other one-mana spells.

6. Land Tax & Sylvan Library

The most combo-able card on the list, Land Tax makes its second appearance along with the best green deck-manipulation card of all time, Sylvan Library. When ErhnaGeddon decks made green/white the colors to beat, this combo forged its way to the top. The Library lets you look at three cards per turn, while Land Tax allows you to pull lands from your deck and, more importantly, shuffle your deck every turn, so you see three new cards each turn with the Library. This combo probably accounted for Land Tax becoming restricted - and then banned - in both Standard and Extended play.

Sylvan Library is still around and finding new partners, like Abundance from *Urza's Saga*.

5. Humility & Orim's Prayer

Our number-five combo is another control combo, this one geared toward shutting down creature damage. *Tempest*, the same set that gave us Tradewind Rider and Bottle Gnomes, provides both halves of this all-white combo. Humility turns all creatures into 1/1 creatures with no special abilities, while Orim's Prayer gains its controller 1 life for every attacking creature (thus totally negating all creature damage). After creature damage has been shut down with only two cards, the rest of the deck could focus on protecting the combo and beating the opponent. Humility proved so powerful (and confusing) it spawned pages of errata.

4. Prosperity & Cadaverous Bloom

Although the deck Mike Long used to win Pro Tour-Paris (and which almost brought him a National Championship in 1998 before it slipped from his grasp) actually consisted of multiple card combos, ProsBloom always hinges on these two cards. With enough mana from sources such as Squandered Resources and Natural Balance, the ProsBloom player casts a large Prosperity and then sacrifices those cards to Cadaverous Bloom to power up a death-dealing Drain Life. The power of ProsBloom was its ability to consistently complete the combo and win on turn four, by using card-drawing cards such as Prosperity, Vampiric Tutor, Impulse, and Meditate.

3. Recurring Nightmare & Survival of the Fittest

The number-three slot contains the most recent combo on the list. Nightmare Survival, a new breed of control deck, stormed into the 1998 World Championships. Survival of the Fittest searches your library for key creatures and fills up your graveyard with other key creatures. Recurring Nightmare then brings any creature you need directly into play from the graveyard. The creatures have "comes into play" effects that help control the board (Nekrataal and Uktabi Orangutan) or effects that reset when they reenter play (Spike Weaver and Spike Feeder). Nightmare Survival wins by using Survival to put a huge creature into the graveyard, followed by Recurring Nightmare to bring it into play.

2. Balance & Zuran Orb

Balance was a "sleeper" card (an R&D term used to describe a power card players don't notice right away) that avoided players' notice for a while and then burst onto the tournament scene with a vengeance. Eventually restricted and then pulled from *Fifth Edition*, the true power of Balance was realized when *Ice Age* brought us Zuran Orb. With Zuran Orb in play, you could cast Balance and then sacrifice all your lands to the Orb, forcing your opponent to discard all of his or her lands. This effectively gave white an extra Armageddon and a super Stream of Life.

The trick was best performed with no cards in hand and only one creature (Serra Angel, natch) on the board.

Total control.

1. Channel & Fireball

Probably the first combo ever discovered, this original first-turn kill combo produced

the very first non-ante card ever banned - Channel. Is it any wonder it's the number-one **Magic** combo of all time? Its simplicity and its deadly nature made it the perfect combo. All you need is 19 life and four mana - two green mana to cast Channel, one red mana to cast Fireball, and one more mana to cap it off - to deal 20 damage on turn one. Of course in the "good ol' days," finding this mana was easy: One mountain and a Black Lotus fit the bill perfectly. In fact, one urban legend claims the finals of an early tournament came down to a long, drawn-out contest to see which finalist couldn't pull off the combo on turn one. Supposedly both decks contained 20 Black Lotuses, 20 Channels, and 20 Fireballs. Best of all, this two-card combo will defeat your opponent any time your life total plus your available mana exceeds your opponent's life by four. The first, the best, the only: Channel-Fireball.

by Jon F. Zeigler

Art by Glenn Grant, John Grigni and Ted Lindsey

GURPS Traveller: First In Designer's Notes

For many years (most of my life, in fact) I've been working on ways to do better worldbuilding for science-fiction RPGs. Some ***Traveller*** players roll up characters, plan mercenary tactics, or design starships. I build solar systems.

Traveller was one of the first RPGs I ever played, and it's always been one of my favorites. Even so, one of the things that bothers me about it is the simplification that it applies to star mapping. The two-dimensional hex grid is easy to work with and fits the game's flavor well enough, but it's not very realistic. The real universe has depth.

One aspect of my study of astronomy has been the structure of the "solar neighborhood," the tiny corner of the galaxy surrounding Earth itself. This three-dimensional space strikes me as an ideal stage for adventure, a backdrop for humanity's first steps out into the universe. Unfortunately, the RPG industry doesn't seem to agree with me. The last RPG to use the solar neighborhood for a setting was ***2300 AD,*** once published by GDW along with ***Traveller,*** but presently long out of print.

Still, let's see if it can be done. Let's think about how to design a campaign with ***Traveller*** flavor, presumably using ***GURPS*** rules, but set among the nearby stars of the real universe.

First, we need to consider all the implications of a three-dimensional geometry. The Third Imperium of ***GURPS Traveller*** owns 11,000 star systems, spread through an irregular two-dimensional region about 200 parsecs long and 140 parsecs wide. In three-dimensional space, assuming about one star system per 11.5 cubic parsecs, the same number of systems would fill a sphere about 62 parsecs across. In the Third Imperium, a ship with jump-6 capacity takes at least fifteen jumps to make it from Capital to Deneb or Terra. A similar 6-parsec-range ship in our three-dimensional Imperium would take only about five jumps to go from core to frontiers. A 3-D empire is more compact.

Related to this is the increased versatility of faster ships in 3-D space. In the Third Imperium, assuming about a 50% chance of a star system in any given hex, a jump-1 ship is likely to be able to reach three or four star systems, while a jump-6 ship can reach more than 60. That's a big difference, but it pales when compared to the 3-D situation. A ship with 1-parsec range in our 3-D universe is unlikely to find even one star within its range, but a ship with 6-parsec range can reach almost 80.

It appears that in order to get the same "feel" as in ***Traveller,*** we'll want to somehow limit the range of starships. One approach might be to make the jump ranges non-linear, so that the difference in range between a jump-2 and a jump-3 starship is actually less than that between a jump-1 and jump-2 starship. That has all kind of implications for the flavor of the game, though. Best not to try anything that radical.

Another option would be to cap the jump numbers. Suppose our campaign setting is only at early TL 10. Then (assuming the same technological progression as in standard ***GURPS Traveller***) the most we can hope for is jump-2. That suggests an "open frontiers" campaign, set in the early days of starflight while humans first expand out from Earth.

Now, if we assume that jump-1 means a 1-parsec range, as in standard ***Traveller,*** we're likely to be disappointed in the results. Jump-1 starships in the Third Imperium are limited, but useful. Many worlds fall in the great "mains," chains of star systems that are all reachable by jump-1. Even a jump-1 ship can slowly leapfrog its way across most of the Imperium. In the 3-D universe, however, it's rare for two star systems to be within 1 parsec of each other, and there are no equivalents to the "mains." We will more than likely need to define a "jump-1" as covering some distance greater than one parsec. Exactly what that distance is should depend on the structure of nearby space. What distance is likely to give us the best potential plots? Perhaps we can find inspiration by looking at a map of nearby space. . .

The first survey of the solar neighborhood was compiled in the Gliese Catalog of Nearby Stars, the first edition being published in 1957. In the last few years, the European space probe HIPPARCOS was flown to compile an extensive catalog of stars, with distances measured to a higher degree of accuracy than was ever possible for Earth-based observatories. These catalogs are not entirely accurate or complete for even the close solar neighborhood, since very dim stars may be overlooked even when they are close by. Still, they should be sufficient for gaming purposes. Using the figures in the Gliese or Hipparcos catalogs, it's possible to apply the ***First In*** rules to do complete worldbuilding.

All of these data are available on the Web. By far, the best site to begin researching nearby stars belongs to Winchell Chung. He has a superb collection of resources for star mapping, world-building, science-fiction RPGs, and so on. His site is at http://www.clark.net/pub/nyrath/starmap.html. Another good resource is RECONS, a group of astronomers who study nearby stars. Their URL is http://cfa-www.harvard.edu/~thenry/RECONS.html. Finally, the best computer utility available for 3-D starmapping is probably the CHview program, designed by several fans of C. J. Cherryh's Alliance/Union stories. CHview comes with data files based on the Hipparcos data, and has a wide variety of options: the solar neighborhood can be viewed from any angle, "jump lines" of any specified length can be planned, and so on. It and its supporting data files can be downloaded from the Sol Station website: http://members.nova.org/~sol.

For this article, I used the CHview program and began investigating how nearby stars could be reached, assuming jump drives of varying range. I further assumed that the "jump drive" of our setting would only move starships between the gravity wells of stars, so that there would be no jumps to "deep space." Although such deep-space hops are possible in standard ***Traveller,*** the setting seems to imply that they don't happen often. In any case, if starships can only move from one star to another, that means that certain star systems will be "choke points" or "crossroads" of great strategic value. Such situations naturally give rise to conflict (and plot hooks).

As the range of our putative jump drive increases, stars begin to fall into chains and networks of accessible routes. When the range passes about 2 parsecs, several long chains of accessible stars appear, reaching out from Sol. In fact, the ***2300 AD*** game assumed a normal "jump range" of about 7.7 light-years or 2.4 parsecs. This assumption is a trifle unsatisfactory, because there are a number of stars close to Sol that can't be reached by any combination of such short jumps. Also, when the jump range is this short, the accessible stars fall into narrow "arms" which connect only at Sol and tend to taper off into dead ends. If we increase the range to about 9 light-years, however, most of the previously-inaccessible stars link into the network. The network forms "trunks" and "webs" which connect to each other at several points, and extend indefinitely into deep space. This will help if we want the dynamic of the campaign to involve interactions between colony and colony, not just between colony and homeworld.

Setting the standard jump range to 9 light-years has another useful implication. If we assume that 9 light-years is a standard range for jump-2 ships, then a jump-1 ship can reach 4.5 light-years. This means that a jump-1 ship can safely travel from Sol to Alpha Centauri (4.4 light-years away) but could reach no other star system. That implies that Alpha Centauri would be colonized soon after the development of the jump drive, but the real burst of expansion would only occur some time later, after jump-2 engines were developed. Alpha Centauri would therefore be an interesting mix of frontier and civilized core, a place from which adventures could begin.

Now that we've decided how to implement our campaign's version of jump drive, we can start looking at nearby stars and deciding where to place important worlds. Let's take a quick tour of the 25 or so nearest star systems. We'll look at every star within 9 light-years (one jump-2 radius), and the most interesting ones out to about 12 light-years.

Nearest to Sol is Alpha Centauri, a famous trinary star system. The primary star is very similar to Sol, slightly larger and brighter. The largest companion is a smaller K0 V star. The system appears to be somewhat older than Sol, perhaps 6 billion years old. Most astronomers doubt that a double star like this one can have planets, but the ***First In*** rules allow for the possibility. In fact, the companion's orbit is fairly wide and has only moderate eccentricity, so even the minimum separation between the components is wide enough to allow both stars to have planets in the life zone. If Alpha Centauri hosts one (or even two) habitable worlds, then it's certain to be an early target for interstellar colonization.

The third component of the Alpha Centauri system is a tiny red dwarf star of spectral class M5 V. It's not clear whether this star is actually physically associated with Alpha Centauri, as the separation is extreme (over 10,000 AU). It is slightly closer to Sol than the bright pair, so by some reckoning it is the star closest to us. It is therefore often named "Proxima" Centauri. Aside from its small size, Proxima is unusual for the amount of its flare activity. It is one of the most active flare stars known.

The next-nearest star system is Barnard's Star, a lone M4 V red dwarf. Barnard's Star is believed to have at least one planet of about 500 Earth masses, somewhat larger than Jupiter. This star was once quite famous for the speed with which it shifts position in the sky, and was called "Barnard's Runaway Star." In fact, it is probably a very old member of the galactic halo, currently cutting across the galactic disk against the motion of most other stars in our neighborhood.

As we might expect, most stars in our neighborhood are ordinary, even rather dull, red dwarfs. The next two systems on our list are perfect examples: Wolf 359 and Lalande 21185. Oddly, these two stars are not only close to Sol, they are also quite close to each other, so they form a matched pair of "stepping stones" leading outward from Sol toward galactic north. Lalande 21185 is believed to have an unseen companion of about 0.01 solar masses, a super-Jovian planet or "brown dwarf" star. Wolf 359 is one of the least luminous stars known, only about 1/63,000 as bright as Sol. Both stars are significantly older than Sol.

The next star on the list is also the brightest star in Earth's sky: Sirius. The primary, Sirius A, is a brilliant A1 V star about 23 times as luminous as Sol. Sirius is clearly a young star, since A-class stars don't last very long. It appears to belong to a group called the "Sirius supercluster," a clan of stars all of which are only a few hundred million years old. Members of the Sirius group are scattered all over our sky, because Sol is currently moving through the middle of the cluster. Sirius might be a good place for industrial outposts to be set up, using torrents of free energy from the primary and mining metal-rich planetoids.

Sirius has a companion, Sirius B, which was one of the first "white dwarf" stars ever discovered. Although the companion has almost the same mass as Sol, it is only a few thousand miles across and has very low luminosity. A few astronomers have speculated that Sirius B was still a red giant star quite recently (within the last few thousand years). Although this would contradict much of what we think we know about the evolution of dying stars, we do know that Sirius B is unusually bright and hot for a white dwarf, and therefore recently formed. Meanwhile, many ancient sources (Babylonian, Greek and Roman) all refer to Sirius as reddish in color. . .

Next on the list is a double-star system tagged UV Ceti. The two components of this system are matched red dwarf stars, both with less than 5% of the Sun's mass. No visible stars are known to have lower mass than the UV Ceti components. The small component is a wildly-variable flare star, erupting every few hours. The UV Ceti system is probably of an age comparable to Sol. While it is very unlikely to host a habitable planet, it is interesting as a "stepping stone" system. Not only is it the last star system within a 9-light-year radius from Sol, it is also one of the best jumping-off points for travel from Sol to systems such as Tau Ceti, Epsilon Eridani or

Epsilon Indi.

From this point on, we won't discuss individual red-dwarf stars. Suffice it to say that there are many of them. Out of the 25 star systems closest to Sol, 19 are composed of one or more red dwarf stars. Given our assumptions regarding the jump drive, these systems are most likely to be interesting as stepping stones, places where outposts or fuel depots will be constructed. Under the ***First In*** rules, any one red dwarf isn't likely to host an Earthlike world. Still, the sheer number of such stars means that many habitable planets are likely to circle them. Feel free to design the occasional red-dwarf system with a freakishly Earthlike world.

Aside from red dwarfs, the next interesting star is Epsilon Eridani, at about 10.5 light-years from Sol. This is a single K2 V star, somewhat smaller and cooler than our sun. For years, it was considered a good candidate for an Earthlike planet. However, recent observations make it clear that Epsilon Eridani is quite young, probably about 500 million years old. It may very well have planets which are still in the process of formation, but none of them will be likely hosts for life. This system might be a reasonable place for a scientific outpost, studying the process of planetary birth. It is also likely to be metal-rich, so industrial outposts might be set up there as well.

The 61 Cygni system is next, at about 11.1 light-years. Strangely, although 61 Cygni is fairly close to Sol there is no direct route there using our assumption of jumps up to 9 light-years. There simply aren't any other stars directly between Sol and 61 Cygni, so the quickest path is indirect and takes four jumps. 61 Cygni is a double system, with stars of class K5 V and K7 V. The pair's separation is fairly wide, so both stars may have complete systems of planets. In fact, it's believed that one or the other (probably the A-component) has a gas giant planet of about 2,500 Earth-masses. 61 Cygni is a possible location for an Earthlike planet, although each star is fairly small and dim so any planet in its life zone is likely to be tide-locked. The system is not likely to be much younger or older than Sol.

Epsilon Indi is a single star of class K5 V, similar to either of the components of the 61 Cygni system. It isn't known to have any planets, although there is no reason to suspect otherwise. Again, it's possible for this star to have an Earthlike world, although any such world would probably be so close to the star as to be tide-locked. Epsilon Indi is probably about the same age as Sol.

The last star in our tour is Tau Ceti, probably the most likely candidate (after Alpha Centauri) for human colonization. At about 11.8 light-years, it's only two jumps from Sol. It's not known to have planets, but it is more than luminous enough to have Earthlike worlds that are not tide-locked. Its spectrum reveals a somewhat unusual composition, slightly poorer than Sol in some metals, but much richer in others. If any of its planets are life-bearing, this might lead to odd local biochemistries (and might also make the planets resource-rich).

If we build a map of these stars, using pencil and paper or a utility like CHview, we'll find that the stars nearest Sol form three large clusters. The largest of these is reachable through Barnard's Star, UV Ceti or Sirius. It includes Epsilon Eridani, Epsilon Indi and Tau Ceti. Further out, this cluster links through a swarm of red-dwarf systems to many more Sol-like stars in several directions from Sol. This is likely to be the primary direction for interstellar expansion, if humans ever learn how to travel between stars at all. Any major Earth-based cultures of the early interstellar era will probably rush to stake claims to strategic systems or Earthlike worlds in this direction.

In almost the opposite direction, through Wolf 359 or Lalande 21185, is another large cluster. Aside from Procyon, most of the nearby members of this cluster are dim red dwarf stars. There are Sol-like stars in this direction too, but

they are more distant and can only be reached through a "star-desert" of red dwarfs. Humans who settle in this direction are likely to be those who can think in the long term, developing a chain of outposts to reach the more distant prize worlds. This direction may attract second-rank powers or isolationist groups who wish to avoid the "land rush" into the first cluster.

The third cluster is smaller and more isolated, and can only be reached by skirting the edges of the first. Eventually, however, we reach 61 Cygni. Beyond that are several Sol-like stars, any of which might have a new Earth in orbit. Again, this cluster is likely to attract pioneers, risk-takers and isolationists.

There we have it. Our campaign setting is placed sometime in the next few centuries, after human beings have settled a few dozen star systems but before they've expanded so far as to lose contact with Earth. We have a civilized Core, and three frontier "sectors" which might each develop a distinctive flavor. There might be three or four Earthlike worlds, a dozen marginal planets, and any number of barren rocks with outposts in place. Now to fill in the details -- but that's your job. Have fun!

by Glen Barnett

Art by Keith Johnson

Editor's Note: You can read Part I in our archives.

A Handcrafted Conspiracy, Part II

Making your cards

There are a number of ways you can go about making cards. Here are some suggestions!

The obvious way to start is to write on a blank card. Sounds fast and easy, but ***INWO*** blanks have a shiny surface that's not all that easy to work on. They are also hard to change -- cards will often go through a couple of revisions during design, and a couple more after you start playing with them.

It is easier to design the card separately. I like to make them up on the computer and print them out. I generally use Word, but almost anything that lets you put text where you want it will work. I have made passable cards in a pure ASCII text editor.

You can glue the paper cards onto blanks or spare commons. I prefer the glue that they use on sticky notes, which you can buy in a stick. It lets you chop and change as much as you like, because the paper peels right off. When you first stick the card on, you can slide it around until it is just right. Permanent glues are rarely so forgiving.

One problem is getting the look of the card right -- the size of the card, the fonts and point sizes, etc. ***INWO*** cards are 3 1/2 by 2 3/8 inches (about 89 by 60 mm). If you are making lots of cards, make your card image slightly smaller, so you don't spend all day trimming corners.

I suggest Arial 10pt bold for the title, 8 point italic for the meeble (the italicized quote part between the picture and the card text) and 8 point regular for the card text. I have these set up as styles in Word. This gives neat, readable cards that look similar in style to the real cards.

I like to print plots onto pale blue paper, groups onto pale pink paper, and resources onto a purplish-pink paper; it helps distinguish them at a glance without being too dark a background for reading black text.

One way to sidestep the formatting problems is to use Sam Kington's homebrew site

(http://www.illuminated.co.uk/inwo). The "Printer Ready" cards under Netscape 4 or Internet Explorer 4 look great.

Another problem with glued-on cards is shuffling them. The cards can also be a little thicker than normal cards, and sometimes you can spot this in the deck. Using soft plastic card sleeves easily solves both problems -- ordinary cheap ones work fine. This has the added advantage that you don't have to glue the paper cards on right away; if you insert them in the sleeves carefully, they'll work just fine on a temporary basis. This is especially handy if you make revisions after play.

What about Deluxe Illuminati?

The new Deluxe cards are the same size as ***INWO*** cards, and the font on the new Deluxe cards looks similar to Eurostile. The old Deluxe Illuminati cards are 3 1/2 by 2 1/4 inches. It came with three blank group cards. If you use all of these up and want to make a lot of cards, note that this is a standard playing-card size. You should be able to pick up a pack of cards of the right size cheaply. Ones with a simple back design in red and white (which are pretty standard) work quite well, though if you use sleeves with opaque backs it won't matter. Here I use Lucida Sans (12 point bold for the card title, 10.5 point for the rest), but the fonts probably aren't all that crucial -- in fact if you look closely, you can see that the font on some of the original cards is slightly different from the others.

Introducing Homemade Cards into play

Everyone in your play group has designed some cards and you want to play with them. How do you make sure that someone doesn't just put an "I win" card into their deck? This is probably the biggest single problem with homemade cards. The most obvious solution is to have an impartial judge decide if the cards are okay. This works really well, unless everyone qualified to judge also want to play!

One idea my play group had a couple of years ago was to restrict ourselves to cards that won a "Card of the Week" award on the inwo-cards mailing list (see the Steve Jackson Games ***INWO*** web pages at http://www.sjgames.com/inwo to find out how to subscribe to the various ***INWO*** mailing lists). Cards that are too powerful, too weak, don't quite work, or are just plain dull don't survive through the judging process. I highly recommend submitting your own cards there -- the feedback from the list members definitely helps you make better cards. If your brilliance goes unrecognized by an award, or you just don't want to share your genius with the rest of the world, here are a few other techniques you could try.

The One Big Deck Approach

Take the new cards that you and your friends have made up, as well as regular ***INWO*** cards, and play a One Big Deck game. That way everyone has a fair chance to get any card. Another idea is all the newly made groups start the game in the uncontrolled area. This serves the double purpose of giving everyone time to read them and think about what they do, and gives more opportunity for other players to stop the nastiest cards getting into play. If you are playing under ***SubGenius*** rules, you may want to make homemade cards in the uncontrolled area not count against the total.

Note that with ***SubGenius*** cards and rules you can play a game closer in style to the original ***Illuminati.*** If you liked the original game, and you have ***INWO*** cards, get your hands on ***SubGenius.*** If your store doesn't carry it, ask them to get it in. Most stores are very happy to do that. If they are a little hesitant, consider putting a deposit on it -- that convinces most retailers. If they still won't get it in (believe it or not, some retailers refuse to take a guaranteed profit), you can order it directly from Steve Jackson Games, who are happy to

take your Megabucks.

Playing One Big Deck style gives you the chance to design the whole deck -- you can pick cards that work well in One Big Deck games and avoid those that don't work so well. You can make themed decks. Aaron Curtis ran a competition for designed One Big Decks on the inwo-list. You can find a link to the entries to the competition on the Steve Jackson Games ***INWO*** web pages. If you play OBD, they are well worth a look. Some of these decks would be a great place to showcase your best homemade cards

The Card Lottery

All the designed cards are put into a single pile, shuffled and dealt to each player. The players then make the rest of their deck around these cards. This encourages interesting, but not powerful cards, since each of your rivals has as much chance of getting them as you do.

The Card Sale

Each player places their homemade cards face up in front of them. Each player is dealt about 55 cards from a big deck (or everyone has half a starter). Other players bid with cards from their own decks on each card, and the designing player chooses the best bid (you may allow several rounds of bidding). Cards that attract no bids go into their designer's deck. There needs to be a limit on the number of cards designed by each player in the Card Sale; for myself, I'd suggest around five as a maximum.

The Card Auction

All homemade cards are placed face up on the table, so all players can examine them, before being shuffled together. Each player has 100 points to spend, and the cards are auctioned one at a time (whole point bids only). If all the points have been spent, any remaining cards are retained by their designers. (If you wish, you could use small metallic disks to represent points. Once spent, these could go into a pot, and the winner of the game takes the pot. Of course, we could never condone gambling.)

The players then design decks using the cards they just bid for and their own "official" cards, with some agreed time limit -- perhaps twenty minutes. Some limit on the number of cards each person may contribute should probably be agreed here as well, perhaps no more than six or eight cards (more if there are more points to spend). This differs from the Card Sale in that designers can bid on their own cards.

The Card Veto

Players make up their own decks, containing no more than, say three homemade cards. Whenever a made up card is played or used in some way -- except generic effects like being discarded to power a Plot -- other players may choose to veto the card. Everyone has 10 veto tokens, and five tokens from any combination of players means the card is discarded.

Spending veto tokens becomes another part of the negotiations in the game. Spent tokens are lost whether or not enough were spent to veto a card. A player without veto tokens may gain one by spending an Illuminati action. The tactics of when you spend your veto tokens, and when you play your designed cards add a little spice to the game.

The Baptism of Fire

This works just like a Card Veto, except now every card must make a roll to enter play. Normally a card must roll under 10 to enter play, but veto tokens may be spent to reduce the roll that must be made by 1, and roll changing cards (like Murphy's Law) can affect the result. You may like to increase the number of veto tokens per player a little.

Card Attack

This only works with group cards, but most designed cards are groups. Designed groups can only enter play via attacks to control, never by automatic takeover. This gives other players the opportunity to prevent any card entering play.

These ideas discourage unreasonably powerful cards; quirky and interesting cards are much more likely to get into play.

A Homebrew Tournament

It seems a pity that all this good card design might only be seen by a few people, so here's an idea for a tournament that will reward good designs. You might find tournaments at gaming conventions, perhaps science-fiction conventions, or even your local game store. Running tournaments is a great way to meet new players, see new strategies, and infect others with the ***INWO*** meme.

Each player needs a starter and some designed cards. In the first round, the designed cards and one 55 card starter deck for each player are put into one big deck. The winner of each game, plus the designer of the best card from each game (and their homemade cards!) advance to the next round. To save cards, the decks at the end of each round can be shuffled together and split up to make new big decks for later rounds. If there are some very good cards, the concentration of made-up cards can be allowed to increase each round -- you might have up to 10 or 12 in the deck for the first round, maybe 18-20 in the second round. You may want to limit the number of homemade cards per entrant, perhaps to three or so.

A topical theme for the cards can help get people started on designs -- the best "in theme" cards could win an extra prize. At the end, the regular cards can be used for minor prizes. Minor prizes could be anything you like -- the funniest card, or the second best card in each game.

There would be separate prizes at the end for best player and best card. If you don't have enough judges, or don't want to rely on their judgment, the players can vote on the best card -- each player gets three points (for example) to allocate

to the one or two cards that they liked best, apart from their own. The winner is the player with the most votes, over all their cards. Voting should be by secret ballot. Ties count as shared victories for prizes.

More ideas on using homemade cards in play can be found on the Steve Jackson Games ***INWO*** pages (http://www.sjgames.com/inwo). Happy designing, making, and gaming!

by Chad Underkoffler

One of the strengths of the ***Unknown Armies*** roleplaying game is its rather abstract skills system. Characters may have nearly any skill they can imagine (with GM approval) and the game actually encourages creativity in this regard. A number of GMCs (Game Moderator Characters, what other games term NPCs) have such interesting and illuminating skills such as Beat You Senseless, Distracting Breast Implants, Make Gobs of Money, Weird Sexual Appeal Based on Being Perceived As A Challenge, Write Stirring Email Message, and Run in High Heels.

The Free Skills -- the skills that anybody in an average industrialized nation should have -- cover many of the role-playing basics: fighting, thinking, interacting, etc. The authors of ***Unknown Armies*** also provide a short list of other sample skills in the Character Creation chapter. But sometimes a player can get stuck when making up an ***Unknown Armies*** character, and while the examples given are pretty spiffy, one feels the need to look at more sample skills to help flesh out the character being detailed.

Below are 20 new skills for ***Unknown Armies*** characters, five for each of the Stats. Enjoy!

New Body Skills

Bounce Back Fast

This skill represents the ability to shake off some of the effects of being beaten silly. After being wounded in a combat, the character may roll against this skill. If successful, the GM may roll one die and add the amount to the PC's hidden Wound Point total. This skill only works once for each combat the character participates in, and is cumulative with First Aid attempts and other convalescence.

Crushing Blow

This skill represents getting in an exceptional hit in combat. If the attack roll is under the Crushing Blow level, add an additional die of damage. This is the same effect as the Hand-to-Hand Cherry of More Hurt. This skill is suited for big bruiser-types, and may not be higher than the level of the character's Struggle skill.

Charge!

This skill represents being able to physically plow through a knot of thugs in your way, a locked door, department store windows, a plasterboard wall, etc. The GM will adjudicate or veto all Charging attempts, and may choose to assess damage, if he feels it's warranted. This skill is suitable for running backs.

My Body is a Lethal Weapon

This skill represents hard fists, specialized martial arts strikes, or a dollop of just plain mean. If the character rolls an attack under his My Body is a Lethal Weapon level, he does an additional +3 damage. On a matched success, he does +6 damage. This skill is suited for martial artist-types, and may not be higher than the level of the character's Struggle skill.

My Grandma Hits Harder Than That!

This skill is for the real tough guys out there. If an opponent's successful attack roll is lower than the character's My Grandma Hits Harder Than That! skill, the GM may eliminate the higher of the two dice, so that the damage done is merely the lesser die roll, not the sum of the dice. This skill only affects hand-to-hand damage. *Example:* Juan the GMC punches Vinny PC in the forehead, rolling a 25. This would normally be 7 points of damage (2 + 5 =7). However, Juan's roll of 25 is under Vinny's My Grandma Hits Harder Than That! skill of 35%, so the 5 gets dropped, leaving only 2 points of damage for Vinny to take. He laughs in Juan's face! Next turn, Juan hits Jimmy, rolling a 40 against his Knuckle-Sandwich skill of 45. This is not below Vinny's MGHHTT! skill, and thus does it's full damage of 14 points. Who's laughing now, Vinny?

New Speed Skills

Evade Pursuit

This skill allows the character to lose pursuers through quick lane changes, ducking down alleys, making switchbacks, and general luck. It can be used for running on foot or driving a car.

Follow That Car!

This skill is used to follow another car, either surreptitiously or through twisty streets and massive traffic.

I'm There!

This skill allows a character to appear anyplace he could normally reach, only with style. This skill is favored by action heroes using air ducts to escape, grim vigilantes who disappear into the shadows, and those villains who tend to appear right behind the heroes while they're talking. The skill roll represents how "cool" the appearance is. *Example:* Ed sees two of Vance Dugan's enforcers on lookout duty. Ed wants to use his I'm There! skill of 40% to pop out of the shadows behind and right between them so that he can bash their heads together and knock them out. He rolls a 46%, and fails: one of the thugs hears him sneaking up behind him and evades Ed's grab!

It's All in the Reflexes

If something happens that requires an immediate reaction (like a stumble on the edge of a precipice, a ladder tipping over, an object hurled at the character, etc.), a successful roll against It's All in the Reflexes allows the character to take an immediate action (grab the edge of the chasm, jump from the ladder, catch the knife in midair and throw it back). If the character has a lower initiative than the event, this immediate action takes the place of his normal action. If the player has already acted before the event, he gets to react, but the IAitR roll does not take up his next action. It's a freebie.

Example 1: Some thugs are chasing Henry and Nancy through the streets of Macon; as their tires squeal, the passengers of the two cars exchange shots. Henry is due to go fourth during a round of combat. Unfortunately, the convertible that he's riding in just took a bullet to the gas tank and is about to explode. Henry rolls against his It's All in the Reflexes skill to react somehow. He rolls and succeeds, and the two troubleshooters dive out of the Caddy just as it explodes into a blossom of fire.

Example 2: Jack is facing a powerful adept named Lo Pan. He throws his knife at Lo Pan, who uses his magick to snatch it right out of the air. "Good knife. Goodbye, Mr. Burton." The villain throws the knife back at Jack. Jack rolls against his IAitR skill, succeeds, grabs the knife out of the air and wings it back at Lo Pan. He rolls for his attack, gets an 01 (!) and buries his knife up to the hilt in the adept's forehead.

Take A Bullet

This is the skill that a bodyguard uses to interpose himself between a shooter and his target. If successful, the bodyguard takes the damage intended for the target. If failed, the target still takes the hit.

New Mind Skills

Connect the Dots

This skill allows the character to put many pieces of information together to get a possible solution to a puzzle or crime. It is especially useful for police, detectives, private eyes, and snoopy reporters.

Debunk

This is the skill of explaining away weird stuff into mundane stuff. "Of course that man didn't levitate that bar-stool! It was all done with mirrors and string, and, er, magnets!"

Been There, Done That

This skill is for those characters who know it all, have globetrotted for years, and have allies and foes all over the place. This is not the same as a high-level of General Education, however. Where General Education is very much "book-learning," Been There, Done That represents a more hands-on experience. While BT, DT couldn't directly help you with an Archeology exam on ancient Egypt, it could help you find a decent guide to the Valley of Kings on the streets of Cairo.

I Know This City Like the Back of My Hand

This skill represents knowledge of all the streets, alleyways, walkways, avenues, boulevards, lanes, sewer systems, and so forth in a major metropolitan city, as well as shortcuts, usual traffic flow, right-of-ways, current construction projects, and the best place to get a Belgian Waffle at 3 am.

Research

This is the skill of knowing how to find out where information is collected. A character could use their Research skill to locate a copy of a medieval treatise on astronomy, an adept's personal webpage, any publicly available information on a person, even how to do a background check. This skill is useful for scientists, detectives, and librarians.

New Soul Skills

Conversation

This skill reflects the dying art of having a reasonable discussion about art, politics, world events, religion, or anything else. A successful roll against this skill could serve in the place of a Charm or Lie roll; one skillful in conversation may also be able to get people to volunteer thoughts, ideas, or information they wouldn't normally.

Danger Sense

The character has a "sixth sense" that can warn him of danger. Every so often, he gets a weird tingling at the back of his neck . . . This is a type of danger sense, that can warn someone of sneak attacks, make him realize he's in the crosshairs of a gun, tell him to jump back instead of forward, etc. The information provided is always vague and usually expresses itself in the split-second immediately before the danger appears.

Favors

This skill represents the chance that someone owes the character a favor. This skill only effects people that the PC could reasonably know, and doesn't necessarily mean that they *must* do a favor for him. However, most average people wouldn't think twice about paying back a favor, so long as it didn't inconvenience them too terribly.

Balance of Luck

This skill is much like Hunches, only it works after the fact. If the character flubs a roll against a skill, he can roll against Luck as a "second chance" to replace the failed roll. If successful, he will succeed at the formerly failed roll; however, he will then lose his next combat action or automatically fail his next non-combat roll in order to balance the karmic scales.

Example 1: Bob shoots (Guns 45%) at a tenebrae, and misses. He decides to use his Balance of Luck of 25% to try and hit it anyway, figuring that one good shot will kill it. He rolls against his Luck and gets a 23, which acts as if he rolled a 23 on his Guns skill, doing 23 points of damage. The bullet must have ricocheted off of one of the walls to hit the monster! This isn't enough to take it down, however, and it charges at Bob as he fumbles with his gun, which seems to have gotten jammed . . .

Example 2: Bob, having survived his encounter with the tenebrae, needs to break into an adept's sanctum. He rolls vs. his Breaking and Entering skill of 15%, and fails. He uses his Balanced of Luck again, and succeeds! The door opens with a low squeak, and Bob tiptoes in. Unfortunately, he's already failed his next roll: a Notice to hear the distant screams of his backup being atomized by the adept! Poor Bob!

Machines Like Me

The character has an uncanny knack for finding and fixing problems with any sort of machine. He can use this skill to find that elusive knock in an engine, cajole a dead battery into life, hot-wire a toaster oven, or figure out how to program a VCR correctly on the first try.

A Sinister Opponent for GURPS and Other Roleplaying Games

by Montejon Smith

Art by andi jones

Apophis, the Eye of Night, is also known to Humans as Apep, Eater of Stars and The Formless Shadow. He is a dark god of the maw-and-tentacle variety. His totem is the Kraken, his color is black, and his symbol is the Eightfold Eye. The essence of Apophis is darkness and cold, and he prefers to operate by stealth and treachery rather than through direct assault. His worship is popular with Fishmen (***GURPS Fantasy Folk,*** p. 70), and it may be that Apophis is also The Lord Beneath the Ice (***GURPS Horror,*** p. 69). The multi-tentacled horror in ***GURPS Supers Adventures*** is probably one of his vessels.

Servants

The Cult of Apophis

Even the rankest initiate of the Cult of Apophis, called Spawn, must wear black at all times and attend weekly services. These services, while eerie, do not involve anything considered really illegal. In fantasy worlds and unfree nations, of course, the Cult of Apophis may be outlawed directly. Initiates of the cult are also expected to attend as many monthly sacrifices as they can and avoid sunlight and open flame as much as possible. These requirements amount to no more than a Quirk in ***GURPS*** terms, unless Apophianism is outlawed. Being a known servant of Apophis may bear with it a social stigma or bad reputation, depending on how much of the true nature of the cult is known.

The lesser leaders of the faith are called Deacons in regions with a strong Christian or Satanist influence, and Greater Spawn elsewhere. These leaders, who have advanced in the Cult but who have not yet achieved the notice of their dark god, have all the same requirements as the initiates plus a few more. In addition to the requirement that they wear black and attend monthly sacrifice, they must attend all weekly gatherings, where they have a leadership role. They may not start fires. In modern campaigns they are forbidden to turn on a light switch. In ***GURPS*** terms these proscription and requirements amount to Disciplines of Faith at the -5 point level. Lesser Spawn eager for advancement may, of course, undertake to observe these disciplines.

The middle managers of the faith, called Archdeacons or
Spawnmasters, have even more requirements. They lead the weekly gatherings, and assist the local priest in monthly sacrifice. Like the deacons, they are forbidden to start a fire or turn on a light. Nor may they use artifacts of refined metal. In the modern world, and some fantasy worlds, archdeacons are also forbidden to fly. In ***GURPS,*** this amounts to Disciplines of Faith at the -10 point level. Archdeacons have a few benefits to balance their limitations, however. See the section on Characters, below.

Priests and High Priests have no more behavioral requirements than do the archdeacons, but do have different roles. Priests are the ones who actually behead the monthly sacrifices, and only High Priests may perform human sacrifice. It is, of course, not common knowledge that the Cult of Apophis undertakes human sacrifice at all. There is no inherent sexual bias in the cult, and there are may be more priestesses than priests, depending on how the GM views the effects of the Yin-Yang Imbalance.

There will be one priest for every few hundred initiates, and one high priest for every 20 or so priests. If you need a total number of high priests, 1d6+3 should do nicely. You can extrapolate backwards from there to determine about how many cultists there are worldwide.

Characters

What follows is a synopsis of cultists in ***GURPS*** terms. It ranges from the Archdeacons to the High Priests. They are not presented as complete templates, because it is expected that these traits will be grafted onto characters with other professions. Being a cultists is not a particularly profitable venture, even for the priesthood. The cult does not collect a tithe in the manner of Christian churches, and the selfish nature of the faith prevents much in the way of voluntary offerings. Where the cult is strong they may support a priest in the tradition of your classic evil fantasy priest, but in most places the priest will have a day job.

Archdeacon

Attributes: ST 10 [0], DX 10 [0], IQ 12 [20], HT 10 [0].
Advantages: Clerical Investment (Rank 1) [5], Literacy [10], Night Vision [10], Power Investiture 1 [10].
Disadvantages: Disciplines of Faith (Apophianism) [-10], Duty (Cult of Apophis, 12 or less) [-5].
Skills: Performance/Ritual (Apophianism) IQ [2], Theology (Apophianism) IQ [4], Fast Talk IQ [2], Sacrifice IQ-2 [1], Dancing DX -1 [1].
0-Point Trait: The character's "zone of comfort" is shifted downwards 10 degrees.

Priest

Attributes: ST 10 [0], DX 10 [0], IQ 13 [30], HT 10 [0].
Advantages: Clerical Investment (Rank 2) [10], Dark Vision [25], Literacy [10], Power Investiture 2 [20].
Disadvantages: Color Blindness [-10], Disciplines of Faith (Apophianism) [-10], Duty (Cult of Apophis, 15 or less) [-10], Secret (Attends human sacrifices) [-20], Yin-Yang Imbalance (Yin) [-5 or -10].
Skills: Performance/Ritual (Apophianism) IQ+1 [4], Theology (Apophianism) IQ+1 [6], Fast Talk IQ+1 [4], Sacrifice IQ [4], Dancing DX +1 [4].
0-Point Trait: The character's "zone of comfort" is shifted downwards 10 degrees.

High Priest

Attributes: ST 10 [0], DX 10 [0], IQ 14 [45], HT 10 [0]
Advantages: Clerical Investment (Rank 3) [15], Dark Vision [25], Literacy [10], Power Investiture 3 [30].
Disadvantages: Color Blindness [-10], Disciplines of Faith (Apophianism) [-10], Extremely Hazardous Duty (Cult of Apophis) [-20], Secret (Performs human sacrifice) [-30], Yin-Yang Imbalance (Yin) [-5 or -10].
Skills: Performance/Ritual (Apophianism) IQ+2 [6], Theology (Apophianism) IQ+2 [8], Fast Talk IQ+1 [4], Sacrifice

IQ+1 [6], Dancing DX +1 [4].
0-Point Trait: The character's "zone of comfort" is shifted downwards 10 degrees.

Services, Holy and Unholy Days

Weekly services are simple. A dozen to two dozen cultists will gather someplace dark, damp and chilly. There they chant and perform ritual dances. The archdeacon will spend some time ranting about why the worship of Apophis is so important and special. Then everyone will chant, perform a final dance, and go home. Worshipers will find themselves strangely exhausted, but slightly euphoric. In ***GURPS,*** those leaving a weekly service will be at one half Fatigue. They will also have a penalty to DX and IQ equal to half the number of Fatigue points lost (round up), to a maximum of -3. This penalty is removed at the rate of 1 point recovered per hour, but Fatigue loss can only be recovered through sleep. Occasionally a weekly service will involve the sacrifice of a cold-blooded animal. Usually the skull of the sacrifice is ritually crushed with a large wooden mallet, but small creatures will be smashed between two flat stones inscribed with the Eightfold Eye.

Monthly services are more complex, and always take place on the night of the new moon (or one particular moon if on a world with multiple moons). Several groups of cultists with gather in some ritual space or hidden temple. The size of the congregation may range from a few dozen to a few hundred. They will sing and chant, the archdeacons will rant in unison, and the priest will behead the sacrifice, which will always be a warm-blooded creature. Most beheadings are performed with an obsidian or glass dagger. The body of the sacrifice is then thrown into a sacred pool, and the officiating priest reads the pattern of blood and water for omens. The head of the sacrifice is then smashed (whether with the mallet or the stones). What is done with the resultant mess is up to the priest. The service wraps up with more chanting and dancing, and everyone goes home. Attendees will suffer the same weakness and euphoria as they would after a weekly service.

Apophis has no fixed holy days. However, a partial solar eclipse or any lunar eclipse counts as a Holy Day for its duration (see ***GURPS Religion,*** p. 103). During a full solar eclipse clerics of Apophis function as during a High Holy Day. During the hours before and after high noon Apophis' clerics suffer as during a Day of Weakness. On the day of the summer solstice Apophis is especially weak.

Special services are performed during a full solar eclipse. Such services always include sacrifice, and are the only services performed above the ground. Usually they do not include human sacrifice, however, because solar eclipses don't last long enough to do such a gory ritual justice.

Although the cult dabbles in human sacrifice, it does not dabble in that other practice of the stereotypical evil cult -- the orgy. Such passion clearly goes against the chilly and withdrawn worldview of the cult. While there is no moral injunction against such a practice, neither is there any encouragement. Apophis himself, although referred to using male pronouns, is considered to be hermaphroditic and mateless.

Goals and Motivations

The cult teaches that the world is a cold and unfriendly place, and that in order to survive the cultists must adapt to its chilling realities. It promotes a sort of communal solitude, in which the worshipers gather together, but share no real friendship or relationship. They are simply bound together by a common need for survival. Although those who advance in the cult of Apophis are clearly fanatics dedicated to the cult as an organization, they have no interest in the well-being of their fellow cultists as people. Betrayal and mistrust are not simply accepted, they are expected.

Apophis' personal goals are held to be freezing the world and devouring the sun. In the frozen world which follows his victory, he and his chill servants will sweep over the earth, ruling it for their own benefit.

The primary motivation for worshipers of Apophis is personal power. There is also a subtext of justice for the underdog, and for this reason it is very popular with adolescents and young adults who feel alienated from their peers.

Magic of the Cult

Priests cast spells much as wizards do. They should use the UMana rules even if the wizards in your campaign world don't, and can be considered to have the normal Recovery of 8 and Threshold of 30. Recovery occurs at dusk rather than dawn, of course.

Calamities use the following table:

3, 4: Nothing bad happens, and Apophis mysteriously shows mercy to his servant. The priest gets (1d×5) points of free, instant Recovery.
5-9: Nothing bad happens . . . Yet.
10: Gloom surrounds the priest, as if two levels of the Gloom spell had been cast upon him. These levels of Gloom darken the priest's own vision as well! They are not affected by his Night or Dark Vision. This effect lasts for 3d minutes.
11: The priest is struck with an awesome chill, and shivers so much he can undertake no new action for 3d turns (3d minutes if a HT roll is failed). Treat the priest as physically stunned while he is shivering. The effects of 10 are also applied.
12: The priest is stricken by his dark god. He is reduced to one half his current Fatigue and has a -4 penalty to his DX and IQ. The priest may make a HT roll every hour. Each successful HT roll reduces the penalties to DX and IQ by one level, but the Fatigue loss must be recovered normally.
13: The priest's god comes to visit his dreams for 4d days. After the first visitation the priest is at -2 to DX, IQ and related Skills. These penalties last until the priest gets a night's sleep without a visit.
14: Any failed spellcasting roll counts as a critical failure. This effect lasts for 1d+1 weeks.
15: The priest's mind is twisted in retribution for exceeding his authority. The GM should assign the character one debilitating Mental Disadvantage with a value of 1-5 points. This takes effect immediately and lasts for 24 hours. Each day thereafter the priest may make a Will roll to shake off the effect.
16: The priest has angered Apophis and reduced his god's favor. His Threshold for the next 1d weeks is reduced by 2d+5. The priest is aware of a drop, but not of it's severity! Result 10 also applies any time the priest casts any spell, successful or not, for the duration of effect 16.
17: The caster gains a 5-point disadvantage. After 3d days have passed, the priest has the option of buying it off (it will simply fade away). If the priest does not wish to, or doesn't have the points, then it becomes permanent. Any disadvantage is legal; the priest can get ugly, go insane, and so on.
18: The priest's Threshold is reduced by 4d+10; the change lasts 1d months! In addition, the priest's spellcasting will be at a -3 penalty for 2d weeks. Result 10 also applies any time the priest casts any spell, successful or not, for the duration of effect 18.
19: As per 17, but the disad is worth either 10 or 15 points (50/50 chance of either).
20: The priest is aged 2d+13 years, or a number of years equal to the energy cost of the spell that caused the calamity, whichever is worse!
21: Roll again (same modifier) but the result affects a companion of the priest (chosen randomly).
22: The priest gains multiple disads worth a total of (2dx5) points. These are permanent.
23: The priest loses permanently the ability to cast a single spell. The skill is still known, but it cannot be cast. The priest must make a (Will-6) roll. If it is successful, he chooses which spell "dies." If not, the spell is chosen at random. On a critical failure, the GM chooses the priest's most useful or favorite spell!
24: The priest loses 1d x 5 points of advantages (or has an attribute lowered). Choose randomly.
25: The priest becomes a wandering Low Sanctity zone. Spells cost double within a 10-mile radius of the priest, and Recovery is halted in the same area. Obviously these limits only affect priests of Apophis. The duration, in days, of this effect is equal to the cost of the errant spell, plus one. Result 10 also applies for the duration of effect 25 and is always on.
26: The priest's skill at spells is reduced by 3d+5. The priest must make a Will roll. If it is successful, the penalty will heal at a rate of one per day. If not, the healing rate is one per week!
27: A plague or curse (e.g. constant rain, regional impotence) descends on the region, lasting for 3d+ weeks. No one will be able to trace this to the priest (-20 to divination attempts on the subject). In secret magic or modern-day investigative campaigns, replace this effect with effect 29.

28: The spell propagates out of control. Harmful Regular or Area spells will affect everybody and every thing nearby, allies and enemies alike. Information magic will overload the priest's mind (Fright Check at -20); Missile Spells will seem normal to the caster, but have so much punch that they drill through their target and through everything else for miles beyond, etc. In secret magic or modern-day investigative campaigns, replace this effect with effect 29.
29: The priest permanently loses the ability to cast spells, but not the skills. At this level and above, the spell that causes the roll fails unless a Will roll is made by the priest. The roll is at a penalty equal to the current "excess bonus" (Excess/5 for most priests), and at a bonus equal to triple the priest's level of Power Investiture.
30-39: As per 29, and something happens to the region the priest is in -- the weather, birth rate, crops, or something else will be affected. It will be a subtle change, but the priest will know what is going on. The change is good on an even roll, and bad on an odd roll. The duration is equal to the cost of the spell, in days.
40+: As per 30-39, but a global change occurs. In addition, the priest must make a HT roll at -6. If this roll is failed, the priest is consumed in a backlash of deific rage, and shatters in a shower of frozen shards. The explosion does concussion/freezing damage. It does the priest's (Will+Power Investiture) dice of damage as if a fragmentation grenade had gone off in the priest's hex. If the HT-6 roll is made, the backlash is less dramatic; the priest takes 1d×2d of internal freezing damage, and doesn't shatter.

Spells of the Cult

Priests buy spells as skills, just as wizards do. However, they have a special approach to prerequisites. Certain spells are only available to certain levels of the priesthood. Also, if the spell has prerequisites and those prerequisites are on the list of spells available to all cultists, the cultist must take the prerequisite spell.

The following spells are available to all cultists with Power Investiture: Hide Thoughts, Hide Emotion, Shape Water, Swim, Walk Through Water, Darkness, Night Vision, Gloom, Seek Water, Foul Water, Resist Water, Cold, Resist Cold, Freeze, Frost, , Frostbite (Touch only), Coolness, Steal Health (Special), Desecrate, Ice Slick, Snow Shoes.

The following spells are only available to Priests: Insignificance, Create Water, Breathe Air, Breathe Water, Water Vision, Body of Water, Water Jet, Fog,, Icy Weapon, Ice Sphere, Ice Dagger, Frostbite, Create Ice, Snow Jet, Icy Touch, Icy Breath, Icy Missiles, Blur, Hide, Dark Vision, Shape Darkness, Curse (Maximum level 2), Fear, Panic, Terror, Nightmare, Mystic Mist.

The following spells are only available to High Priests: Presence, Whirlpool, Waves, Tide, Snow, Hail, Flesh to Ice, Body of Ice, Rain of Ice Daggers, Body of Shadow, Fascinate, Death Vision, Animate Shadow, Curse.

Note that it is possible to be both a priest of Apophis and a mage.

The Steal Health spell of the Cult is special:

Steal Health (Apophis) Regular; Resisted by HT

Lets the caster take Hit Points from the subject to reduce his own Threshold penalty. The caster must touch the subject. The spell stops when the caster's Threshold is fully restored, when the subject breaks away, when the caster decides to stop, or when the subject's Hits reaches -HT. Hits cannot be drained from a subject at -HT, but the subject must still roll versus HT to stay alive. Hits may be drained at the rate of 1 per second. If the subject breaks away, untallied Hit Points fade at the rate of one per minute and the spell can be begun again from where the caster left off.
Duration: Permanent.
Cost: None to the caster. For every 3 full Hits drained, the caster regains 1 THRESH.
Time to Cast: 3 seconds.
Prerequisite: Frostbite and Desecrate.

Final Words

The Cult of Apophis is designed to serve as a long-term enemy for a long-term campaign. It is, in fact, designed for

my own homegrown dark fantasy world. It doesn't take much to tweak it into the world of ***GURPS Black Ops, GURPS Technomancer,*** or the like. Dumping it into a ***GURPS Traveller*** campaign might prove to be a little more difficult, but if you don't mind mixing your sci-fi with the occult, have at it! The Cult's modular design should make it easy to use for any GM.

Converting RPG Characters to Button Men

by Darrin Bright

Art by Keith Johnson

Are you tired of card games? Did you get burned on pogs? Maybe you're still scratching your head over collectable candy? Wait until you see the next craze . . . the ***Button Men*** are coming.

Pushing Buttons

Button Men is another brilliant Cheapass game designed by James Ernest, who has been turning heads in the game industry with hits like ***Kill Dr. Lucky*** and ***Give Me The Brain.*** (*Editor's Note:* click here to read the Pyramid Pick review.) ***Button Men*** pits two fighters, five dice apiece, against one another in a fast and furious one-on-one duel. The rules are amazingly simple, the gameplay is quick, and the strategy can get very complex. If you haven't run across this game yet, you might want to stop by the Cheapass Games Secret Web Site and check out the different fighters, the rules, and even some in-depth articles on strategy, as well as all the other incredibly clever and highly addictive games in their lineup.

Cheapass has rewritten the rules and has introduced two new characters, Hannah and Kublai. Cheapass junkies will recognize the latter from the ***Lord of the Fries*** game. With twelve Button Fighters to choose from, teasers about more crossovers, license deals, and new expansions, what more could you possibly want?

Conversion rules, of course! Maybe Avis just isn't getting things done for you, or you just can't find a fighter you can stick with. Maybe you've just lost to Hammer the sixth time in a row, and you know your 20th-level fire-breathing anti-paladin can kick his caboose any day of the week, right? Time to find out!

Pushing Buttons

The Basics

To convert your favorite RPG characters into Button Fighters, we just need to pick a few stats and divide them up into six basic categories. The first three numbers we need to determine will be the character's Speed, his physical Strength, and his Skill with his primary weapon. The fourth die is determined by how high the other dice are to help even things out.

As you'll probably notice, the following system doesn't go out of its way to be terribly complex or even-handed. Combat-intensive characters will tend to get higher dice than social- or academic-oriented characters. You'll just have to take your lumps and live with it, though . . . the Button Men live in a gritty, harsh world where the

strong survive and the weak get smushed on a regular basis. Besides, having bigger dice means you have more to lose, so in this devilishly-balanced game big dice are no guarantee of victory . . .

If you don't get the dice you want, remember that your fifth die is always a Swing Die. Since you can pick whatever you want as your Swing Die, you can compensate if you get a set of numbers you don't like.

Step 1 -- Determine Speed and Strength

For ***GURPS, AD&D, Call of Cthulhu,*** and other game systems based on a 3d6 (3-18) system for character generation, use the following table to determine the first two Button Fighter numbers. The first number roughly reflects how fast the character is or how often the character wins initiative, so the higher your dexterity (or equivalent stat) the lower the number. Use Column A for Speed. Strength is just the opposite. The higher your physical strength, the higher the number. Use Column B for Strength.

Stat	A(Speed)	B(Strength)
1-4	20	4
5-7	12	6
8-10	10	8
11-13	8	10
14-16	6	12
17+	4	20

Example: Lurch the Half-Ogre has a Strength of 18/00 and a Dexterity of 6. OK, so he's not much of a dancer. His first two Button Fighter numbers are 12 and 20.

For *Storyteller* systems like ***Vampire: the Masquerade*** and ***Werewolf: the Apocalypse,*** we have to add things a little differently. If the character has different stats in different forms (like Garou), use whatever form the character usually fights in. Determine your Speed by adding Wits+Alertness or Dexterity+Dodge, whichever is higher, and use Column A in the chart below. Vampires can add points for Celerity to either total.

Strength is a little trickier. For Werewolves, add Strength+Rage. For Vampires, add Strength+Courage+Potence. For humans and mages, add only Strength+Courage. Then consult Column B on the chart below.

Total	A(Speed)	B(Strength)
1-2	20	4
3-4	12	6
5-6	10	8
7-8	8	10
9-10	6	12
11+	4	20

Example: Runs-With-Scissors is a werewolf who likes to hit people with trees. He's not the sharpest crayon in the box, so he adds his 6 Dexterity in his Crinos form to his Dodge of 4. His Strength in Crinos is 6 and his Rage is 3, so his first two Button Fighter numbers are a pair of 12s.

For ***Deadlands*** characters, use the Quickness Trait for Speed (Column A) and the Strength Trait for Strength (Column B) on the chart below.

Trait	A(Speed)	B(Strength)
1d4-3d4	20	4

4d4, 1d6-2d6	12	6
3d6-4d6, 1d8-2d8	10	8
3d8-4d8, 1d10-2d10	8	10
3d10-4d10, 1d12	6	12
2d12+	4	20

Example: A reformed gunslinger turned preacher, Zachariah Queeg has a Quickness of 3d10 and a Strength of 3d6. His first two Button Fighter numbers are 6 and 8.

Step 2 -- Determining the Third Die

Your third Button Fighter number is roughly how good you are with your primary weapon. At this point we won't worry too much about what type of weapon it is or how much damage it does. A sword is as good as a gun if your character knows how to use it well enough.

For ***GURPS*** characters, use the skill value for the character's best combat skill and determine it just as if you would determine Strength, by consulting Column B on the appropriate chart above. Thus, if Tommy the Pizza Delivery Boy's skill with a pizza cutter is a 14, his third Button Fighter number is a 12.

For ***AD&D,*** use the character's THAC0 and consult the following chart.

THAC0	**Skill**
18-20	4
15-17	6
12-14	8
9-11	10
6-8	12
0-5	20

Example: Remember Lurch? He's a 1st level fighter, so his THAC0 is just a 20. His third Button Fighter number is a 4, which balances nicely with the 12 and 20 he has already.

Call of Cthulhu and some other game systems use percentile-based skills. To determine the third number for a game that uses a percentile system, take the character's highest combat skill and use the chart below.

Percentile	**Skill**
01-15	4
16-30	6
31-45	8
46-60	10
61-80	12
81+	20

Example: Freelance investigator "Pinky" Boyd plays baseball when he's not getting eaten by Deep Ones. His Club skill is 75%, so his third Button Fighter number is a 12.

For *Storyteller* characters, add Dexterity to either Brawl, Melee, or Firearms, depending on which is higher or which skill the character uses most often. Then consult Column B on the chart above like you did with Strength. **Example:**

Runs-With-Scissors has 3 points in Firearms and Brawl, but 5 points in Melee, so he uses that. Added to his Dexterity of 6, he winds up with a 20 for his third Button Fighter number.

For ***Deadlands*** characters, use the highest combat aptitude and consult Column B on chart above like you did with Strength. For most characters, this is either a shootin' or fightin' skill, but hucksters could use their best direct-damage hex. Sykers and Doomsayers from Hell On Earth might want to use their Blastin' aptitudes. **Example:** Kevin Gable, a shyster of a huckster who likes crooked card games, has no shooting skills and a pitiful 1d6 in fightin'. His Soulblast is a more useful 4d8, however, so his third Button Fighter number is a 10.

Step 3 -- Determining the Fourth Die

The last step is to add up the first three numbers and consult the chart below. The chart is set up so that lower totals get a high die, and higher totals get a low die. This is a more or less crude attempt to even things out and prevent uber-characters from winding up with nothing but 12- and 20-siders, but it's not perfect. Even so, it should even things out enough to give one Button Fighter a decent chance against any other.

Total	**Die**
60	*(see below)
38-52	4
32-36	6
26-30	8
22-24	10
18-20	12
12-16	20

Pushing Buttons

* Did you actually get three 20-siders? Geez, is your GM a pushover! Well, that's just plain ugly and not very fair. If you want, you can keep three of them and play with only four dice, just as if you were playing Iago. Or you can drop one or more of them to 12 and go from there. Your fourth number will most likely be a 4, but at least you're back in the neighborhood of playing fair.

Example: Lurch the Half-Ogre got 12, 20, and 6 for his first three numbers. These add up to 38, so his fourth die is a 4. This is how he looks as a Button Fighter (numbers listed lowest to highest).

Lurch: 4 6 12 20 X

Remember, X is the Swing Die, so his player can pick a 4 or a 6 for more speed or bring out the heavy artillery with a 12 or 20.

Looks like Lurch is all set to start punching people's buttons!

by Scott D. Haring

Stephen V. Cole is practically synonymous with ***Star Fleet Battles.*** As co-designer of the original game (with Steve Petrick) and main driving force behind its early growth, Petrick and Cole's Amarillo Design Bureau was the source for all things ***SFB.*** Now, after several years out of the picture, Cole, Petrick, and ADB are back. We chatted with Stephen Cole recently via e-mail.

Pyramid: So, you're back in the saddle with ***Star Fleet Battles.*** How did that happen?
Cole: After nearly two years of protracted negotiations and several dead-end deals that never quite happened, we were able to buy the license, inventory, and rights from TFG (Task Force Games) and became our own publisher.

Pyramid: What are your plans for the ***SFB*** line?
Cole: To get it back where it was in the market, and then take it where it should have been. Broader product lines, more creativity, more adventure.

Pyramid: How much of the out-of-print material will you bring back, and how quickly?
Cole: We plan to bring back everything that would have been kept in the line if there had been no interruption or change of publishers. For example, the ***P Modules*** were playtest products designed for a very short life cycle and will not come back. ***Captain's Log*** was always designed as a one-print-run product that sells through and then disappears forever (with some of the playtest stuff in it moving on to regular products). Beyond that, we plan to bring back most everything else within a year, probably finishing up with the new ***Tournament Module*** along about spring 2000. We have already brought back ***Basic Set*** and ***Modules R2*** and ***R4.*** We will shortly bring back ***Federation & Empire*** and ***SFB Advanced Missions.*** I would expect the other modules (***C1, C2, K,*** and ***R3***) to come back this fall.

Pyramid: How much stuff will be new?
Cole: Lots! We have all of the ***SFB*** products that were planned before the interruption, and more we have thought of since then. Beyond that, we will be bringing in at least three outside design shops to produce their own products, and our new ***Stellar Shadows*** line will allow anyone with an idea and the money to print it to bring their product to market through us. Even someone with one ship and a hundred bucks can get printed and make a profit on his investment.

Pyramid: What is your overall goal?
Cole: Make money, have fun, and entertain our customers.

Pyramid: How many products a year?
Cole: I never counted "products per year," and was always kind of surprised at the end of any given year to see how many we had done. Given the ***Stellar Shadows*** line, we could easily hit a product a month after the first year, but if we don't, I'm really not going to cry about it. Number of products isn't the point. If we serve our customers, we'll make enough to stay in business, which is the ultimate service to the customers.

Pyramid: Is there a limit due to the size of the market?
Cole: Could be, but we haven't found it yet.

Pyramid: Just how many ***Star Fleet Battles*** fanatics are left out there? Enough to support a company?

Cole: I have no idea, but as our plans develop, we hope to bring back many of the previous players, recruit a lot of new ones, and keep the ones we still have as happy as we can. From what we have seen, there are certainly more than enough to support ADB, Inc.

Pyramid: What kind of response have you gotten from the fans so far?
Cole: Very gratifying. Mail order is running hot, and the wholesalers are already turning in follow-up orders because the stores are selling out of the first shipments. We produced an "information for retailers" sheet, put it on the web site, and asked players to print it out and give it to their store managers. That has produced a lot of demand hitting the wholesalers.

Pyramid: Do you plan to do other games? If so, what?
Cole: We have no plans to do anything other than ***SFB***-related games. Given how many of them there are on the ideas list, there doesn't seem to be any shortage of things to do. While I have always wanted to publish a series of World War II games that I half-designed a decade ago, the bottom line is that ***Star Fleet Battles*** outsells them. As an engineer, I have to build what people want to buy, not what I want to build. If there came a time that we had totally satisfied all of our ***SFB*** players and had a really good game in hand, we might print it, but I would strongly advise freelance designers not to waste the postage sending us their non-***SFB*** designs.

Pyramid: There is practically an entire generation of gamers out there who only know of ***Star Fleet Battles*** as a game the old-timers played in the good old days. How do you plan to reach them?
Cole: Three or four years is an entire generation now? Gee, I knew the world was speeding up! Seriously, we'll reach new customers the old fashioned way -- we'll produce good products and show people that we have them.

Pyramid: Will you be hitting the big summer conventions?
Cole: We will be at Origins because we have a long-term commitment to host the annual "Gold Hat" tournament there, and it's always been the best sales convention for the line. However, we don't really plan to attend other conventions as it just takes too much time away from the office for the core designers. We are arranging to sponsor tournaments and have our products taken there by some of our dealers. Now, I might mention that we rarely get talked into sending Steve Petrick to a convention that pays for his expenses.

Pyramid: What other marketing plans do you have?
Cole: We're going to enhance our support of tournaments and conventions, and do some advertising in various places. But the first phase has to be restoring our active playing base and our store shelf space. We have to rebuild the hotel before we go beating the bushes for more guests.

Pyramid: Is getting back into ***SFB*** as much fun as you thought it would be?
Cole: As much fun as I thought it would be, and as much pure nightmare as I feared it would be. Everything took longer and cost more to get going. The phone company took a month to get our phones working, and it's been a three-month struggle to get directory assistance to give out the right number. We found a great warehouse that we really love, but had to spend hundreds of bucks replacing a lot of the wiring. Reprinting ***Basic Set*** was a nightmare because about 90% of the parts were out of stock, and ***F&E*** is little better. But there were good points, too. Wholesalers were calling with orders before we even knew when we'd have product to sell. The printers who produced ***SFB*** are all very enthusiastic about working with us. And hundreds of players have take the time to send us letters (mostly e-mail) thanking us for seeing the deal through and bringing ***SFB*** back.

Pyramid: Any hopes of getting together with Last Unicorn and doing ***SFB***-type games for *Next Generation, Deep Space 9* and *Voyager*?
Cole: We have all we can handle for right now, but if they have ideas for ways we can work together, I'll give them a listen.

Pyramid: And what happened to Task Force Games, anyway?
Cole: So far as I know, it still exists, although I don't think they're actually publishing anything. The people who worked there all seem to work for Harlequin now, but the last time I called TFG, the phone was answered.

Pyramid: After all these years, is it still fun?

Cole: If it wasn't, I'd be doing something else.

by Elizabeth McCoy

The ***Liber Servitorum*** was nowhere as easy a compilation-and-edit job as the ***Liber Castellorum.*** Among other reasons, instead of only a dozen authors, I had potentially two or three dozen, since we threw the doors open to have a contest! (I wound up with 27 authors in the book.) Also, I quickly discovered that some types of characters were more popular than others. Perhaps due to my initial warnings, Servitors of Creation were light on the ground, and I only got two Bright Lilim (and no Lilim of the Sword or Judgment!).

Habbalah, however, were plentiful, and I had nearly half-a-dozen of them in Stygia alone! It was hard to choose, and Genevieve Cogman's Idalah was one runner up to Ishmah (p. 62 of the ***Liber Servitorum***) -- you see, evil doesn't have to be huge. It can be as simple and close-to-home as your own office . . .

Idalah

Habbalite of Factions

Liber Servitorum Designer's Notes

"Well, I wouldn't treat a dog the way she treats you, Mary." The blonde woman twitched her head, making her short-cut hair bounce. "I call it downright unreasonable."

The dark-haired woman at the desk sniffed into her hanky. "It wouldn't matter so much if she weren't so vicious about it. I'm not some kind of moron."

"Of course you aren't." The blonde woman patted her on the shoulder encouragingly, and the glint of pure contempt in her eyes was gone before anyone could see it. "You don't deserve to have her looking down on you like that. And I know the others feel just the same way about it."

"You think so?" Mary looked up. "You think it's worth telling her where to get off?"

"I'm sure of it." The other smiled, and reached out with her mind, and ***pushed,*** *feeling the confidence flood into Mary. "You just need to stand up to her, just once, in public, and tell her what you think of her behavior. It'll work. I've seen it before."*

Indeed I have, *she thought,* ***and I've seen the entire office come apart because of it, and all it proves is what weaklings you all are.***

Corporeal Forces - 2 Strength 4 Agility 4
Ethereal Forces - 4 Intelligence 8 Precision 8
Celestial Forces - 3 Will 7 Perception 5

Vessel: Human/2 (blonde female in 30s), Charisma +1
Role: "Ida Lathen," Office Temp/3, Status/2
Skills: Computer Operation/3, Detect Lies/2, Driving/1, Fast-Talk/2, Knowledge/2 (Office Bureaucracy), Ranged Weapon/2 (Revolver)
Songs: Tongues (Corporeal/3)
Attunements: Habbalite of Factions, Imbroglio

Idalah is a young Servitor of Factions whose particular expertise is destroying harmony among office-workers and clerical staff. Her vessel is female, blonde, mid-twenties and unremarkable, dressed to fit in with whatever firm she is currently working for. When assigned as a temporary assistant to some office, she spends the first week identifying those people in the office who are most important as peacemakers, organizers, and experts. She then sets about isolating them from the rest of the office, arranging arguments and exacerbating quarrels, and generally throwing the place into turmoil.

This does not necessarily mean that the quality of work from the office will suffer -- at least, not immediately. Idalah is a very efficient typist, and up-to-date with office procedures and computer usage. She often finds herself propping the office up while everyone else neglects their work to feud with their coworkers and develop their grudges -- thus confirming her opinion of humanity. Of course, when she leaves, the office then falls apart . . .

Idalah is definitely not combat-oriented, and does her best work when never suspected. She has on several occasions been hired into offices where known Soldiers of God worked, with particular instructions to cause them as much trouble as possible. She has also caused trouble in businesses owned by angelic roles, or their servants. However, if an angel enters the office or discovers her identity, her tactics -- short of direct orders to the contrary -- are to develop a sudden illness and let another temp take over the office work. She has a healthy sense of self-preservation.

Idalah is not, as yet, particularly ambitious, and is happy to keep working on low-risk jobs while she strengthens her techniques and builds up a good reputation in the eyes of her superiors. Of course, they steal most of her credit, but she reasons that *eventually* someone will have to notice what a good job she's doing. Lately she has begun growing interested in the scope open to computer sysops and network moderators, and is considering making overtures to Servitors of Vapula.

***

In the middle of playtest, it was discovered that the Word-bound, almost uniformly, didn't have enough space to actually shine -- especially if they had a lot of skills and Songs! One page can be a very tight fit, if your character has any history, and we discovered that one thing a Word-bound needed to have was *history*. Finally, it was decided to cut all Word-bound from the book, and save them in the hopes of some future book dedicated to immediate superiors and contenders for Superior-hood -- or ones who almost made it, such as Marou, the true mistress of Hani Basyah (***Liber Servitorum,*** p. 105) who nearly held the Word of Seduction, but wasn't quite skilled enough for Lucifer to agree.

One minor Word-bound who was cut was near and dear to my heart -- but really, the following didn't half describe all the history and quirkiness that would have made her come alive . . . (And look at all those blessed skills!!)

Kathriel

Malakite of Creation

Angel of Sculpting

"Inside that block of marble, that board of wood, there's something beautiful. It's the same with souls -- you see a demon, but I see the unrealized angel inside. You see a punk human headed for Hell, but I can see a Saint. You just have to show them the glory inside, and they'll shape themselves."

Corporeal Forces - 4 Strength 8 Agility 8
Ethereal Forces - 6 Intelligence 12 Precision 12
Celestial Forces - 5 Will 10 Perception 10

Vessels: Human Male/1, Charisma +3; Human Female/4, Charisma +3.
Skills: Acrobatics/1, Artistry (Carving/1, Drawing/1, Painting/1, Sculpting/6), Detect Lies/1, Dodge/3, Driving/3, Emote/1, Escape/1, Fighting/4, Knowledge/3 (Psychology), Languages (English/1, French/3*, German/1, Japanese/1, Spanish/1), Large Weapon/2 (Sword), Move Silently/1, Savoir-Faire/1, Singing/2, Small Weapon/1 (Knife), Ranged Weapon (Pistol/1, Sling/1), Seduction/1, Throwing/1.
Songs: Form (All/3), Healing (All/2), Motion (All/3), Shields (Ethereal/2, Celestial/3), Tongues (All/1), Wings/3.
Attunements: Ofanite of Creation, Elohite of Creation, Malakite of Creation, Mercurian of Creation, Abracadabra, Transubstantiation.
Malakite Oaths: (i) never suffer evil to live by her choice; (ii) never surrender or allow herself to be captured by Lucifer's armies; (iii) never make a snap judgment about someone; (iv) never hurt an innocent.
Special Ability: Kathriel can mold *anything*, with the power of her will and a bit of Essence. A cubic yard (or less) of something light and easily sculpted is 1 Essence; hard materials, such as marble, require 4 per cubic yard; diamond would take 6. An Artistry (Sculpting) roll is required to determine how aesthetic (or useful) the result is.
Special Rite: Spend 3 hours creating sculpture.

Kathriel is one of Eli's few "unattached" Servitors. Instead of being in service to anyone, Kath takes her orders from Eli -- when he chooses to give any. The rest of the time, she's either riding with some of her Choirmates of the Wind, or avoiding everyone, dodging Judgment triads who want to ask her questions about her Archangel. Kathriel doesn't understand her occasional enigmatic orders, or know why her boss is AWOL, but she figures that if Eli wanted Judgment to know what he was up to, he'd have told Dominic himself. So, since Seraphim of Judgment are *very* perceptive, she doesn't want to talk to them at all. (Admittedly, it's always difficult for even a Seraph to get information about a Superior who doesn't want that to happen, but Kath doesn't like taking chances.)

When Eli was still in Heaven, Kath was one of his "Redemption Squad" -- angels who had the talent and training to find demons who held the potential for good, and then manipulate them into seeking redemption. There, she learned the tricks of sculpting souls until they could realize they *wanted* to be redeemed.

Though Kath was comparatively young to hold such power, Eli used his then-considerable influence to get her the Word of Sculpting, shortly before he left Heaven. She does her best to use it wisely and well.

Kathriel's third oath means she never assumes "demon = evil." With a complete reading of someone's honor (check digit 6), she'll act -- but that's enough information that it's not a *snap* judgment. She'd rather take the time to get Infernals redeemed (or humans saved) instead of just killing them. However, this does not mean she's adverse to terrifying those who deserve it; it takes her a little while, but she can entomb someone in earth or stone, and then discuss how much she'd like to carve *them* -- unless they do as she's asking. And if they're really irredeemable . . . she'll kill them. Malakim are like that.

Kath travels all over, dodging Judgment or on Eli's enigmatic orders. She'll recruit help when she needs it, lend Good a hand or try to foil demonic plots -- a powerful enemy or ally, but she doesn't stick around long. She's got her own missions.

***

It wasn't easy to choose -- there are a lot of good submissions which weren't used, and I've still got them all. I hope that the first book is popular enough for a sequel someday, because with all these random angels and demons on my hard-drive, there's no telling what mischief they'll get up to . . .

by T. Carter Ross

Art by andi jones

Across Ytarria, people have grown nervous. A thousand years ago, the Banestorm whisked people from their homes to Yrth, and now the third millennium is dawning. None know if the year A.D. 2000 will mean a return to Earth, bodily assumption to the bosom of the Lord, or absolutely nothing at all.

While most in the Church remain skeptical of anything apocalyptic happening in the days, weeks, or month surrounding the year 2000, the Curia is having trouble keeping some of the Christians of Yrth calm. From across Christendom, the Templars, Hospitallers and Michaelites bring reports of priests, mages and others proclaiming the imminent end of the world. Last October, four heretics claiming to be the returned Christ had to be cleansed in a grand auto-da-fe in Serrun.

Now, in the city of Sho'joor, a charismatic wandering preacher called Aloo'rilaam, apparently an albino Hobgoblin, has been drawing large crowds among the traditionally faithful Goblins, wooing them with a mixture of end-times theology and Goblin chauvinism.

At last report, some 300 Goblins in Southern Megalos were proclaiming at least tacit acceptance of the Lurite heresy, and the Curia is concerned that its acceptance is spreading.

The Michaelites have come close to capturing the heretic twice, but each time he managed to elude the holy brothers. Now, Aloo'rilaam has gone into hiding. The Michaelites believe he is in one of the Goblin villages that dot the southern countryside, but he may have fled to Araterre, Cardiel or the Muslim lands.

According to Michaelite reports, Aloo'rilaam preaches that Goblins are the original Israelites, delivered long ago to Gabrook. Over the centuries, some gave in to their bestial nature, degenerating into Hobgoblins; others became swollen with self-importance and pride. All forgot their special relationship with God. For that He sent forth the Banestorm to punish them. Those who were irredeemable were killed on Gabrook, just as God killed all but those saved by Noah in the flood. The elect were brought to Yrth and given a second chance. Now, the period of exile is almost over, according to Aloo'rilaam, and the righteous will soon return to Gabrook and God's favor.

The Lurite heresy views humans and other races as tools of God. They exist to both tempt Goblins away from and prompt them back toward the path of righteousness. However, while non-Goblins may be learned beings, they are not the chosen ones. When God brings forth the Banestorm again, only Goblins will return to paradise. Oddly, Aloo'rilaam has not said what role Reptile Men and Kobolds -- both of which came with Goblins from Gabrook to Yrth -- play in God's grand plan.

Aloo'rilaam

A short man (5'6", 140 pounds) with a distinctive voice wearing a

long, cowled robe that hides his features and body completely.
Age: 33.

Attributes: ST 9 [20]; DX 14 [20]; IQ 14 [45]; HT 12 [10].
Advantages: Ally Group (Lurite followers, 9 or less) [20]; Charisma +3 [15]; Language Talent +2 [4]; Literacy [10]; Reputation +1 (among Goblins, 10 or less) [1]; Sparrial [8].
Disadvantages: Albinism [-10]; Amnesia [0]; Appearance (Ugly) [-10]; Delusion (Messenger of God) [-10]; Enemy (Michaelites, 9 or less) [-30]; Excommunicated [-5]; Sense of Duty (to followers) [-10].
Quirks: Always wears a cowl to hide appearance; Mutters in Sparrial; Never lets others see him eat [-3].
Skills: Area Knowledge (Southern Megalos)-14 [1]; Augury-11 [1]; Bard-16 [6]; Brawling-14 [1]; Cooking-14 [1]; Cyphering-14 [1]; Dreaming-13 [4]; Fast-Talk-15 [4]; History (Goblins of Yrth)-14 [4]; Knife-14 [1]; Lucid Dreaming-13 [1/2]; Savoir-Faire-15 [2]; Singing-12 [1]; Staff-13 [2]; Streetwise-13 [1]; Teaching-13 [1]; Theology (Christianity)-14 [4].
Languages (includes +2 for language talent): Anglish-14 [1/2]; Goblin-16 [2]; Sparrial (Native)-16 [--]; Latin-15 [1].

Aloo'rilaam's earliest memories are of a small hut in the countryside outside of Ekhans. He had been found, burned and mutilated, in a nearby field by a kindly old Goblin woman. As the woman nursed him back to health, she tried to learn from Aloo'rilaam who and what he was. All he could do was to feebly state his name, which left the woman to weave her own version of his story.

The woman decided that Aloo'rilaam was a deformed hobgoblin who'd been tortured and cast out from his tribe. Because his eyes -- as odd as they were -- had a light of kindness and intelligence behind them, she worked hard to educate Aloo'rilaam. Enlisted into this effort was the village priest who found Aloo'rilaam to be an eager student.

A total amnesiac, Aloo'rilaam believed the story the woman developed for him. His same thirst for self-knowledge led him to grasp at the message of salvation offered by the priest. So as to not frighten others, Aloo'rilaam began to wear a cowled robe to hide both his burns and his deformed features. As he healed and learned, Aloo'rilaam began to have increasingly vivid dreams.

At first, the priest was excited by Aloo'rilaam's dreams, many of which involved communication with Goblin-like images of the divine, but soon Aloo'rilaam's visions left the priest more and more worried. He called in an exorcist to see if the young man was possessed by demons, but to no avail. Although Aloo'rilaam had little inkling as to what was going on, he could smell (literally) that the priest's attitude toward him had changed.

When the old woman learned that Michaelites were being sent to question "her boy," she sent Aloo'rilaam off to Sho'joor. There his true role as the chosen messenger to the Goblin race was revealed to him in a dream.

At first Aloo'rilaam was scorned. What could such a grotesque figure (and a Hobgoblin at that!) know about God? And if he were really the messenger of God, why could he work no magic? But gradually his stories of the paradise of Gabrook and God's true message for Goblins drew an audience. And as his flock grew, the interest and ire of the Curia were raised, culminating in his excommunication and the condemnation of the so-called "Lurite heresy."

Now Aloo'rilaam wanders from Goblin village to Goblin village charming audiences with his promise of glory soon to come.

Aloo'rilaam is a 110 point NPC.

GM's information

Although he believes he is a deformed hobgoblin, Aloo'rilaam is actually a Sparrial (see ***GURPS Space***, pp. S41-42 (note the most recent ***errata***), or ***GURPS Aliens***, pp. A84-87), although this fact is unknown to both him and his followers. Because of his amnesia, how Aloo'rilaam arrived on Yrth is up to the GM: He could have arrived on Yrth as the result of a hyperdrive malfunction, or the Banestorm could have plucked him from the Sparrial homeworld long before the Sparrials developed even rudimentary space travel, just as it has plucked thousands from Yrth, Gabrook and Loren'dil. Perhaps his amnesia is courtesy of the Ministry of Serendipity.

It has been seven years since Aloo'rilaam arrived on Yrth, and for the past year he has been on the run from the Curia and its agents. He is completely sincere in his teachings, and believes the Yrthian church is made up of Pharisees out to prevent him from delivering God's message to the Goblins of Yrth. (Because he has no recollection of his life before Yrth, but does have access to everything he's learned since arriving on Yrth, Amnesia is treated as a zero-point special effect. Also while he retains his Sparrial language skill, he cannot remember how to speak it. Occasionally, he will mutter, talk in his sleep or otherwise slip into Sparrial; at these times his followers believe Aloo'rilaam is "speaking in tongues.")

Despite his amnesia, Aloo'rilaam remains subject to his Sparrial instincts, such as Kleptomania an Stubbornness, which upon occasion get him into trouble, but he also can take full advantage of his inborn Detect Lies skill, which has helped keep him stay one step ahead of the Michaelites.

For those without ***Space*** or ***Aliens***, the Sparrial racial package is reproduced below:

Sparrial (8 points)

Attributes: ST -3 [-20]; DX +2 [20]; HT +1 [10].
Advantages: Acute Taste & Smell +2 [4]; Night Vision [10]; Super Jump [10]; Thin Fur [0].
Disadvantages: Gluttony [-5]; Kleptomania [-15]; Short Lifespan [-10]; Stubbornness [-5].
Skills: Climbing @DX-1 [1]; Detect Lies @IQ+3 (limitation: Scent-Based, -20%) [8].

Sparrials appear vaguely feline. They have long, pointed ears that stick out parallel to the top of the head, and large, deep-set eyes, slitted vertically like a cat's. Their oddest feature is a triangular mouth with three lips; instead of teeth, a Sparrial's mouth has a serrated bony ridge. They are covered with sleek fur, usually in varying patterns of brown or rust, although albinism is common. Their height and weight are average for their strength.

Adventure Seeds

* If any of the PCs are Goblins, a friend, dependent or family member becomes a follower of Aloo'rilaam. Not only are the PCs being pressured to join the sect, but the Michaelites have learned of the PCs and think that they might be able to lead the Curia to Aloo'rilaam.

* On a trip to Sho'joor, the PCs are asked by a Goblin acquaintance to help bring a poor cousin of his to Yibyorak. The poor cousin is Aloo'rilaam. As they travel, the PCs must avoid the Michaelites and curious Goblins who have heard that Aloo'rilaam is passing through their area.

* In a Michaelite campaign (see the article by Sean Nicolson in ***Roleplayer*** #19), the players have to find Aloo'rilaam and deal with his heretical followers. Of course, it is rumored that Aloo'rilaam is a demon, which could complicate things.

* It's all a great con. Aloo'rilaam is faking the amnesia and having the time of his life leading a life of luxury at the expense of his Goblin followers. Perhaps the PCs are followers who begin to suspect something, or they are

Michaelites who want to expose the fraud in order to diffuse the power of the sect.

* It's at least partially true. The Sparrial homeworld really is Gabrook, and Sparrials are the next stage of Goblin evolution . . . and Aloo'rilaam is just the first of what could be the busiest Banestorm resurgence in centuries.

* It's really an illuminated conspiracy. Aloo'rilaam is scouting out Yrth for an alien invasion force, building a cadre of Goblin collaborators who will help rule the coming order. . . .

Further reading

As the year 2000 draws near, a number of real-life cases of millennial anxiety are arising. The following websites include more information that could be useful in adding millennial anxiety to almost any type of campaign.

Center for Millennial Studies Check out "The Year 1000" links for medieval reactions to A.D. 1000.
More Adventure Coming, a sermon by Rev. William Tully at St. Bartholomew's in New York City.

Alien Invasion!

by John Tynes

Art by andi jones

Editor's Note: This article originally ran in *Arcane* issue #19 in May of 1997.

Beings from outer space are coming to take over the world. What do you do? If you're a referee, you should congratulate yourself: you've picked a campaign-level plotline that is a breeze to plan, exciting to enact, and easy to relate to. Alien invasions have populated our entertainments for decades, and most everyone has seen a film such as *Aliens* or *Independence Day*, or watched a television show like *The X-Files* or *The Tripods*, or (God forbid!) read a book such as *War of the Worlds* or *Starship Troopers*. Players will understand the nature of what is going on -- though of course the specifics will vary widely -- and will also have a bank of stored experiences to draw on when they have to figure out how to save the day. (Plus, they'll have a set of expectations that you should delight in confounding.)

"But it's all so trite!" you cry. "It's been done to death! I don't want to just rip off some movie!" Bah. We're going to rip off a whole bunch of movies. (And TV shows. And books. And comics.) You shouldn't be afraid to mine pop culture in your pursuit of a fun RPG campaign. The advantage of drawing on such a rich entertainment tradition is that you can very quickly mix-and-match elements from different sources, keeping the bits you like and discarding the bits you don't. Besides -- you know that you could have plotted a better story than *Independence Day* had. You just haven't bothered to prove it.

Now's the time, chummer. Earth needs you!

Behind the Mask

Every good RPG campaign thrives on conflict. The conflict may be emotional, or political, or just physical, but it's the fuel that drives the engine of play. Developing an RPG campaign means choosing a source of conflict. Conflict is about opposition: me against you, us against them, right against wrong. The history of warfare -- the biggest and loudest form of conflict humanity practices -- has taught us that the best way to fight an enemy is to dehumanize them, to convince your side that the other side is not worth the breath they draw and therefore to fight all the harder because we are right.

Right off the bat, we've got the root of our campaign's thematics: our foes are not human. This isn't a dispute over lines on a map or who controls what oil fields or the fact that some potentate got whacked in the streets of Sarajevo. This is about being different. And different is bad. Defeating the different and leaving only the familiar is good. This is the essence of the alien invasion campaign, the sweetmeat at the center of the onion's layers.

In the course of developing your campaign, you'll be tweaking this in all sorts of ways. The aliens may not be so different after all, and there may be sympathetic factions within the invading force. But the core thematic is what is going to get under your players' skins and get them up in arms to stop the aliens and save the day. It's the primal itch that your players will be dying to scratch. Don't be afraid to use kneejerk, reactionary xenophobia to manipulate the

players, to excite their enthusiasm, to push their buttons. Simple ideas are powerful ideas. Different is bad. Destroy the different. Save the world.

Developing Your Aliens

Aliens come in all shapes and sizes -- except on *Star Trek,* where they just have weird noses -- as well as a variety of psychologies and goals. One of the first steps you'll need to take in building an alien-invasion campaign is to design the alien invaders. Here's a checklist of considerations to work through.

Are they like us? One of the simplest set-ups for an alien race is to just make them pretty much like us, in terms of psychology and behavior. Sure, they may have some weird customs and social structures and they probably have six arms and exist in twelve dimensions -- but they think like we do. A given alien might be heroic, or vain, or cruel, or gentle, just like a given human. If you go with this idea, it suggests a number of possibilities: we can probably figure out how to communicate with them; there will probably be some among their number who sympathize with our plight; and they'll make human-like mistakes which we can exploit. Examples of these kinds of aliens include the lizard-people of the TV series *V* and the sporting hunters of *Predator 2.*

Or are they just bizarre? Aliens can be entirely that: alien. They can act in ways we do not understand, they can communicate in systems that we cannot access, and they can pursue goals that make no real sense. This is tricky to pull off really credibly, since it's easy for their actions to be just like those of any human aggressor, only they talk with their nostrils or something. This is because we are humans, and it can be difficult for us to conceptualize a completely different worldview. If you're going this route, don't try to work out the aliens' plans in great detail -- because if you can understand their plans then they're not very alien, are they? Instead, work up a set of small, arbitrary goals and sets of behavior, and just have the aliens pursue those goals and behaviors indefinitely. Examples of well-done, truly alien behaviors are rare. One example is the short story "Heresies of the Huge God" by Brian Aldiss, about a massive, uncommunicative alien being that lands on Earth and then just sits there for decades, causing destructive climactic and sociological changes.

What do they think of us? Given that the aliens want to invade your game world, they must have addressed the issue of just what all those naked apes are doing down there. They might respect us as a worthy foe. They might consider us savages ripe for conquest. They might see us as a source of protein. They might not understand us at all, and think that we are servants to a master race of machines (our cars and computers). Or, they might not even be aware of us; they might perceive so many facets of the universe that to them, we are nothing more than some sort of natural interference, like static in a broadcast. Their understanding of humans (or lack thereof) will have a profound impact on play, so consider it carefully. Are there competing schools of thought within the aliens about the role of humans? Are they capable of adjusting their opinion over time? Have they been taught falsehoods about humans by superiors who know better?

What do they want from us? Now that you know who the aliens are and what their understanding of humans is, you need to decide what they're after. What goal is behind this invasion? (We'll get to the methodology of invasions shortly; for now, just consider the ultimate goal.) Do the aliens want to conquer Earth and add it to their empire? Do they want to destroy humanity before we discover starflight and start screwing things up on other planets? Do they plan on terraforming Earth for their own use? Are they here to liberate the dolphins? Do they need our genetic material, or our minerals? Once you know their major goal, start scaling down: what are their early goals? Do they need to evaluate us in some way prior to achieving their goal, perhaps by testing our defenses? Do they need to seize a chunk of land in a particular climate suited to their physiology to use as a staging ground? Do they have to reduce the amount of oxygen in the air? Do they need to create a network of human or human-seeming agents? Work up a list of minor goals, leading up to the major one.

What can stop them? An alien invasion can be defeated in several ways, dependent on how you've answered the preceding questions: our heroes could stop the invasion by making it too costly in terms of personnel and resources; they could stop the invasion by convincing the aliens to stop (perhaps by demonstrating sentience in humanity); they could stop the invasion by manipulating factions within the aliens against each other; they could make the aliens' goals unobtainable; and so on. Every point of definition is a potential point of vulnerability. This is important, because it

rewards the players for learning about the enemy. The discovery that the aliens don't even perceive humans as living beings could lead to a plan that demonstrates our sentience in some way. Working with a group of plotters within the aliens to stage a coup against the invasion's leaders could save the day. Options are plentiful, but the referee should really try to anticipate these points of vulnerability. If you think the assist-the-coup-plotters method of victory could work, for example, you need to have some notes on the plotters and how our heroes can meet them.

Do they eat bricks? That is to say, what's their physiology like? I recommend addressing this question after all the others because I think your campaign will go better if the emphasis is on who the aliens are, rather than what the aliens are. Once you have the aliens' mindset, perspective, goals, and vulnerabilities mapped out, then you should go ahead and decide if they're green or have six arms or whatever else comes to mind. Unless you're into science, you don't need to get heavily into this. Work up a rough physiology that supports the psychological elements you've already got in place. Don't look at their physiology as science fiction; look at it as a set of referee tools. Create weaknesses and strengths in their physiology that can be exploited -- for good and ill -- in the course of play. For example: aliens who can't breathe our atmosphere are unlikely to be fighting us hand-to-hand, unless they have special suits or other apparati. If they have special suits, does that mean they're very vulnerable to having the suits torn or shattered? Or are their suits massive sets of body armor impervious to most attacks? Questions like these will have drastic effects on the nuts and bolts of what actions your players will take and what goals they will set, so think of them in gaming terms -- don't try to be Carl Sagan.

Have you got all that? When you've worked your way through this set of questions, take a minute and write up a description of a sample alien. What does it look like? Does it have a name? What kind of a personality does it possess, if any? What is its place in the alien society? Your sample write-up should be a condensation of your thinking throughout this set of questions, and include a number of asides and touchstones to trigger recollections in your mind later of minor details you thought of during this process.

Planning The Invasion

Now that you know who your aliens are and what goals they have in mind, you need to plan the invasion. Looking at the wealth of alien-invasion entertainments, we can break types of invasions down to a handful. Each type is sub-divided into two chunks: intro and meat. "Intro" is a guide to running the opening stages of the invasion if that's where you want your campaign to begin. "Meat" is a guide to running the main portion of the invasion if you'll be playing there instead. (Your campaign might begin with the invasion already well underway, for example.)

All-Out War

Alien Invasion!

Intro: Astronomers spot them first. A fleet of fast-moving craft appears outside of the Moon's orbit. Within days, the invasion begins. You'll have to decide if the attack will be air-based or ground-based -- do they have lots of swift aircraft, like in *Independence Day*, or will this be more like the attack on Hoth in *The Empire Strikes Back*? You'll also need to work out what role the player characters have. Are they miscellaneous folks caught on the front lines of the attack? Are they pursuing their own goals with the alien invasion simply serving as a backdrop? Are they in a position to lead Earth's response to the invasion? With that settled, you'll need to map out early events and responses. Where do the aliens strike first? What counter-attacks are launched? Don't just go for random destruction -- keep the goals you defined earlier in mind and make sure that the

aliens' attacks are helping them to achieve those goals. You might also want to consider whether or not the aliens will engage in any sort of misdirection in this early stage, to disguise their true agenda.

Meat: The battle rages on. Earth is a flaming ruin, major population centers have been decimated, and the aliens are everywhere. Organized defense exists solely on the local level -- large-scale terrestrial military structures have been shattered. But at the scale that the player characters operate on, there's lots to do. Whole towns are in flames, natural disasters are occurring as a result of the attack, first-aid stations are overwhelmed, and food is in short supply. Where do the PCs start? They might be fighting guerrilla actions against local installations of the aliens. They might choose a particular locality to defend, from aliens as well as from looters or opportunistic crime lords. They might be holing up in a secret hideout, sneaking out only to gather supplies and recruit NPC allies for some future assault. Or, they may be plotting to end the invasion through unconventional means -- such as a secret weapon, fomenting a coup within the alien ranks, holding the alien leader hostage, or who knows what else.

Trust No One

Intro: *The Invaders* asked: can the man sitting next to you bend his little finger? If not, he's an alien infiltrator! This style of invasion is secretive, and often involves either aliens who look like humans or humans who collaborate -- or are mind-controlled -- by the aliens. Examples include *The X-Files, Invasion of the Body Snatchers, The Thing,* and H.P. Lovecraft's story "The Whisperer in Darkness." The theme of this style is paranoia, since you never can be sure who is your enemy and who is your friend. Kick off your campaign with isolated peculiar incidents that gradually point the PCs towards the awful truth; this stage of the Trust No One style is over once the PCs understand the aliens' methodology and something of their plans.

Meat: In Robert Heinlein's novel *The Puppet Masters,* people quickly begin going around naked because the aliens were parasitic critters that clung to your back and plugged into your spine -- "A man wearing a coat is the enemy. Shoot!" You might not want to get quite that wacky, but this is definitely the us-against-them stage of the Trust No One style. The important thing is that no one should believe the PCs. No reliable proof can be gathered, authority figures who believe you are killed or "replaced," and in general, it's up to the PCs to save the world. The PCs will probably have a quick method of identifying aliens among the populace, setting up numerous scenes of sudden chaos: even a shopping trip to the mall can turn into a melee when the PCs realize that the department-store Santa Claus has that peculiar scar on the back of his hand. Plus, the aliens will now be aware of enough of the group's existence and opposition that the PCs will be hunted or persecuted. The alien infiltrators/collaborators can wipe out their bank accounts, get false charges filed against them, and generally try to run them to ground.

Crawling Horror

Intro: One lone alien can be all you need at the beginning of the invasion, as the films *Alien, The Hidden,* and *Predator* demonstrated ably. This style of invasion represents the incursion of a lone alien invader, intent on some particular mission, who comes into conflict with the player characters. While it may seem that this would only be good for a one-night adventure, that's not the case -- you don't have to make it a resolvable physical conflict, at least not at first. Your PCs could spend several adventures tangling with a distant, unseen adversary whose machinations have a ripple effect that brings trouble to the PCs' door. They'd have to track the alien down, learn its plans, and bring it to a stop.

Meat: You thought one was bad? How about a bunch more? Appropriately enough, the sequels *Aliens* and *Predator 2* handle this topic fairly well. By this point in the campaign, the lone incursion of an alien invader can be placed in context: sure, it was after one thing, but that was just a sign of things to come. Now there are a bunch of them, operating openly. This stage of the Crawling Horror style is actually not dissimilar to All-Out War, except that it's only at the scale of your PCs' operations rather than at a global scale. But the foes here are more likely to be hand-to-hand opponents with special fighting prowess or peculiar abilities, rather than hordes of troops in warships. This style falls more on the terror end of the terror/tension axis -- these aliens don't kick down doors with their big jackboots, they leap out of shadows and get you in a stranglehold when you least expect it.

Wrapping It Up

Sooner or later, the campaign must end. You should plan ahead and anticipate the sorts of endings that are likely, so that you aren't caught by surprise -- that's the point of the "What can stop them?" portion of the alien-creation process. The trick here is that you can't just conceptualize what endings are possible; you need to lay the groundwork to support those endings. The players can always come up with something unexpected, of course, but you should at least be confident that they won't be floundering about without direction if it's needed.

So: for each point of vulnerability you identified earlier, set up clue paths that the players can follow so as to learn about those points. (Clue paths consist of incremental advances towards gaining a full understanding of one point of alien weakness, with each advance carrying an increased level of danger.) Some paths should be action-directed, some should be investigation-directed, and some should be roleplaying-directed. An action-directed path could be: destroying the reactor at the aliens' stronghold on Earth will wipe out their invasion fleet if you do it at the right time. An investigation-directed path could be: a biological weakness of the aliens can be exploited with a new piece of technology or a type of virus. A roleplaying-directed path could be: convincing an alien commander to overthrow his superiors and seize the throne back home, rather than screwing around here in the backwaters of the galaxy.

Once you've got these basic clue paths set up -- some action-directed, some investigation-directed, and some roleplaying-directed -- you need to have two entrances to each clue path. One entrance should be ready and waiting to reward player initiative; the other should be something you can drop in their laps if they're clueless. Using the investigation-directed path as an example, the player-initiative entrance would be that if the PCs decide to orchestrate research into alien biology (stealing equipment, setting up a lab, convincing a scientist to help, etc.), you need to know what sort of stuff they'll need, what obstacles will be in their way, who they'll need to get on their side, and what practical results such research will produce. The player-clueless entrance would be to have the scientist come to them for help and thereby kick them in the pants; perhaps they free him from alien confinement as a by-product of rescuing someone else.

You don't need to spend a lot of time developing these clue paths. Just set up the entrances and ultimate results of each one and put them aside; when the time comes and the players get onto one of those paths, that'll be the point at which you need to flesh out the specific steps.

Conclusion

Alien invasions are an appealing and fun campaign-level plotline. The wealth of entertainments in this sub-genre means that a wealth of ideas are close at hand, and you don't have to buy a single sourcebook! A few trips to the video store or a brief ransacking of your friends' libraries is bound to turn up plenty of examples. Make up some cool stuff, plan it all out, and save the Earth. Don't dawdle, chummer -- there's a war on!

Sidebar: Alien Goals

Just what the heck do these crazed fiends from another world want, anyway? Here are some suggestions . . .

Genetic material. Earthlings have some genetic quirk that makes our double helix the cat's pajamas. Aliens after such a thing might be harmless collectors of fingernail clippings, but it's more likely that they have to run you through a meat grinder to get a good sample.

Terraforming. Evincing an uncannily human-like mindset, these aliens have trashed their homeworld's ecosystem and want to start from scratch on ours. "First, we'll nuke the whales."

Galactic Bureaucracy. Earth poses some sort of perceived threat to a vast alien organization. Perhaps our orbit screws up some of their jump-drive routes, or perhaps they anticipate us gaining FTL travel and wreaking havoc. Whatever the case, we've been targeted for extinction, not conquest.

God & Country. The Crusades go galactic: an interstellar army out to convert heathen worlds to the One True Way and lock up all the mineral rights in the bargain. You get eeriness points if the One True Way resembles an Earth religion, plus special Von Daniken/Stargate bonus points if the religion is Mesoamerican or Egyptian in aesthetics, if not in ethos.

The Insurrection. The aliens seem nefarious, sure, but in reality they're just using extreme measures to prepare Earth for the coming of a much greater threat. They want to use us to oppose the Big Galactic Empire that is en route -- and they don't care if they break a few eggs along the way.

A Dash of Salt. Psychology? Motivation? Bah! "Humans taste good. We are here to eat you."

Sidebar: Aliens Across Genres

An alien invasion campaign is something that works in every genre. At heart, alien invasion stories are just us vs. them -- they're about our innate fear of strangers. In literalizing an instinctual fear, alien invasion stories work no matter what obstacle course you put them through. Here are some genre-specific suggestions.

Contemporary Horror (*Call of Cthulhu, Don't Look Back, Conspiracy X, World of Darkness*). These games posit a secret history of humanity, one in which dire forces have conspired to manipulate us all. Emphasize the broad view: they're been here for millennia, guiding our development. They've created our governments and they run our lives. Secret signs of their presence are everywhere, if only we know how to see them. **Models:** *The X-Files, Five Million Years to Earth* (a.k.a. *Quatermass and the Pit*), *They Live, Stargate.*

Victoriana (*Cthulhu by Gaslight, Castle Falkenstein*). The Victorian era was defined by the British Empire; therefore, the natural form for an alien invasion is of a colonial empire that dwarfs that of the Queen. Isolated, secretive colonies in remote regions -- Antarctica, darkest Africa, Greenland -- with slaves mining obscure minerals prefigure a larger, public plan of global conquest and assimilation. The issue is debated in parliament as much as on the battlefield. **Models:** Well, the British Empire of the Victorian era, of course.

Heroic Fantasy (***Advanced Dungeons & Dragons, Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay, Rolemaster***). You could go for a full-on SciFi invasion with giant ships and exploding castles, but a more subtle approach is probably better and more adaptable to a fantasy scale. Communication in such a genre is often slow, so take advantage of it: entire countries could be overthrown before anyone nearby knows it. Rather than aliens from space, perhaps beings from other planes (such as the Mind Flayers of ***AD&D***) or strange magical creatures (such as Dopplegangers) would make a good choice. **Model:** The Dominion of *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine,* invading a thousand years early.

Science Fiction (***Traveller, Fading Suns, Space Master***). This genre is full of alien invasions anyway, so it's a matter of picking your approach. You've got your military SF (*Aliens, Starship Troopers*), your conquest-of-empire SF (the Borg of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*), or your subvert-from-within SF (*The Puppet Masters, Invasion of the Body Snatchers*).

Superheroics (***Champions, HERO, GURPS Supers***). DC Comics did this up a few years ago with their Invasion crossover series. You start out with a few isolated incidents for the supers to take care of, then build up to all-out war -- in fact, the recent film *Mars Attacks!* is a perfect model, only with super-heroes kicking alien butt instead of mere mortals. For added pathos, have the aliens related to one of the major heroes' origins (like Doctor Tachyon's in the *Wild Cards* book series) to boost up the angst-o-meter.

Cinematic Action (***Feng Shui, Hong Kong Action Theatre***). Kick alien butt! Any number of godawful (and some good) movies have tackled this theme, generally with a modern setting. For best results, have the aliens form an alliance with the major bad guys of the campaign and kick it off with nefarious arms shipments of alien weapons. **Models:** *I Come in Peace, V, Predator (1 & 2), Independence Day.*

Old West (***Boot Hill, Deadlands***). "Well goldurnit if that ain't the goldangedest thing I ever saw!" Them's aliens in them thar hills. Maybe they're after gold, or spiritual energy from massacres or the Civil War. Whatever the case, there

are a bunch of weird guys riding the range with handkerchiefs wrapped around their faces to disguise their true natures. Aliens in the Old West should be singular, strange wreakers of havoc who ride into town on some weird mission and die with all three of their boots on.

Quotes

"Within days, we could all be doomed."
-- *Lifeforce*

"If we killed a warrior -- or a thousand, or ten thousand -- his or their replacements were hatched and on duty almost before we could get back to base."
-- Robert Heinlein, *Starship Troopers*

"I wish I could tell you more. But we have a large number of deep-cover operatives involved here . . . you know how it is. We all have a job to do."
-- *Predator 2*

"I admire its purity: a survivor, unclouded by conscience, remorse, or delusions of morality."
-- *Alien*

"It could have imitated a million life-forms on a million planets, could change into any one of them at any time. Now it wants life-forms on Earth."
-- *The Thing (1982)*

"It is absolutely necessary, for the peace and safety of mankind, that some of earth's dark, dead corners and unplumbed depths be let alone; lest sleeping abnormalities wake to resurgent life, and blasphemously surviving nightmares squirm and splash out of their black lairs to newer and wider conquests."
-- H.P. Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness*

Variant Rules for Lunch Money

by Owen S. Kerr

Art by andi jones

The combatants face each other in the glaring light of the noonday sun. Light falls harshly on the asphalt, concrete, and metal of the chosen arena, and glitters on steely eyes.

The gang leaders trade the ritual insults, as their followers finger weapons and carefully assess the enemy. The three challengers are wound up tight, their motion stiff, pigtails and patent leather shining in the sun. In contrast, their opponents are casually menacing: cigarettes dangle from pre-pubescent lips, plaid skirts immaculate, Jodie the third-grade berserk grinning as she shifts a lead pipe from hand to hand.

"You-all sure you be wantin' to take us on?" Missy drawls. "I tell ya, you just opened a big ol' can 'a whup-ass all ovah yourselves."

The challenger leader bares her teeth in a brace-faced snarl. A barked command, and the pack of young Amazons are upon their enemy.

This is it, the final showdown. The younger girls fight for their honor and dignity. No more pulled hair. No more dodge-ball massacres. Never again to have the agony of a mid-morning swirly. One way or another, it all ends here.

And Sister Mary Anthrax's homeroom will never be the same.

Lunch Money, a non-collectible card game by Atlas Games, is one hell of a good time. What other game has as its main thrust combat between pre-pubescent kung-fu Catholic schoolgirls? If your group has had some fun with the original rules, try these variants for some pimp-slapping, eye-gouging, throw-her-through-the-tire-swing-and-pants-her action.

Sticky Fingers

Grab can be a fun card, when used correctly. Using the Sticky Fingers variant, any player may use a Grab card to retrieve a Weapon card "dropped" after the play of a Disarm card. This can be the player who dropped the Weapon or any other player.

This move is not without danger, however. All other players may make one free attack on the Grabbing player, using either Kick or Stomp cards.

This variant also allows the target of a Weapon card to play a Block + Grab + Grab combination to wrest the Weapon from an attacker. (Stop the attack, grab the opponent, grab the weapon. Simple, no?)

Each of these plays may only be thwarted by the attacker playing a Humiliation card on the person attempting to pick up the Weapon card. If it is the attacker who is attempting to retain the card, any opponent may play Humiliation to keep it out of her grasp.

Thumbs of Steel

A player suffering from a Choke card may feel that turn-about is fair play, and rightly so. Using this variant rule, any player being Choked may, in addition to her other options, play a Choke card against her assailant.

Note that this does not break the original Choke; the players may both choose to throttle each other, or to attempt to break free, as per the rules.

All other rules apply as normal, including rules-as-written on how to escape the clutches of a Choke card.

Team Rules

Get 'Em, Girls!

In any fight, it's nice to have friends, even if they are all nine-year-olds in blazers and skirts. The Team variant for Lunch Money makes the game a bit longer, and much more tactically challenging. Playtesting showed that the players go through the deck much faster, as well.

Teams may be from two to four players, with each team's goal being the eradication of the enemy or enemies. (One deck of ***Lunch Money*** cards supports two to four players, so a three-way fight between teams of four players would need three decks.)

Standard rules call for each player to have fifteen damage counters at the start of play. In Team play, add five counters for every player on the opposing team(s). Yes, this makes for some tough little squirts, but you'll soon see why you need the extra hits.

Players may support teammates during play, Blocking attacks meant for players on the same team, using First Aid cards to add counters to an injured ally's pile, and playing Humiliation cards to good effect. Players may also use a new combination, Grab + Dodge, to pull a teammate out of harm's way.

The two cards that cannot be stopped with team effort are Uppercut^2 and Hail Mary. These attacks are bold, cinematic, and too powerful (and fun) to fall prey to anything as mundane as team effort. In both cases, the intended victim is on her own, free to Dodge, Block, or Humiliate (assuming she has the applicable card(s)). If no defense is possible, smile and take it on the chin. It's only a game. Besides, you have a long memory, right?

Cards which may carry damage over to another player if Dodged, like Spinning Backfist and Roundhouse, may only do damage to members of the same team; the card may not carry over to another team.

Big Combo is always a useful card, and in Team play, it becomes even more versatile: the two three-point attacks that make up Big Combo may be used against two enemies on the same team. As with the original rules, both halves of the Big Combo have to be Blocked or Dodged in order to avoid damage.

Another aspect of Team play is group combinations. If a teammate plays Block, feel free to play that Grab. When you're on top of the situation, another trusty comrade whips out a Headlock, immobilizing the erstwhile attacker. Any cards played in combination by a team are treated as a single action, with the exception of the Grab + Dodge defense named earlier. (This move must be performed by one player.) Dealing with restrictions on actions, if you played the card, it's your baby. In the above example, the player who used Headlock is subject to the restrictions surrounding the card, while her teammates have none. (Missy blocked the punch, then Jodie grabbed the attacker, holding her for Tanya's headlock.)

Note that Team play does not require teammates to sit next to each other in the circle, and shrewd players will rapidly discover strategies that depend mainly on player seating arrangements.

Cutthroat

This is a Team variant for three players (or three teams, for that matter). Players start with 20 damage counters each (this applies to all Cutthroat games, even team Cutthroat). Play proceeds as normal, with the two non-active players acting as a team against the active player. Mayhem ensues. Remember, however, the pony-tailed little troll you Poke In The Eye this turn will be your ally (you hope) next time around.

The sun goes down on a scene of Catholic school carnage. Handfuls of ripped-out hair drift aimlessly, pushed by a hot breeze off the basketball courts. The winners and losers limp home, bloodied but unbowed.

Missy spits out a tooth as she leads her broken pack toward the mall. Next time, she thinks, we'll be ready for them. My sister has some power tools . . .

A Variant GURPS Traveller Covert-Ops Organization

by Glenn St-Germain

Art by andi jones

[*Editor's Note:* While the following article is an interesting variant, it is unofficial, and not part of the official ***GURPS Traveller*** universe.]

The IISS Rangers

Library Data

Rangers: *A covert intelligence unit established by Emperor Paulo I in 741. Their original mandate was to observe and record activity in the Imperium which could constitute a threat to Imperial security. For several years, that was all they did. But as time went on, the Rangers became more of an intervention force, answerable to no one but the Emperor himself. Upon the death of Paulo in 767, the Rangers continued to function, independently, dealing with threats to the Imperium, both real and imagined. Excesses on the part of some Ranger operatives, and the possibility of the Rangers being involved with the untimely death of Emperor Tomutov I in 768, eventually caused Empress Paula II to revoke the Rangers' charter in 772, upon which the Rangers were disbanded.*

. . . or so people believe. While the Library Data entry is true, it is also incomplete. Paula disbanded the Rangers as they were, but saw a legitimate need for a group such as the one Paulo had envisaged 31 years earlier. She met secretly with the head of the Intelligence Branch of the Imperial Interstellar Scout Service (IISS), proposing that the Branch take over the function of the Rangers by creating a new sub-unit within its own infrastructure. Thus, the Rangers as they are today were created.

The Rangers function as a semi-autonomous unit within the IISS' Intelligence Branch. Their mandate is to watch out for threats to Imperial security from within, and intervene if necessary. They are covert operatives, ones whose existence is not known to the general public. Even most Scouts are unaware of the existence of such a unit within their own ranks.

Officially, Ranger operatives are members of IISS Intelligence. As with most covert operatives in the field, they will have cover identities and assignments, which will vary depending on need. However, many Rangers in the field have

as their cover assignment a placement in the Internal Mapping Branch of the Imperial Grand Survey. This allows Ranger crews to move from one system to another without arousing suspicion.

A typical Ranger crew will consist of four to six individuals, the crew of a standard Scout/Courier vessel of the type which are ubiquitous throughout the Imperium. In addition to a pilot and an engineer, there will be a security specialist and someone well versed with research and intelligence analysis. They will be given an area, generally a sector, to patrol, moving from place to place as the team leader sees fit. At each new port of call at a scout base or a system on the X-Boat route, the team leader will scan for coded messages addressed to him/her and his/her crew, which will contain instructions or assignments from the Ranger sector chief, usually located on the sector capital world. In turn, the team leader will keep the sector chief apprised of their location.

Assignments can be nearly anything that requires covert intervention. An assignment can be as simple as a trip to a particular world to observe a situation and report, or it can be a complicated mission which requires extraordinary intervention. Some of these assignments are less than entirely legal, as they could constitute intervention into a planetary government in violation of the laws of the Imperium. However, if a government poses a threat to the security of the Imperium, the Rangers will authorize an intervention. And should any of the Rangers be caught or killed, the IISS will disavow any knowledge of their activities . . .

Rangers on patrol are also allowed to intervene into situations they happen to come across during their travels without requiring authorization from above, especially if a rapid response is required.

Rangers as player characters use the same template as for regular Scouts (***GURPS Traveller,*** p. 99), but with the following additions and changes:

* Mandatory disadvantage: Secret (The Rangers) [-10]
* Skills should include at least one from each list of Primary Skills given for the Undercover Agent template (p. GT99).
* All Rangers should be skilled with the use of a sidearm of their choice, at (P/E) DX + 1, as well as at least some familiarity with unarmed combat (Judo or Karate, or arts from ***GURPS Martial Arts***).

A team of Ranger player characters should be a good mix of different types of agents -- stealth / infiltration specialists, electronics experts, intelligence analysts, and so on. The Rangers pre-screen potential recruits very thoroughly before contacting them, and only those whose loyalty to the Imperium is beyond reproach are given the chance to join.

Overall, the Rangers are not a large operation. At most, there is one field team operating in a particular sector at any one time, except for areas with a greater-than-normal chance of security threats (e.g., the Spinward Marches, areas near the Solomani Rim border). Their number in total is not more than a few hundred agents. They are, simply put, the best of the best, given the jobs no one else could do, the kind of jobs that need to be done to maintain order in the 11,000 worlds of the Third Imperium.

A Campaign Setting for Changeling: the Dreaming

by C. A. Johnson

Art by andi jones

For over 200 years, Bristol, Rhode Island has been a port. Not the largest, certainly. Most serious commercial ships would run aground in her harbors. She isn't the most glamorous, either. Still, the maritime tradition runs strong. From her younger days as a settlement, to the early wars of our nation's history, when her harbor sheltered many a privateer, to the present, the sea has called to the people of Bristol. Its position on Narragansett Bay gives it the perfect blend of safe harbor from storms and access to the open seas.

Some say you can still hear the bawdy songs of mariners from those days if the wind is right. In the woods near what used to be Ferrycliffe Farm, they are right. There, under the watchful gaze of the Bale Point Light, the Eshu privateer Lord Tirion and his crew lead lives of adventure and mystery.

Theme and Mood

The theme of Tirion's Cove is nobility in the face of adversity. The mood is adventuresome.

Balefire Point

A mortal visitor to Balefire Point would be unimpressed by his surroundings, if he could find the site. It lies nestled in the deep woods that run along what used to be Ferrycliffe Farm. It is overshadowed by a dense ceiling of trees, which shield it both from the prying eye of Banality and rain. To mortal eyes, there is nothing here but a simple stone tower, perhaps 20 feet tall, flat and drab in the way only stone can be. A simple ramshackle structure juts off the platform and squats gracelessly beneath the trees. Perhaps it was once a moonshiner's hut. More likely it was a rumrunner's hideout. Either way, anyone foolish enough to enter it risks it collapsing on him.

To fae eyes, Balefire Point appears quite different. A graceful tower stretches upwards into the canopy and beyond, granting a commanding view of the nearby bay. The battered old structure attains a sturdiness lacking in its mortal seeming. It is still small and relatively unadorned. Hemp lines hang from the door frame, and something like a net lies bundled by the corner.

Only passing the threshold gives a fae a true understanding of this place. Nets hang from the ceiling, lending a truly maritime feel to the close room. They are not merely for decoration, however. Enfolded in their meshes are treasures both real and chimerical. Intricate swords lay entwined next to decorative shells. Jugs and casks line the walls, some breached. Others remain untouched, covered by dust and cobwebs. Goblets and plates tend to lie scattered on the only table in the room, and chairs and hammocks vie for wall space.

The Hearth dominates the room. A circle of stone flows from the wall of the tower, providing a base for the great fireplace that holds the freehold's Balefire. It is a warrior's hearth, decorated with the trophies and tools of victory.

Arrayed over the fire are several weapons, the greatest of these being a great war axe of dark blue metal. Matching flintlock pistols flank it artfully. A pair of cutlasses sweeps outwards, framing the Hearth. Decorated as it is, it does not feel homey, as some freeholds do. This is not a place where childlings play, nor where grumps would rest their Banality weighted bones. It is a camp . . . sophisticated as camps go, but a camp nonetheless.

Sea Dancer

Back outside, a twisted path wends its way through the underbrush that surrounds the clearing. The bay is invisible from the building, cut off from view by trees. Rounding the final corner, one sees the true home of the fae of Tirion's Cove, the great chimerical vessel *Sea Dancer.* She is a wonder, all delicate curves and flowing angles. Two masts reach for the sky and her lines and wires seem spider woven for their thickness and their placement. Brightly colored sails lay carefully furled along the booms, and her fine wooden decks are clean and tightly fitted. Rails of brightly polished brass line the cabin, and strong, golden rope provides handholds on the outer deck. She is 70 feet from stem to stern, draws 20 feet beneath the waves, and has 22 feet between her hempen rails on her top deck. She is built for graceful speed, and it shows in her lines and her bearing.

Under sail, she is an even more impressive sight. Her booms stretch wide to catch the faintest breath of air and turn it into speed. There has never been a wave the *Sea Dancer* couldn't crest. She has never run from a fight while Tirion has been at the helm, and her opposition has so far either surrendered or lies broken on the sea floor. Fifteen cannon emerge from each flank in battle, and their chimerical roar and thunder are deafening to hear.

Beneath her decks, she is a utilitarian vessel. The only rooms of any note are the common room and Tirion's quarters. Two things mark the common room; the fine oaken table that graces the center of the room, and the balefire stove that provides warmth. The table is railed, as almost all seagoing tables are, to keep plates from sliding off in rough weather. Sitting at it, one feels a sense of camaraderie. It is a setting that encourages the telling of tales. Sometimes, if the stories are good enough, the table will tell its own. Its grain seems to change over time, showing different scenes from *Sea Dancer's* career. Battles and journeys, quests and pursuits all appear in the table's finely polished surface. Behind the Captain's Chair rests the Balefire stove, vaguely reminiscent of a knight's helmet. The green glow from the balefire can be seen leaking through the slits in the visor.

Then there are the quarters of Captain Tirion. Nemo himself could not equal the splendor the Master of the *Sea Dancer* allows himself. Fine cabinets with brass ornaments, a beautiful chart table made seemingly from the finest mahogany, and paneling of red oak gives the room a luxurious feel. The bed is carefully made, its silken sheets concealed by a thick blanket of soft wool, under which another cottony blanket rests. The room is lit with brass lamps securely fastened to the walls and set in swivels to allow them to sway with the motion of the ship. A small, lockable desk contains the Captain's Log. An inkpot is securely set into its well, corked carefully. A fine quill bobs over the desk as the ship rolls in the swells.

As fine as she is, *Sea Dancer* is almost wholly chimerical. Her mortal seeming is of an old, battered hull drawn ashore to get it out of the channel. No masts grace the deck, no fine decorations set her apart from any other wreck. When she sails, it is always upon the Sea of Dreams.

History

During the Revolutionary War, Balefire Point was a watch station for the colonists, to keep an eye on British ship movements through Narragansett Bay. Its concealed location made it ideal for such observation. It could be made into a comfortable camp without being revealed to the Redcoats. Its small natural harbor was deep enough to hold skiffs, and concealed enough to render any such boat anchored there all but invisible from the Bay. The channel in was a twisted one, navigable only by small craft. As such, it made a perfect launch point for several sabotage

operations too insignificant to make the passage through history.

During the War of 1812, Bristol became a major privateering port, and the concealment of Balefire point became irrelevant. The camp, with its few permanent installations, including the stone watchtower, was largely forgotten. It became a playhouse, where great powwows and mighty battles happened before lunch. Its status remained largely unchanged until Prohibition. All of a sudden the concealed nature of the Point became much more important. Access from the Bay allowed raw ingredients to be brought in in bulk, while the watchtower became the base for a moonshiner's operation. Rum and other liquors were also brought in through the Point and ferried out overland to nearby speakeasies. It never became a major site, so it wasn't discovered before Congress repealed Prohibition. With booze legal to serve again, the Point once more found itself in use as a secret hideout and play house.

Once again, it began to gather Glamour, with the Commoner Lords of the time all unaware.

The Accordance War

It was during the Accordance War that Balefire Point first came to the attention of the Fae, or more precisely to a Fae. Lord Tirion was a mighty Eshu captain, and the Interregnum Lord of the Isle of the Lost. His ship, the *Sea Dancer*, and her crew created quite a name for themselves on the Sea of Dreams, carving their legends out of the bodies of Sea Serpents, Krakens and other powerful chimerae. He was a matchless sailor and a brilliant strategist, and his crew was the bravest afloat. He counted on this reputation and his own daring skills to keep the Isle for himself during the Accordance War. The naval campaign he waged against the Sidhe was glorious. Unable to match them force for force, he instead matched them with uncanny guile. The Sidhe Lords sank more of their own ships than Tirion did.

Alas, bravery was not enough. When the dust had settled, Tirion found himself driven from his freehold by the political manipulations of the Sidhe Duke Vortaylis. Vortaylis seduced Tirion's first officer, a Satyr named Naiad. She became a key witness in David's Court against her former Captain and lover. Portrayed as a traitor and a villain, Tirion was banished from the Isle by the High King, and Vortaylis was installed as Regent of the Isle of the Lost, a post he holds to this day.

Tirion and the crew of *Sea Dancer* abided by the decision of the High King, albeit with imperfect grace. They set sail on the tide following the message, vowing revenge on the deceitful Regent of Isle of the Lost. They sailed for a year and a day, seeking a place they could call home. Many were the adventures they had, and glad were they for a rest when they came across Balefire Point.

The Present

Tirion and his crew have spent the intervening years waging a private war on the Unseelie Regent of the Isle that was once their home. Outnumbered and outgunned, they have avoided direct confrontation, instead hitting Vortaylis in his most vulnerable point, his shipping. The Isle of the Lost is mighty, but it is not self-sufficient. Food and other items

must be imported if the Isle is to prosper, and messages and supplies must be sent ashore. All of these things are targets to Tirion the Privateer.

The Isle of the Lost

For some reason, no information is available on the Isle of the Lost. Copies of maps made by court scribes are . . . well . . . lost. Tirion won't speak of his former freehold, thanks to a vow he swore upon his banishment. The Mists obscure the minds of his crew. Count Vortaylis does not attend Court functions, nor does he send emissaries, a fact that is not lost on High King David.

The Fae

Tirion, Captain of the Sea Dancer

Born on the Gold Coast of Africa in the late 1800s, Tirion's Chrysalis was heralded by his first sight of the sea. He was helped through this time by a crew of Arabian Unseelie pirates operating off the Gold Coast, and learned early both the ways of the sea and the ways of pirate. He began his own career in his early twenties, and quickly made a name for himself. His ferocity and unpredictability soon won renown up and down the Gold Coast, and earned him the (formidable) enmity of several naval powers, both mortal and changeling alike. He was finally forced to sail west, to the New World.

Destination has ever been a fluid concept to the Eshu, however, and rather than his intended port of call, he came across the Isle of the Lost. His crew were well met and well treated, and after only a short time on the Isle, Tirion felt the pull of his Seelie nature. He came to be a respected member of the Privy Council of the Island. When the former Lord was lost to Banality, Tirion was given the realm by popular decree, and with it his great ship, *Sea Dancer.* Were the Realm anything but an Isle, Tirion would have been miserable. As it was, he ruled mostly from *Sea Dancer,* or by proxy, a fact his subjects did not seem to mind. He fought off the pirates he once sailed with, kept the Isle safe from Banality and Chimerical terrors. He took his title seriously, wore it well, and earned the respect of his subjects and the fanatical loyalty of his crew.

Save one.

Naiad had been the best of First Mates. She oversaw the crew with a careful master's touch. She obeyed every order faithfully. She became in many ways the heart of the *Sea Dancer.* When she betrayed Tirion to the High King's Court, that heart was ripped out. Loyalty to their Captain kept the crew together, but life aboard *Sea Dancer* has never been quite the same since then.

Tirion is angry at his former first mate, but it is a cold anger. The hatred he knows for Vortaylis knows no bounds. The Sidhe stole his lands and his people from him, and Tirion means to have them back and Vortaylis' head in the bargain.

Court: Seelie
Legacies: Paladin\Outlaw
Seeming: Wilder
Kith: Eshu
Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 4 (Catlike), Stamina 2
Social: Charisma 4 (Bold), Manipulation 3, Appearance 2
Mental: Perception 4 (Keen-eyed), Intelligence 3, Wits 4 (Creative)
Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Dodge 3, Expression 2, Subterfuge 2
Skills: Craft, Shipwright 2, Firearms 4, Leadership 4, Melee 4, Performance 3, Sailing 5
Knowledges: Linguistics 2 (French Swahili), Lore, Sea 3, Heraldry 2
Arts: Chicanery 2, Soothsay 2, Wayfare 5
Realms: Prop 4, Scene 4, Nature 2
Backgrounds: Holdings 2, Retinue 2 Title (Baron) Chimera 4 (*Sea Dancer*)

Glamour: 6
Banality: 5
Willpower: 7
Image: Swarthy and weathered, Tirion does not cut a handsome figure so much a noble one. His eyes are nearly black, in both his mortal and his fae seemings, and his wardrobe tends the puffy side, with wide belts and bandoleers over white tunics. He is just under six feet tall, and well muscled.
Roleplaying hints: Your crew comes first, but adventure comes second. Always be on the lookout for an opportunity to go to sea. It is only there that you are truly at home, and only there that you can win back your Isle.

Unwyn, First Mate of the Sea Dancer

After the betrayal of Naiad, the gap in the *Sea Dancer* crew was palpable. Naiad had been well respected, and of the few who were willing to take her place, only Unwyn was qualified. Where Naiad had served out of loyalty, however, Unwyn served out of greed. She took the position not out of respect for the crew, but because the First Mate gets a larger share of the booty. She and Tirion often disagree, mostly on the issue of targets, but so far she has heeded her captain's orders.

Unwyn is a harsh taskmaster. Her orders are to be followed right now. She is feared, not loved. No one questions her value to the ship, however. She is a powerful fighter, and the leader when the battle comes deck to deck. She protects her shipmates, and wreaks havoc upon all that oppose her with her great axe.

Everyone knows her greed will win out over her captain one day. Tirion is aware of her ambitions, and uses them to keep her in line. She knows she isn't half the sailor he is, or one-third the strategist. If she were to take over by mutiny, Tirion would have to be either killed or set adrift, and the fortunes of *Sea Dancer* would take a sharp turn downward. Still, she is careful to swear her oaths not to her captain, but to her ship.

Court: Unseelie
Legacies: Outlaw\Comrade
Seeming: Wilder
Kith: Troll
Physical: Strength 5, Dexterity 2, Stamina 5
Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 1
Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3
Talents: Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Carousing 3, Dodge 2, Intimidation 3,
Skills: Firearms 2, Leadership 3, Melee 4, Sailing 3, Swimming 4
Knowledges: History 2, Medicine 2, Poisons 2
Arts: Ledgermain 2, Primal 3
Realms: Fae 3, Prop 3
Backgrounds: Contacts 3, Greymayre 2, Resources 2
Glamour: 5
Banality: 5
Willpower: 6
Image: Unwyn is a thin troll, with a tight, whipcord musculature under her light blue skin. She stands nearly seven feet tall, and moves with controlled power and confident assurance. Her dark hair is worn long and tied back into a braid. Her mortal seeming is almost as tall, but more filled out. She wears tight shirts and loose pants, preferring to keep her arms free for combat. She prefers black or khaki colors.
Roleplaying hints: You're in it for the money. If something threatens to cut into your profits, argue about it. If that doesn't work, throw it overboard. Unfortunately, Tirion is too good to lose, even though he ignores rich targets for the symbolic victory. You'll deal with him eventually. For now, he's getting you rich enough.

Other Fae

Cleat and Halyard: Whenever battle has scarred the *Sea Dancer's* hull, it is the team of Cleat and Halyard that makes

her ship shape again. Cleat is a Boggan, named for his stability under duress. His no-nonsense approach to repairs has won the respect of the crew and the praise of *Sea Dancer's* Captain. Halyard is pure Nocker. She's named for her tendency to snap under stress and flap wildly in the wind, but her chimerical innovations have saved the day on more than one occasion. (Nobody talks about the Daedalus Oar anymore. At least, not where they can be heard.)

Strange as it may seem, the pair work well together . . . provided you can stand the noise. Their curses are the stuff of legend aboard ship. Halyard is said to have blistered the deck under Cleat's feet once, so foul was her language.

Limey: When the battle comes deck to deck, Unwyn leads the fight. Amid the smoke and thunder of the cannon deck, the Redcap, Limey, runs the battle. His voice booms loud over the cannon, bulling his crack teams into action. Broadsides are his meat and potatoes (literally, since Tirion allows him his pick of enemy cannonballs for his meals.) Once the guns are of no longer of use, Limey is the first of his crew on deck, and the last to come back aboard.

The Crew: The rest of the crew of the *Sea Dancer* changes constantly. There is always a free hammock to be had. Perhaps you, as an enterprising Storyteller, know a few fae who would be daring enough to join such a crew of rogues. There's adventure enough, and prizes to boot.

Story Ideas

Milk Run

On a routine voyage into the Sea of Dreams, *Sea Dancer* comes across a foundered vessel waving distress colors. Is it a trap set by Duke Vortaylis? If not, what caused the ship's distress?

Meet Davy Jones

A hole has appeared in the Sea of Dreams. Tirion sends a skiff down it to investigate. There below the waves is a community of sailors who have made a Freehold of sorts for themselves among the corals. Beset by Nunnehi, they implore the characters to help them win their way back to the surface.

Mutiny

Unwyn makes her move, and the *Sea Dancer* is a ship divided. Which side do the characters stand on?

A Campaign Resource for GURPS Fantasy

by Jeremy Davies

Art by andi jones

"The existence of an all powerful High Guild of magecraft is a pure flight of fancy. It is a myth used to scare young apprentices and has absolutely no basis in fact . . ."
-- Tiberius Spellweaver, Guildmaster of the Megalan Central Guild of Christian Magic.

"Statum quo conservare ante omnia"
To preserve the status quo above all things

The High Guild, the Grand Guild, Altus Collegium, Murtafi Aahila, there are many legends among the magical fraternities of the Ytarrian nations regarding a single all powerful Guild of magicians. A High Guild that transcends all boundaries: religious, cultural, political and geographical. Amongst the few that actually believe in such stories, there are many theories regarding the agendum of such an organization.

History

Files

The High Guild was officially formed on the 1st of March, 1585, in response to the resurgence in the Banestorm that started in 1551. Up until that point, every nation had dealt with small increases in technology, due to new arrivals and inventions, with varying degrees of success and zeal. It wasn't until the major arrivals from areas such as Renaissance France that it was recognized that a combined and internationally coordinated effort was required to stamp out the threat to the status quo of Ytarrian power.

At Keyhole Isle, the Guildmasters of 14 of the most powerful mages guilds on Yrth got together at the beginning of 1585 and hammered out a charter that brought the High Guild into existence. There was to be no individual leader, but a Masterhood -- four from Megalos, two from al-Wazif and one each from al-Haz, Cardiel, Caithness, the Nomad Territories and Sahud. Envoys were sent to Zarak, the Orclands and several kingdoms of Elves amongst the Great Forest and the Blackwoods, but none of these areas were interested in participating in the

ideals behind the High guild, probably because it represents continued human dominance on the planet.

In December of 1586, representation on the High Guild was also granted to the area of Ytarria known as the Land of Djinns. The great mage that sits for the Djinns, known only as Master Zeek, remains a member of the Guild to this day.

Purpose

The High Guild's motto basically reveals its purpose. The Ministry of Serendipity, and groups like it in other nations, has a remarkably accurate profile of social trends on Earth, so they saw the decline of influence of the traditional power groups from the beginning of the Renaissance to the current day. It became obvious that with the development of ideas and the evolution of science came the erosion of autocracy and religious ideals. This trend is unacceptable to the Ytarrian autocrats and religious officials, not to mention the magical fraternities that have a monopoly on getting things done that are not otherwise possible.

For these reasons, the High Guild received total and unquestioned cooperation from all the major power groups of Ytarria. The leaders of these groups are just about the only other people aware of the Guild's existence. The Curia supports the High Guild philosophy by being as deliberately belligerent to new ideas as their Earthly medieval equivalent. They spread the message, as much as possible within their area of influence, that new ideas and concepts are automatically suspect of "satanic inspiration" until proven otherwise.

The symbol of the guild, a plain looking key shape, represents the metaphorical "key" that the Guild has become to continued feudal/medieval society on Yrth, while Earth continues to develop. It is also symbolic of their place of meeting. Although most authorities are unaware of the High Guild's existence, they are instructed to assist those holding "the key" whenever asked, which is very rarely. Any such request is reported up the chain of command to ensure the key is genuine. If not, the holder may as well climb quickly into the nearest coffin they can find and bury themselves. They are no longer alive . . .

Organization

The Twelve Masters of the High Guild meet routinely every two years at Keyhole Isle, while they are available for emergency meetings at a moment's notice to address particularly pressing matters. Each Master is in charge of policing the status quo in their areas, and in reporting to the other Masters all the major actions taken during the two year period. The Masters are generally high placed officials in Yrthian society themselves, mostly Guildmasters of normal Mage's Guilds.

The main purpose of the meetings are to decide whether action should be taken in certain circumstances. Subtle warnings are generally issued to those in danger of developing ideas that may affect the status quo. If these warnings go unheeded, a suppression may be required. Any Master has the right to call for a suppression at any time, but if he has doubts he may decide to refer it to the next meeting, or even call an emergency gathering. In 1775, the Sultan's second eldest son had secretly developed a crude form of gunpowder to help in the liberation of al-Kard. Warnings had been ignored -- he was the Sultan's son after all! An emergency meeting was called and a covert suppression ordered. The Sultan's son and immediate servants died when his Al-Abyad residence burned to the ground one night from a kitchen fire "mishap" that also destroyed all his research material

A Secretariat exists to be full time servants of the High Guild and are permanently based at the secret underground meeting site at Keyhole Isle. These are the people charged with calculating all the data received from the many different sources between meetings. From this intelligence analysis, secretaries of the High Guild are able to call emergency meetings, but do not have the power to order suppressions. Informants at all levels of society give information on new creative ideas with absolutely no idea where the information is going and who is paying them for it.

The Secretaries of the Guild also control a vast network of scrying devices that are distributed around Ytarria.

Information received through these means is closely guarded, and although many illegal activities are discovered, the charter of the Guild ensures that only information related to the purpose of the Guild is ever acted upon.

Finally, there are the Guardians. These are the hit men, used individually or in small groups as required, who do the wet work of "idea suppression." They are well trained in covert operations, have physical fighting skills as well as being fearsome mages in their own right. They are fanatical in their belief in the ultimate good of the Guild's purpose, so they will show no pity or remorse for even the most questionable violent actions that they may have to perform as a part of their duties.

by Justin Bacon

Art by andi jones

When a character is being created, it is a magical time. The most proficient members of our hobby are able to breathe so much life into their characters that they seem to actually inhabit the bodies of their players while the game is on.

However, the half-elven archer who is tortured by his heritage, was torn from his mother, and rejected by his father when the truth was first learned -- while being an exciting and interesting character to play -- is all too easily spoiled by a name such as: "Ron the Archer". Somehow it just seems to lack an essential ephemeral quality.

An engaging, exciting, entertaining, and original name for characters in a fantasy universe has become essential. "Gregory" dims in comparison to "Fairyleaf" or "Dewdusk"; "Stewart" becomes shallow when held up to names such as "Aldervan" or "Floaic".

But there are no sources from which to draw these names and I have, more than once, had the character creation process halted by the fact that I cannot find an appropriate name for a character. Even fantasy literature does not aptly serve this purpose, because if you have seen one "Aragorn," you have seen them all.

The task becomes even more daunting for the aspiring Game Master. He must populate his world with literally thousands of NPCs, and the one bad memory of "Bob the Butcher" will leave a much greater impression upon his players than a hundred characters with interesting and original names will ever do.

This problem is one unique to the gamers of fantasy. If you are playing a campaign in a modern or futuristic setting, names such as "Donald" and "Blake" do not appear incongruous with their surroundings, and "Arthur" is a fine name for a historically-based medieval campaign. Fantasy, on the other hand, is a world of primitive wonders that are completely unearthly in their scope and nature. This inspires us to come up with equally unnatural and magical names to the mirror the world in which the individuals who bear these names live their lives. Fantasy worlds are the domains of Fafhrds and Alustriels . . . somehow it seems the only proper thing to do.

This article strives to alleviate these problems from the backs of fantasy gamers by providing sources you may not have thought to consult, as well as some basic ways to start the creative process when the block occurs.

Historical Texts

Historical texts are an invaluable source for names. Although many are cluttered with more common names such as "John" or "Margaret," you can often find caches of treatises which deal in totally foreign names.

J.R.R. Tolkien used historical papers and names extensively. The names of the thirteen dwarves from *The Hobbit* are lifted verbatim and in order from one of the Icelandic sagas.

Even the common-sounding names from historical papers can often be "fancied up" to one degree or another to produce a usable fantasy name of some sort. For example, while "Thomas" is rather mundane, you can easily make it of the female persuasion ("Thomasine") and end up with a name that is not commonly used.

Legends and Fairy Tales

Naturally enough, from this sort of material, you will be able to reap great rewards in terms of names. Although many of these tales employ common names of the time period, it is not hard to find names (usually in the more mystical sections of the story) that will spark your creativity.

Often you will find good sorts in foreign tales, as names are not typically translated. Therefore you can draw greatly from common names, so long as they are not common to the people you are playing with.

It is also advised that you avoid well known material. Having the captain of the Lich's guard named "Neibling" is probably not the best way to come off as witty and intelligent to your peers; similarly the elven archer who has lost his royal title and is named "Robin" is not going to instill coos of delight at your originality. Avoiding tales like Robin Hood or King Arthur is heartily suggested.

Fantasy Fiction

Uncannily enough, if you are looking for fantasy names the best place to look is fantasy fiction. Some science fiction literature may also be applicable -- although more often it shall be the names of the aliens than the name of the human characters.

As with fairy tales and legends, I stress that popular works should be avoided. *The Foundation Trilogy*, Tolkien, Robert E. Howard, and Fritz Leiber all jump to mind as prime candidates to avoid.

Last Names

Although the last names of your peers may seem boring and commonplace, it is more likely because you have become overexposed to them. There are many uncommon last names with a feeling of unearthliness attached to them, and even your phone book can be used in naming your NPCs.

If you have a large library of novels and other works, it is suggested that you look at the last names of some of the lesser known authors. Names such as "Gillard" and "Amend" strike me as perfect. Even slightly more earthly names such as "Blish", or names that seem just slightly unusable, can be changed in various manners (see the Syllables sections below) to suit your purpose.

It is also suggested that you get in the habit of looking at the credit pages of large books. If you look at the front of a

TSR book you will get a listing of everyone from the CEO to the artists to the actual writers of the work. A massive collection of names, any one of which may work for you.

To stress this point again (and I do not believe it can be understressed): do not use the last names of popular authors. If you add characters such as a fearsome fighter of unparalleled strength known as "Asimov" or a butcher named "Gygax," the popularity of your campaign may be drastically reduced. The author of this article takes no responsibility if this warning is ignored.

Combinations

If you are in a rush, a cut-and-paste method may best fit your tastes. A combination of two different sections of text from a work (or two different works) may let you come up with something completely original.

For example: Paging through a handy science fiction novel I spot two names I rather like, Bryce and Nicolai. I quickly paste them together and my character becomes Nicolai Bryce.

Try to make it compositionally sound; "Richard Andrew" just doesn't make the cut.

Do not limit yourself to just fantasy authors. If you employ this method in combination with the Last Name method above you'll find great success. Modern fictional characters can have exciting last names just as easily as real people. The only thing to remember is our prime directive: No popular works (and thus, in this case, characters). Therefore "Gandalf Bilbo" is probably not the wisest thing to attempt.

Gaming Supplements

Gaming supplements may seem unlikely places from which to draw names -- especially if you are playing the game in question -- but, if done properly, game supplements are invaluable assets.

If you are running the campaign on the fly, either because the PCs have taken off in an unexpected direction or you simply had nothing prepared, open one of the game worlds you already have on your gaming shelf. This process works for any locale name, from cities to mountain ranges, so long as you avoid the more popular names which are immediately recognizable.

Suggested

GM: The dust billows up around you as you walk down the dusty road. A rickety old sign off to the side says "Sourlode"; some short figures, probably dwarves, are milling about an old mine entrance about a half mile away.
Player: Wow!

Avoid Like Plague

GM: Alright, you're in Waterdeep --
Player: So this campaign is in the ***Forgotten Realms***?
GM: No, I just stole the name.

This method even works effectively for NPCs; as long as you avoid Elminsters and Raistlins you should meet with successful results.

Baby Name Books

Although the vast majority of the space in these tomes are filled with commonplace names such as "Betsy" and "Frank"; one of my best characters -- Darwara -- was named from one such book.

It may take a little bit of time to find an appropriate name, but if you are completely out of ideas or simply want to browse for awhile you may uncover simply wonderful and awe-inspiring names that you never would have considered. Render all options fully available to yourself; leave no stones unturned and no doors unopened.

Syllables, Method One

The modern world as we know it is a mass of written material. At this very instant there is 100% chance that there is written material within your line of sight (since you are reading this, I figure this is a pretty safe bet).

Each word in the English language is broken down into syllables -- one or more for each word. This also applies to names. If you find a string of syllables and arrange them in an audibly appealing fashion, chances are that you will end up with a name fully usable for a fantasy character.

To demonstrate this procedure: I have an ***AD&D*** handbook close at hand. Across the room is a shelf of *Star Trek* novels. From those five words (Advanced, Dungeons, Dragons, Star, Trek) I can construct the name of "Adarun." I drew the syllable "ad" from "Advanced," the syllable "ar" from "Star," and the syllable "un" from "Dungeon."

This procedure can be applied to any written material you may have at hand. The name "Procan" is drawn entirely from two words in the previous sentence, considering how many words fill up this magazine there are a nearly infinite number of names you could conceive from the combination of varying syllables throughout.

Considering that there must be some written material at the game table in order for the game to be played, it should not be too difficult to come up with names on the fly with this method.

Syllables, Method Two

The first step you must take in applying this method is finding a base word; usually this is the sort of thing you can simply pick out of thin air. From this base word you change syllables incrementally to similar sounds, or delete them entirely until you come up with a name which you enjoy. It takes me approximately ten seconds to run through the whole process (on average) in my head. For example:

Ravenloft
Cavenloft
Cavloft
Covloft
Covlaft

And you have a completely original name that is unlikely (if not impossible) for anyone to trace back to its roots in the word "Ravenloft."

Conclusion

I can only hope that this article finds its way into the hands of at least one Gamemaster who will find some use for it, who will be able to improve his campaign, reduce the guffaws from his players as NPCs with generic names gain center stage, and add the essential elements to the atmosphere of his campaign that creative and correct naming processes can accomplish.

by Seth Cohen

Art by andi jones

I don't know about you, but my biggest problem with gamemastering is coming up with a plot. Characters are no problem . . . people bring them with them, either fully-constructed or as part of an idea they've had. But plots? How do you make these characters do things that their players will find interesting, session after session? Some might say that there's only a certain number of plots in the world of fiction . . . and they might be right. However, it's not the basics of the plot that matter, but the bells and whistles that keep your gamers coming back for more. How do you find those ideas? Here's a thought -- I'll pull some examples out of the idea box for you.

Recycling Paper

1) The US Government is supplying funding and high-tech weaponry to a small Middle Eastern country in exchange for oil concessions. The dictator is reprehensible (murdering the American ambassador when his demands for more aid aren't met) and is oppressing his own people. An independent strike force organized to break the dictator's control over his people has been sent to the Middle East. They are equipped with high-tech weaponry as well as some specialist heavy-hitters. However, the real struggle does not take place entirely on the battlefield; the politics, philosophy, and psychology of all groups in the conflict are highly analyzed and are vital to the resolution of the mission.

2) A telephone repairman driving on a snowy Wisconsin road is flagged down . . . by a man being chased by demons. The telephone repairman thinks the man mad (and he's not wrong), yet the demons do exist, manifesting themselves almost immediately. The two of them retreat to a secure location . . . where it turns out that the telephone repairman's mundane skills are as important against the demons as those of their initial target.

3) A group of adventurers is walking along the city streets, observing the fine stonework and partaking of the quiet village air. One of them pauses, in reflection . . . and then jumps, as if shocked. The other adventurers gather around her as she unbuckles her sword and looks at it askance. She then turns to her companions of many years and questions them, "How did this happen to New York City?" None of her companions have ever heard of such a place, although it seems strangely familiar, in a deja vu sort of way.

4) The city's protector is shocked to learn of a series of horrific murders. An invisible killer is decapitating men, and the traces left behind suggest that the killer isn't human. The protector notes that the people being killed are underworld

types, and the killer's pattern suggests that he is following some kind of code-of-honor. The murders are panicking the city; despite the good that may be done by allowing the killer to operate, harm will soon come to many. How is the protector to fight an invisible alien?

Would you like a fifth example? Do you have enough information? Or have you figured out where the first four examples came from? 1) was *The Incredible Hulk, #390.* 2) was *Badger #46.* 3) was *The Uncanny X-Men #190.* And 4) was *Batman vs. Predator #1.*

When I mentioned "the idea box," I wasn't being metaphorical. I have ten "idea-boxes," which are actually comic book long-boxes, each containing several hundred comic books. It took me longer to write the above text than it took to pull the comic books out of the boxes.

I'm not discussing the concept of running a RPG of your favorite comic-book heroes or villains. Far from it, actually. I'm discussing plots and characters that can fit most campaigns in many different genres -- sword and sorcery, Old West, modern-day adventuring, or far-future pan-galactic inter-dimensional swashbuckling. It doesn't matter, comics have it all.

Take *Batman,* for example. Bruce Wayne is a multimillionaire, martial artist/acrobat detective, with connections to both his local police department as well as international crime-fighting agencies. Although none of his skills are supernatural, he is about as highly trained as any man could be in any of these fields. Conceivably, you could break his various skills and abilities down into several characters if you needed to, and his adventures span from breaking up a simple mugging to fighting organized crime to defending the earth against invaders from outer space or other dimensions. A single book can be used as a one-shot with pregenerated characters for a gaming convention, or a selection of comics from *Batman's* 50-year history can keep your gamers satisfied for years.

The adventures of the *X-Men* normally span the world and the galaxy as they fight oppression to their fellow mutants. But the adventure I mentioned above concerns an instance where a sorcerer's amulet was unearthed, allowing the spirit of the sorcerer to take control of the man who discovered it. The sorcerer was reincarnated, and turned New York City into a re-creation of the city he'd lived in several thousand years ago. Despite the changes he'd wrought in the city's superstructure and populace, he was confronted with resistance from within and without his realm. This could be easily modified as a transition point to change the scope of an adventure for a set of characters.

I mentioned *Badger.* Most people reading this article will have no idea who or what *Badger* is, and that's alright, as *Badger* changes from minute to minute. *Badger's* adventures have spanned the continents, the dimensions, and time itself. Who is *Badger*? Norbert Sykes is *Badger,* although that's subject to some debate, especially from within Norbert himself. Norbert is a Army veteran who suffers from Multiple Personality Disorder, although he often finds himself in a *Badger* state of mind. *Badger* is a world-class martial artist, can speak to animals, and shares a castle with a 5th century druid. I'll bet that he qualifies as having an unusual background of some kind or other. *Badger* adventures tend towards the ridiculous, but can easily be adapted as above with *Batman* (splitting Norbert's personalities and skills among several characters,) or injecting him as an NPC in an ongoing adventure.

And although expecting one character to play the part of Dr. Bruce Banner (nuclear scientist and *Incredible Hulk*) is too much to expect for a non-Supers campaign, the conflict in the book is partially drawn from the United States meddling in Middle-Eastern politics. This adventure discusses the psychology of the oppressed population as well as addresses the ethics of invading a country to save it from its leader. The ultra-tech elements of the adventure can be suppressed or expanded as needed by the GM in order to fit his scenarios, and the super-powered characters can be included or deleted as he sees fit to make the plot of the comic book fit his campaign.

Understand where I'm coming from now? Of course, I wouldn't recommend recycling your old *Richie Rich* comic books . . . but I can think of things to do with *Spider-Man, The Legion of Super-Heroes, Dr. Strange, Buck Godot, The Punisher, Conan, The Fantastic Four, Green Lantern, Nexus,* and some old geezer called *Superman.* The well-written comic book delves both into the depths of the character (and his "secret identity," if he has one) as well as the conflicts he has to resolve and skills he has to use in order to make it to the next day. It's rare that a skill that can be used in a roleplaying game isn't represented somewhere across the wide field of the comic-book industry.

Of course, there are many different ways to modify the characters and plots to meet your needs. Certainly you'll have to be trickier with filing off the serial numbers and switch more elements around if some of your gamers read the same material you do. But that's no more than you'd expect if you were modifying a preconstructed scenario from ***AD&D*** to ***Rolemaster*** or ***GURPS.***

If you haven't been in the comic book store recently, you'll be surprised at where the price of the books has gone. I picked up nine books today and paid over 20 bucks (but since one of them included *Dork Tower #2*, the trip was well worth it!) - but that's no reason that you need to do the same. If you're familiar with your local store or outlet for comic books, they'll let you browse until you see something you want. Even searching the 50-cent bins can turn up something useful and interesting; and if spending money isn't the way to go, you can still find a lot of material at your local library. Yes, your tax dollars are being spent to purchase rebound editions of popular comic series. Isn't it cool that something useful is done with your money? Go take these out of the library. Even if it turns out that one of the books you borrowed doesn't have the elements you need to fit your ongoing campaign, you'll have spent a pleasant afternoon "researching" for your next adventure and spending time with some old friends.

by Bob Portnell

Art by Keith Johnson

I've been a ***GURPS*** fiend for a decade. Growing up playing Steve Jackson's first roleplaying design, ***The Fantasy Trip,*** conditioned me to be well-disposed to anything with few stats and no classes or levels. But lately, I've missed the fast-flow give-and-take of the old ***TFT*** days, not to mention the speedy character creation rules. I've found ***GURPS'*** detail and realism don't bend easily to these desires.

Enter ***Pocket Fantasy (PF)*** from Plaid Rabbit Productions. Lo and behold! A system designed to encourage creativity while retaining simplicity. I was hooked right away. And while the crunchable numbers are of quite different flavors, the broad outline of ***PF*** is very much like ***GURPS,*** making conversion easy. Here are guidelines for converting ***GURPS*** characters to ***Pocket Fantasy*** or vice-versa.

Note: ***Pocket Fantasy*** is based on the ***PlainLabel Roleplaying System*** by MC+ Creations. Many of these conversion principles will apply to future ***PlainLabel***-based games.

Character Concept

It helps to take a few minutes to write down a capsule summary of the character's history and personality. You might be surprised to discover how much this person has changed since you started play. Remember, too, as you convert that you're not changing the character; you're just describing him with a different set of game rules.

Core Numbers

Both ***GURPS*** and ***PF*** use four attributes representing physical strength, agility, health and intelligence; only the names have been changed to protect copyrights. The scales and die roll conventions are different. Also, we are told (in ***Pocket Warrior***) that an "average" Stat-5 character "is perfectly capable of handling himself -- better than the common man on the street" and "a character of stat 8 or above will stand out . . . as especially gifted." Combining the probabilities and philosophies, we come up with:

PF **Stat**	***GURPS*** **Attribute**	***PF*** **Stat**	***GURPS*** **Attribute**
2	1 to 4	7	12 or 13
3	5 to 7	8	14 or 15
4	8 or 9	9	16 to 18
5	10 or 11	10	19 or 20
6	11 or 12		

Where two values are offered, pick the one that seems appropriate for the character; don't just greedily take the higher value. Keep proportions in mind, too. If Olaf The Awful Hungry has (ST 12, DX 11) think about converting him to (S 7, C 6) or (S 6, C 5) instead of (S 6, C 6).

Inborn Traits

GURPS has Advantages and Disadvantages and Quirks; ***PF*** has Abilities and Disabilities. They're all the same thing: inborn traits which make the character unusually versatile or unusually limited.

A Rule (or two) of Thumb: Most 5- or 10-point ***GURPS*** traits correspond to 1-Point traits in ***PF***; a 15-point or bigger ***GURPS*** trait will be a 2-Pointer in ***PF.*** 3-point ***PF*** traits are beyond human ken and correspond to very high value (or very inhuman) ***GURPS*** traits.

Many traits have similar names and roles, so converting is easy. Literacy Advantage converts to Literacy Ability. Hard of Hearing and Deafness Disadvantages become Hearing Impairment and Deafness Disabilities.

A Quirk should convert to a note on a ***PF*** character sheet. Play it, don't Point it! Some Quirks or low-value Advantages or Disadvantages may become 0-Point ***PF*** traits, adding variety without really affecting point balance. This is fine. But you're allowed only one each of 0-Point Abilities and Disabilities in ***Pocket Fantasy.***

What if you don't have enough Disabilities to equal -40 points in Disadvantages? Don't worry about it. You may not need all those extra Disadvantages; if you do, you can add ones that make sense for the character.

Naturally, there are exceptions to these rules:

Just Lucky, I Guess: In ***PF,*** Luck is a minor stat, an accumulation of reward points which can be used to modify die rolls. In ***GURPS,*** Luck is an Advantage allowing rerolls on a periodic basis. All ***PF*** characters start with 15 Luck points -- even ones converted from ***GURPS***! Translate each level of Luck Advantage as an extra 15 Luck points. Going the other way, subtract 15 pts. from the ***PF*** character's current Luck points, then give him one level of Luck Advantage for each full 15 Luck points remaining.

On The Dodge: In ***GURPS,*** Dodge is a figured stat. In ***PF,*** it's a Skill, and much more generous. Either way, you can't convert directly between them. You might equate higher-than-default Dodge Skill with Enhanced Dodge, or martial arts proficiency, or Combat Reflexes.

Combative Nature: In ***GURPS,*** Combat Reflexes is an Advantage which adds to Defense rolls. ***PF*** has nothing like this. ***Pocket Fantasy*** does have Combat Awareness, a Skill which at high levels gives bonuses to Initiative. The ***GURPS*** equivalent is Tactics Skill. In converting, let one rating level from Combat Awareness equal Tactics Skill; let two rating levels equal Combat Reflexes. A ***PF*** character Familiar with Combat Awareness would have Tactics Skill; but a Capable character might have improved Tactics Skill or Combat Reflexes.

Senseless: The ***GURPS*** Sense Rolls are, in ***PF,*** a roll vs. the "Notice/Observe" Personal Skill. Convert the Acute Vision or Acute Hearing traits as above; if the ***GURPS*** character had Alertness, give the ***Pocket Fantasy*** version at least a Capable rating in Notice/Observe (or vice versa). ***GURPS*** Danger Sense is worth one level of Notice/Observe and one level of Combat Awareness. Note there are no "Taste/Smell" features in ***PF***.

Mentally Deficient: Most of the Mental Disadvantages (Delusions, Codes of Honor, Compulsive Behaviors, Vows) are covered by the Compulsion/Obsession/Mania Disability. Similarly, Mild and Severe Phobias become

Fear/Phobia/Terror (a truly severe form). Use the Rule of Thumb above, plus the game descriptions of the traits, plus what seems appropriate for the character.

Socially Bankrupt: ***PF*** does not (as of ***Pocket Warrior***) have Disability analogs to the Duty, Patron, Enemy, Ally, Dependent, or Secret Disadvantages. The unreleased ***Tomorrow's Heroes*** is a superhero game using the same ***PlainLabel*** mechanics as ***PF***. As of this writing, ***Tomorrow's Heroes*** includes the Sponsor Ability (analog of the Patron Advantage), and the Appearance, Enemy and Secret Disabilities. If you need these now and the GM allows it, use the Rule of Thumb above to convert costs.

Many of the "self-imposed" Disadvantages have no corresponding Disabilities; ditto for the ***GURPS*** derived stat Will and Reaction modifiers. This is deliberate; the ***PF*** designers think such things should just be played; let them be Disabilities only if the GM can use them to get the characters into serious trouble.

Skills

Skills are just as easy to convert, but take a little more thinking. Instead of working from a table (as for Core Numbers) or from effect (as for Inborn Traits), to convert Skills we need to take notice of how much effort the character has invested into the Skill. That is, we convert based on points spent and not on actual Skill level. So:

PF **Skill Rating (cost)**	***GURPS*** **Skill Points Spent**
Familiar (1)	1/2 to 2
Capable (2)	1 to 4
Professional (4)	4 to 8
Expert (8)	more than 8

So, if Alex the Ranger (***GURPS***) has DX 13 and Shortsword 16, he's spent 16 points on the skill. DX 13 becomes C 7, and a Expert Level Sword Skill would take value 19. If the values seem wrong, tweak them a bit. The goal is to get the character right, not to rigidly follow formulae. In this example, I thought a ***PF*** Sword-19 was just too good to be true for Alex, so I changed it to Professional level, resulting in Sword-15.

The ***PF*** Skill list is smaller and more general than in ***GURPS***, so you may find yourself changing skill names. Don't fret. Remember you're playing the same character, just with a different game.

The Skill Point Pool: In ***PF***, starting characters have a limited allotment of points to spend on Skills. Since this isn't a starting character, we can safely assume that the character has gained sufficient experience (in a ***PF*** framework) to justify all those Skill points we've converted.

Magic

The ***Pocket Sorceror,*** the magical core rules for ***Pocket Fantasy,*** is out and available at the ***Pocket Fantasy*** web site.

GURPS has Magical Aptitude (aka Magery) Advantage, which costs points depending on the quality of bonus. ***GURPS*** Spells are learned just like Skills, and used just like Skills, too. Each Spell can be learned at a different level, within rules for prerequisites and the like.

PF has Magic Skill. Your Magic Skill determines: your magical energy reserve, the number and difficulty of spells you can learn, and your task roll for *all* spellcasting. ***PF*** Spells are purchased with Skill Points, but have no skill level or rating; Average and easier Spells cost 1 Point; Above Average and more difficult Spells cost 2 Points. All rolls to cast spells are made against Magic Skill.

To convert Magery to Magic Skill: Let Magery-1 or -2 correspond to a Magic Skill of "Capable"; and Magery-3 to

Magic Skill of "Professional." (There is no "Expert" level in Magic Skill, and "Familiar" is too low to accurately reflect most ***GURPS*** mages.) This may result is a shockingly low value of Skill; a ***PF*** character with average I and Magic Skill at the Capable rating has a skill value of only 9! But he also will only be learning and casting low-difficulty spells, which include their own bonuses to skill.

Spell Conversion is easy: Convert on Effects, just as you did for Inborn Traits. ***GURPS*** Fireball matches up with the ***PF*** Fireshot spell, for example. ***GURPS*** magic requires a logical hierarchy of foundation spells be purchased, but many of the prerequisites will drop out during conversion; or if going from ***PF*** to ***GURPS***, you may need to purchase many minor spells to satisfy the prerequisites. Also, Many ***GURPS*** spells will be covered by a single ***PF*** spell. ***GURPS*** has Control Mammal, Control Reptile, Control Congressman . . . ***PF*** has Control Creature, which works on any non-sapient.

To create a ***PF*** Spell from a ***GURPS*** model, set the Difficulty level equal to one-half the number of straight-line prerequisite spells, rounding up. If a variable point effect exists (like damage), base it on the Difficulty level: Difficulty 1 has a maximum result of 5 points; Difficulty 2 has a 10 maximum; Difficulty 3 a 20 maximum; and Difficulty 4 a 30 maximum. This may vary, of course -- ***PF*** Greater Healing is a Difficulty 4 spell, but only has a 20-point maximum effect. Use existing ***PF*** spells as guides for area or range effects.

PF also has a Spell Targeting Skill, the analog of the ***GURPS*** Spell Throwing Skills. Convert between these as you would with any normal skill.

Material Goods

Equipment: Make a list of items from the old character, and "acquire" them in the new game. Use the new game stats: weight, cost, damages, the lot. If some special equipment must come over (your fighter's elven-mail shirt, for example), consult with the GM on the best way to handle the situation.

Money: Starting Wealth is an irrelevant concept here, since (say it with me, now) this isn't a starting character! Allow fair translation of wealth and goods from one game to the other, then use the new game for determining reward values, monthly cost of living, and so on.

Secondary Figures: Never try to convert secondary stats, like Speed or Hit Points; always calculate these using the rules of the game to which you are converting.

The Big Picture

Pocket Fantasy characters converted to ***GURPS*** may seem sketchy to the experienced ***GURPS*** hand. You'll probably want to add a few Skills, or tweak the Attributes, or add a Disadvantage, etc. Feel free! Going the other way, some of your ***GURPS*** Skills might be jettisoned, unneeded in the minimalist ***PF*** format. All of this is just fine! This is your character and you should do anything reasonable to see that the game correctly represents said character. Remember, without the character, there is no role, and no roleplay!

Sample Conversions

Here are sample conversions of the "sample" characters used in each game's rules: ***GURPS*** rogue Dai Blackthorn as a ***Pocket Fantasy*** character, and ***PF***'s Gerald Haldane in ***GURPS*** terms

Dai Blackthorn

S 4 **C** 8 **H** 6 **I** 6

Abilities:

Acute Hearing (1)

Disabilities:
Enemy (Thieves' Guild) (1)
Financial Restrictions (1)

Skills:
Convince F/7
Notice/Observe F/7
Combat Awareness F/9
Knife C/12
Lockpicking C/12
Pickpocket C/12
Sword C/12
Stealth F/9
Streetwise C/10
Traps F/7

Notes: Dai's only two skill points over the pool he would normally get as a created ***PF*** character . . . plus he compares favorably with sample thievish NPCs, so we feel pretty good about this conversion.

Gerald Haldane

ST 14 **DX** 9 **IQ** 11 **HT** 12

Advantages: Literacy; Comfortable Wealth

Disadvantage: Vow: Harass the Black Baron (-10)

Quirks: Hard-G Gerald; Admires Books and Learning

Skills: Shortsword-10; Blacksmith-12; Armoury-12; Riding (Horse)-9; Research-11; Naturalist-10; Boxing-9; Savoir-Faire-12.

Total Points: 95

Notes: It would probably be appropriate to fill Gerald out with Social Status-2 (he is a lesser noble, after all) and a self-imposed disadvantage like Overconfidence. A few other skills and quirks would help round out the character for ***GURPS*** play.

by Peter V. Dell'Orto

Art by Sebastien Allard

As a referee, I began to have a problem with how people spent their accumulated character points. My players' characters had reached around 60 or more points above the campaign base, and I began to fret over the skill levels that they were flaunting. Weapon skills, especially important in the fantasy campaign I was GMing, had climbed to 17s and 18s, well ahead of most of the opposition. While I had no problem with the skill levels, I wanted to curb the rate that they increased while still giving the same number of character points out as awards.

For example, one character had a DX of 17 and DX+1 in his main weapon skills; another had DX 15 and DX+1 or DX+2 in his main weapon skills. Both were primarily fighting foes in the 14-15 skill range, and it seemed unlikely that their weapon skills should increase that much from fighting less-skilled opponents. Understanding this, both players had voluntarily set limits on their own skills, not planning on increasing them until they could find a valid campaign reason to do so, such as a skilled teacher or practice with a superior warrior. Meanwhile, players saving points to increase an attribute or purchase an advantage such as Combat Reflexes would do one of two things. Either they would monomaniacally dedicate all points toward that goal until it was achieved, no matter how much they used other skills in the adventures they had to earn the points they spent, or they would save the points for a time, then binge-spend the points on skills that they suddenly wanted to increase and be forced to start all over. Other players, whose newer characters were less powerful than the older characters, would spend the vast majority of their earned points on one or two skills to get as capable as the veterans, resulting in lopsided character development.

In the end, I felt that this was unrealistic, frustrating, and made it hard for me to plan ahead -- was the player going to buy Combat Reflexes or not? The answer could make all the difference when I was planning my adventures, which were often meant to be a tight squeeze for the players. A point or two difference here or there could spell the difference between success and death. Voluntary curbs were fine, but ultimately unsatisfactory. After all, maybe the warrior learned comparatively little today, but after ten solid combats with those same enemies he would have improved enough to gain a point of skill. But what about after four combats? Eleven? Where was the learning breakpoint?

What I wanted was a more natural-seeming progression, with character points spread out more evenly among the character's skills. But I also wanted characters to be able to concentrate on the skills they wished to develop. So my solution, prompted by a friend, was to force my players to commit all character points as soon as they were given. We would end a session after some important event or junction in an adventure, and I would give the players slips of paper listing their XP awards at the beginning of the next session.

Now here is where my experience scheme gets clever: All character points must be spent immediately. Points cannot be saved in a general pool to spend later. Instead, the points must be dedicated towards the eventual (or immediate) increase or purchase of a skill, attribute, or advantage. A maximum of 1 point can be put into any skill, with the exception of new skills (bought up from successful default use) or skills with 1/2 point in them. Those skills are limited to 1/2 point each. Attributes could have anywhere from 1/2 to 2 points committed towards

raising them (since they cost twice base cost to increase during play), and advantages could have up to 1 point committed. As a result, a PC with DX+4 in Axe/Mace would need at least eight play sessions involving successful combat use of Axe/Mace to increase it to DX+5. Buying Combat Reflexes would take at least 15 sessions involving combat. Going from HT 13 to 14 would take 15x2 = 30 points, so at least 15 sessions at 2 points each. Naturally, points do not have to be put in consecutively in order to increase a skill. If the above Axe/Mace wielder had 7 points in the skill and did not fight for six play sessions, he would still only need one more session and 1 more point to increase the skill. Or perhaps your character, looking to purchase that increase in HT, is, luckily, not called on to make any HT rolls for a few sessions, would not be able to dedicate more points toward HT, but the accumulated points would not be lost.

Only skills and advantages that were used "significantly" in the course of the adventuring that earned the character experience points could be improved. "Significant" was defined as using the skill successfully in a situation were failure was possible and significant. This meant combat for combat skills, with a successful hit for offensive skills (regardless of the enemy's success or failure at defense) and successful defense for shield or buckler, both in serious combat. Serious combat means not only life-threatening but with some meaning to the success or failure of the adventure, or a fight against tougher-than-normal opponents. Multiple combats of any intensity will also qualify, since the skill is being used repeatedly -- sure, those peasants were no match for your mercenary, but if you have to carve your way out of a large and bloodthirsty mob with your trusty blade I cannot see denying you the opportunity to dedicate points to it. A successful climbing roll up a ladder is not significant, but a successful climbing roll up rusted rungs barely able to hold your weight is. Successfully resisting a spell, or other Will roll, allows points to be put into HT (if resisted with HT), Strong Will, but never (at least, in my campaign) IQ. Alertness can be purchased whenever a successful sense check is made to spot something significant. The aforementioned Combat Reflexes may be acquired as a result of any serious combat. Hard to Kill can have points dedicated to its purchase for surviving rolls against death (this one can be hard to increase!) Spells would need to have been successfully cast in an appropriate situation; casting a spell over and over to get better with it is better covered by time use sheets. Learning new spells is also handled by time use sheets -- just because you earned 6 points on the last adventure does not mean you can buy six new spells. I require finding a teacher and spending the hours to do it.

Stats work the same way. IQ can have points dedicated to it if the player can explain why they have gained such a significant experience that allows their general intelligence and knowledge base to increase rather than just the skills used -- definitely a GM judgment call. DX is handled the same way; to a lesser extent-it is much easier to justify a general improvement at agility than a general increase in intelligence. ST and HT and quite easy to justify -- most rolls against either will be quite significant, and any serious combat is quite an intense workout.

When training up skills with time use sheets, OJT, etc., keep track of any and all extraneous hours until they equal 1/2 point, at which point they are dedicated to the stats or skills in question. Any combination of hours and experience

points can be used to buy up skills, and there is no limit on the speed of training -- it is slow enough.

Naturally, disadvantages can also have points dedicated towards buying them off. Overconfidence will seem much easier to buy off when you place one point per session to buy it off, one point after each time your character gets an inkling of his or her real capabilities. Points can be put towards either Strong Will or buying off a Phobia if the character overcomes the fear in order to accomplish some task, depending on the concept of the character. Some disadvantages do not lend themselves to being bought off incrementally, such as One Arm, Duty, or Enemies. These can be handled by either allowing the player to buy it off all at once, then pay back the "debt" on the 1-point-per-session installment plan, use of the dedicated points method above, or by a combination of the two. For example, you killed off your 20-point Enemy, and to do so you spend 6 points you had dedicated towards buying it off, owe 4 more, and take Overconfident (after all, you are walking tall and acting cocky now that you've wiped him out). Justifying points in these cases may be difficult, so players and referees are encouraged to be creative. Maybe you can dedicate points towards your enemy after you interrupt its activities (the CIA is still after you, but you got the Congress to start investigating its activities, thus weakening them), kill his most important henchman (you killed Frank, but the evil Dr. Forrester is still after you), or perhaps buy down the frequency first (now that Frank is gone, Dr. Forrester has trouble catching up to you as often). I allow points to be dedicated towards disadvantages that can be bought off but not "overcome" (such as One Arm) any time the player wishes, so long as when it is fully bought off they make the proper effort from a roleplaying perspective.

A character with points committed to a skill can never retrieve those points or change his mind. The points committed, which do not yet affect the character's skills or attributes, are not counted against the character point total. A 150 point character with 28 points committed (but not yet cashed in) is still only 150, not 178.

There are several advantages in using this method. It forces characters to diversify their points, placing points not only in the skills they want at very high levels, but also in the stats they are based on, putting points towards the Reputation they are slowly developing, etc. The system also works well with advantages like Reputation, Contacts, Patrons, etc. For example, you could put two points into a Reputation after two sessions fighting in the arena with your gladiator-getting a +1 on a 7-, from a small group (diehard fans). Soon enough it is +1 on a 10-, then a large group. Eventually, at least 20 sessions later (probably much longer, since not every session is going to be "significant" in enhancing your formidable rep) you have that +4, everyone, always reputation as the greatest gladiator to ever grace the sport.

The method also means that each session is more important, since a player who wishes to increase in several areas at once as rapidly as possible must get as many points as he or she can. Naturally, the ***GURPS*** method of handing out experience is very heavily weighted towards points for roleplaying. As a result, the would-be master swordsman must also be a well-played character before he can become the all-around warrior he wants to be -- just putting points into broadsword, shield, HT, and ST each session at the maximum rate means the player must earn 6 points per session. There are drawback as well. If you want a very rapid pace of growth, handing out more experience per session in order to achieve it, the characters will still grow slowly. Or let's say you want Literacy, Combat Reflexes, or ST to increase quickly in your particular campaign. In either case, you can loosen, or remove entirely, the limits on the areas you want emphasized, or simply take the expedient of doubling the limit that can be invested. This system also works best in long-term campaigns, and campaigns where extreme power levels are not emphasized. I have discarded this system while playing short campaigns, or in my eventually 1000+ point character Immortality campaign, where this would put the brakes on the rapid advancement I and my players wish to achieve. The system works well in the face of acquiring new spells, purchasing advantages, buying up defaults (and reversing them, as per the example in the ***Basic Set***), and all other situations I have so far come across. It has also meant that I could be more free with points, since I know that they cannot be abused. I have also found that players are more likely to set aside points for advantages and attributes, since they cannot put any more points in their weapon skills than they already have.

A Variant for Settlers of Catan

by J. Hunter Johnson

Required: Klaus Teuber's ***Settlers of Catan,*** from Kosmos and Mayfair Games.
Recommended: Steffan O'Sullivan's ***FUDGE Dice GM's Pack,*** from Grey Ghost Games.
Optional: Any of the expansions or other variants for ***Settlers of Catan.***

Settlers of Catan is the game the brought German games to more American game tables than ever before. It was popular enough to sell through three English editions, and the first two expansions have recently been translated as well. The game, for those who may still not know, centers around resource management -- you need points to win, you need to build roads, settlements and cities to get points, and you need raw materials to build anything. And those resources are meted out on the whims of the dice. If only there were a way to gain a little edge over the dice . . .

Which is exactly what ***FUDGE Dice*** are good for.

Fudgers of Catan

At the beginning of the game, each player is given a single ***FUDGE Die.*** Players may build additional ***FUDGE Dice*** at a cost of 1 wool, 1 timber, and 1 stone each (a little sacrifice to the Fates of Catan), until the supply (20 dice) is exhausted.

FUDGE Dice may be used as normal: after the regular dice are cast, the player who rolled may expend any number of ***FUDGE Dice*** by throwing them and modifying the original roll by +1 for each "+" and -1 for each "-" rolled. The number of ***FUDGE Dice*** to be rolled must be chosen ahead of time -- you can't decide to throw more after seeing the result of the first set. Once rolled, ***FUDGE Dice*** are returned to the supply.

The ***FUDGE Dice*** may also be used to modify another player's roll. In this case, the expended dice are given to that player.

The number of ***FUDGE Dice*** given to each player at start and the number of ***FUDGE Dice*** in the supply may be varied to taste. If you do not have ***FUDGE Dice,*** you can use regular six-sided dice: treat a roll of 1 or 2 as "-", 3 or 4 as "blank", and 5 or 6 as "+".

The game is still one of skillful planning as opposed to luck, but now the players have a bit more control over the lucky element of the game.

Look It Up!

by Volker Bach

Art by andi jones

How do you spot a tourist in a foreign country? Well, apart from the silly sun hat and the expensive camera, the pocket dictionary is a dead giveaway. The traveler uses this practical little device filled with phrases like "Could you direct me to the airport, please?" to boost his effective Language Skill. If this works in the real world it should be possible in ***GURPS*** as well. Thus, I propose the following set of rules:

Dictionaries

Dictionaries increase the user's effective Skill in a given language by an amount that reflects the book's size and quality. A four-volume translator's dictionary will help more than a 50¢ palmtop dictionary. However, a bad dictionary (*English as She is Spoke, With 15.000 Verbs*) may decrease the user's effective language Skill (see below).

At a high enough Skill level, the character will outgrow a dictionary. A professor of English is unlikely to benefit much from a travelers' pocket dictionary. Thus, every dictionary has not only the bonus to effective Skill, but also a maximum Skill increase allowed. A palmtop dictionary would raise the user's effective Skill by 1, but only to a maximum of 8. Anyone with a skill of 8 or higher already knows practically everything this dictionary could tell him. Thus, it is useful for beginners but not much help to advanced students. The 24-volume *Oxford English Dictionary*, on the other hand, increases the user's effective Skill by 4, to a maximum of 16. Every character below level 16 in English can benefit from using it. By way of a rough guide, the following figures can be used:

Palmtop Dictionary: Skill +1, max. 8 (1/2 lb., $5).
Travel Dictionary: Skill +1 (spoken +2), max. 8 (1-2 lbs., $5-20).
Learner's Dictionary: Skill +2, max. 11 (2-5 lbs., $10-80).
Translator's Dictionary: Skill +3, max. 13 (5-20 lbs, $50-500).
Academic Dictionary: Skill + 4, max. 16 (10-100 lbs, $ 300+).

Note that not all types are available for all languages. Exotic and dead languages are usually found only in scholarly dictionaries which are often not user-friendly, and sometimes contain pitifully little information.

Example: Milton Gregory, Esq., gentleman of independent means and hobby archaeologist of the occult, is faced with a puzzling inscription he unearthed on a hill near Fayum. Unfortunately, his Greek is very rusty (Skill 7). Fortunately, he has his trusted *Liddel-Scott Dictionary* (+3 to Skill) with him. With its help, he boosts his effective Skill to 10 and, since time is not a major factor, arrives at a correct translation at 2 a.m., after several abortive attempts and numerous shots of brandy (successive rolls of 12, 13 and 9).

Optional Rule: Thesauri

A thesaurus is not supposed to help understanding, but expression. Thus, it increases not the Language skill but the Writing skill. As opposed to dictionaries, thesauri cover only a very small part of successful writing, namely vocabulary. Therefore even a very good thesaurus will only give +2 to Skill.

Dictionaries give 1/2 their Skill bonus to Writing. Maximum Skill applies by Language, not Writing Skill. Thus, if a character knew English at 12 and Writing at 7, a +2 dictionary, max. 10, would do no good. He already knows English above the maximum and therefore is aware of everything the dictionary could tell him.

Handbooks

Look It Up!

Handbooks are similar to dictionaries, but apply to Mental Skills other than languages. A handbook of Chemistry will increase the character's effective Chemistry Skill. A handbook is different from an instruction manual. It does not tell a character how to do something, it merely gives him additional information.

Handbooks, like dictionaries, come in various sizes and qualities ranging from the small and easily portable high school textbook (+1, maximum 12) to the extensive and extremely non-portable academic handbook (+4, maximum 18). As with dictionaries, there are examples of execrable quality that will result in an effective Skill penalty if used. "Generic" types are:

High School Textbook: Skill +1, max. 10 (1-4 lbs, $10-40).
College Textbook: Skill +2, max. 12 (2-8 lbs, $30-100).
University Textbook: Skill +3, max. 14 (4-15 lbs, $30-200).
Academic Handbook: Skill +4, max. 16 (6-50 lbs, $300+).

Handbooks should be assumed to exist for all Scientific and many other Mental Skills. When in doubt, the GM is final arbiter. Use common sense: A handbook on fishing should be readily available at the corner bookstore. One on Interrogation might exist, but would probably not be for sale and maybe even illegal. If a handbook on Leadership exists at all, it is unlikely to do much good.

Example: Milton Gregory, Esq., has followed the instructions in the inscription and found a very strange object. The small golden statuette looks like nothing he remembers on a roll of 10. (Archaeology 13, at a -4 penalty). However, once back in his library he takes to the trusted tomes of his *Realencyclopaedie der Classischen Alterthumswissenschaften* (+4 to Skill). His modified Archaeology Skill of 16 (13 + 4 = 17, which is adjusted downwards for being above the maximum Skill bonus) is enough to offset the penalty for recognizing the strange little item on a roll of 12. The dice come out 10. Mr. Gregory pales as he realizes what his curiosity has saddled him with . . .

Optional Restrictions

As a rough-and-ready system of rules for using dictionaries and manuals, this much is sufficient. However, for the sake of realism, and to discourage the use of dictionaries and handbooks as cheap skill-boosters, a number of optional limitations can be applied:

Time

Leafing through a book every time a character is trying to do something is time-consuming and inconvenient. Using a handbook or dictionary is appropriate only when the PCs are not under pressure. If any agreed-upon durations are being used, add 50% for each +1 to Skill due to handbook use (as ever, common sense should rule out silly results).

Nothing done with the aid of a dictionary or handbook takes less than one minute. Thus, trying to use one in dialogue is going to badly hamper communication. However, no handbook or dictionary should ever require a Research roll to use. A book that complicated (or badly written) is by definition no handbook.

Weight

The idea of characters carrying a large array of dictionaries and handbooks to boost their skills is tempting, but unrealistic. They are just too heavy for that. While there is no absolute standard for the weight of a handbook or dictionary, a rough-and-ready guideline can be established according to the Skill bonus. A small, +1 pocket volume should weigh between 1/2 and 2 lbs. A more extensive +2 book might readily go as high as 8 lbs. The professional +3 tomes easily reach 15 lbs, while for a +4 multiple-volume set the sky is the limit.

These weights apply to TL5+ printed books. For TL3 parchment manuscripts quadruple the listed weight. For TL4 printed works double it. At late TL7, computer-based handbooks and dictionaries become available at the weight and size of a CD-ROM. By TL9 at the latest, weight and bulk cease to be a consideration as thousands of gigabytes of information are stored in palmtops.

Availability

Handbooks and dictionaries of any quality should not be available prior to TL3. The early versions are rather basic and rarely exceed +1 to Skill. Books of the type and quality outlined above are available only from late TL5 onwards. In a Fantasy campaign, the GM is absolutely justified in allowing only a narrow selection of dictionaries and handbooks, or none at all.

Even in a modern environment, some dictionaries and handbooks may be impossible to come by. Finding an advanced textbook on any academic discipline should be worth an Area Knowledge roll (do you know a good bookstore?), and getting it may be further bedeviled by interminable delivery time. A desperately needed book may only be available in a foreign language, or even out of print.

Dictionaries for more exotic languages can be equally difficult to come by. Of course anyone can get a French dictionary, but what about one for Twi or Arapaho? If the players are academically minded, finding a desperately needed book may even become an adventure in itself (every university student knows what I speak of).

Price

This should not be a problem for the simple +1 handbook or traveler's dictionary, but academic textbooks, particularly those in more exotic disciplines, tend to go up in price very quickly. While a +1 book on a common subject may cost as little as $5, a good +2 work will already come at around $50, a +3 volume can easily cost over $200 and a +4 might go for as much as several thousand dollars. There is a lot of give in these categories with commonplace books (Cooking, English) being cheaper and exotic ones (Advanced Nuclear Physics, Sumerian) costing a lot more. GMs should freely vary prices according to either realism or the playing value of a Skill increase in the campaign.

Errata

A good textbook of any kind has no major errors. However, not all the books out there are good. Whenever the characters go out to buy a handbook or dictionary they run the risk of getting one that is, in some way, flawed. This can range from minor flaws to true uselessness.

A book with minor flaws usually works normally, but the GM rolls 3d every time it is used. On a 16, it yields no useful information (no bonus). On a 17 or 18, the information is wrong (GM supplies an appropriately faulty conclusion on a successful roll). For major flaws, the GM rolls 1d. On a 5 no useful information is obtained. On a 6, the information is wrong. A truly useless book leaves nothing to chance -- it actually lowers the user's effective Skill by up to -3 on any use. All this should not be told to the players but worked out behind the GM's screen. It will take

them a while to notice that their books are faulty, and any unpleasantness that results from it in the meantime can be worked into the storyline.

Any Unlucky, Jinxed or Cursed characters obviate the need for dice rolls. The GM simply assumes that they stumble over the flaws whenever it is most amusing, embarrassing or dangerous.

Characters can try to make sure their books are not flawed. An appropriate successful Skill roll after superficial reading will tell them. Minor flaws are at -3 to detect, major ones at Skill, total uselessness at +3. Careful reading will always reveal the flaws (but is extremely time-consuming and not usually possible before buying).

Some Knowledge Required

Handbooks, except possibly the very simple +1 type, may not be used to increase a default. A minimal knowledge of the subject -- at least 1/2 character point in the Skill -- is required to use a handbook. This is realistic. Otherwise a genius of IQ 16 could, with the aid of a +4 handbook on Chemistry, synthesize explosives at Skill 14 (default IQ-6 = 10 + 4 = 14) - a professional chemist's level!. In reality, very few people with no prior experience with a Skill will even understand an academic textbook on the subject.

Somewhat more realism (and a lot of number-crunching) is added by the rule that only users whose Skill level is no more than 6 below a book's maximum Skill increase receive full benefit. Every point below that means -1 to the book's effective Skill increase. Thus, a character with the English Language Skill at 8 could not get full benefit from working with an academic dictionary with maximum Skill increase 16. Being 8 points under the maximum, he is at +(4-2), +2 to effective Skill. In fact, a translator's dictionary +3 would be more helpful. These narrow windows of maximum benefit are depressingly realistic but should only be used if the players don't mind a lot of math.

Other Prerequisites

If a GM feels like punishing some players, he may rule that a handbook or, occasionally, a dictionary, has a prerequisite other than knowledge of the Skill it increases. The most obvious kind would be a book written in a foreign language. The assumption that everything worth reading has been translated into English can backfire badly, as any player will realize the first time an urgently needed book turns out to be available in either Dutch or French.

Even nastier, though sadly very realistic, are books that require proficiency in a number of skills to understand them. That could be a handbook on the archaeological finds of a certain area that increases the Archaeology Skill by +2, but only for characters with Geology at 12 or higher. Some dictionaries, particularly those written by linguists "in the field," may also require a minimal proficiency in Linguistics to figure them out. The details are left to the creativity (and sadistic streak) of the GM, but regularly occurring problems of this kind are appropriate only for campaigns with a very "academic" feel.

Embarrassment

In many environments, using a textbook openly is considered bad form. Academics will not take too kindly to a character leafing through a high school textbook at a congress (though more demanding works may be acceptable). An angler laying out his gear according to a pocketbook will have to take some ribbing from his comrades. And a captured spy seeing enemy agents consult a handbook on interrogation techniques should immediately get + 2 on any rolls to resist for sheer contempt of these amateurs. However, in other situations the use of a textbook or dictionary may even prompt others to assist the character unasked (especially with Traveller's Dictionaries). The details are entirely up to the GM.

Combining Handbooks

In case players wish to use a +2 handbook and two +1 volumes on the same task to give a +4 bonus, the GM should rightly disappoint them. Handbooks on the same Skill usually contain the same information. At the very least there

should be a great deal of overlap between their content and, thus, a lot of redundant information. As a rule, only +2 or better handbooks can be combined. A second and third handbook only yields half the bonus, but give the full time penalty. No greater bonus than +4 to Skill is possible. More than three handbooks used simultaneously are considered to be a library and are used according to the rules covering library research.

Specialization

The basic assumption for easy game mechanics is that there is a handbook for every Mental Skill, just as there is a dictionary for every Language Skill. Realistically, this is nonsense. No Skill more difficult than Mental/Easy could be contained in a single handbook. In real life, handbooks cover only small parts of a given skill. To simulate this, a handbook with a bonus of +2 or higher should be a specialized version, covering only a subdivision of a skill. There would, for example, be History (Roman Empire) or History (World War II) handbooks, but no generic History handbook. Whether a specialized book's Skill bonus applies to a certain question or not is always up to the GM, though in most cases there should not be a problem.

While no amount of specialization should allow for more than +4 to Skill, highly specialized handbooks can, at the GM's discretion, have much higher maximum Skill increases than "generic" ones. A book that increased a character's overall History skill by +4 to a maximum beyond 16 would have to contain so much detailed information as to become a library in itself. A volume that did the same for the character's Skill in "History, 7th-century Irish Monastic Literary Education," could easily encompass all the detail required to boost that particular Skill specialty well beyond 20. The question of whether a highly specialized handbook for a given specialty exists and is available to the characters rests, as ever, with the GM.

Dictionaries can also specialize. The main benefit here is that a character can carry a Business French dictionary +3 in his pocket while a generic French +3 dictionary would require a suitcase. However, it will not help when asking a passer-by for the way to the train station. Obvious specializations for dictionaries are Business, Law, Sciences, Medical Terminology and Slang.

Optional Rule: Continuing Bonus

While it technically makes sense that pocket dictionaries are of no use to a highly skilled character, academic fare does not entirely cease to be useful once you know a certain amount of facts. Nobody has memorized the entire *Oxford English Dictionary.* However, most books do grow less useful over time. +1 and +2 dictionaries and handbooks become useless once the character has exceeded a certain Skill level. From +3 on, the Skill bonus is halved (round down), but continues to apply indefinitely. Thus, even a character with the History Skill at 21 would be at +2 to effective Skill when working with the aid of a good, extensive handbook that would give a character with History 12 +4 to Skill.

Instruction Manuals

Instruction manuals are different from handbooks. They tell a character exactly how a certain very specific thing is done. They are not suitable as Skill-boosters. In game terms, instruction manuals help bring up defaults and offset familiarity penalties, at the expense of time.

Characters attempting to use some technical device can benefit from an instruction manual if:

a) Using the device does not require rapid sequences of action to work properly and
b) The use of the device has no major physical requirements (like riding a motorbike). Driving a car or piloting an aircraft by instruction manual is impossible, since both require rapid reactions to changing situations. There will be no time to consult a manual. Using a communicator, a radar device or even an artillery piece by manual is possible.

Manuals are rated by their quality. The basic assumption is that whatever default the character would roll against is

replaced by a straight IQ roll with a regular manual. Very good manuals may grant a bonus to the IQ roll. Bad manuals, which are far more common (as anyone who ever tried to program a VCR can testify), impose a penalty on the IQ roll. Manuals usually range from +2 (very well written) to -3 (probably a bad translation).

Using a manual to help a Skill default is the usual case. To play this out, the GM needs to determine how many pages of a manual a given action takes to describe. As a rule, a single application of a Mental/Easy Skill takes 1-2 pages, the same for a Mental/Average Skill already fills 2-4 pages and an application of a Mental/Hard Skill can require up to 6 pages. A "single application" is a very simple action like "hook up a VCR" or "set the frequency on a radio communicator." At the GM's discretion, longer or more complex actions can be broken down into sub-actions such as "load the gun," "calculate the Range," "lay the gun," and "fire the gun." Using the manual instead of a Skill default requires one minute and one successful IQ roll (modified for manual quality) per page in addition to the usual time for using the Skill. A simple failure on the IQ roll is a mistake that is immediately obvious to everyone. The page can be reread and the roll repeated at +1. A critical failure will damage some piece of the equipment, usually rendering the desired task impossible. The procedure must be repeated -- provided a replacement part is at hand . . .

Example: GI Bill and Joe badly need to contact headquarters. Unfortunately, nobody thought to issue them radios or even teach them how to use one. In an abandoned command post they find a communicator and -- this being their lucky day -- an instruction manual for it. Bill grabs it and starts flipping through the pages. He quickly finds the instructions on hooking up the radio -- 4 pages. His IQ is 11 and the manual is very carefully written, giving a +1 for a final roll of 12. He rolls: 7. The battery is uncrated and tested. The next roll comes out 12: the cables are hooked up the right way round. The next roll is 5: the morse tapper and headphones are plugged in and the volume set. The final roll comes out 14: no contact. But wait, that can't be right! Bill rereads the page and plugs the antenna into the right socket. The radio is up and running in five minutes.

Now Bill seeks out the chapter about broadcasting. It encompasses 3 pages, with the same modifiers. Bill's player rolls 11: a viable frequency is found and set. The next roll comes out 6: very slowly, Bill taps out the message. The final roll is 17!: as Bill keeps tapping away, he accidentally locks the homing signal switch, crowding out his own message. Let's hope headquarters can make sense of the part they got.

Instruction manuals also serve to offset familiarity penalties. A regular manual offsets 1 point of familiarity penalties. A good manual adds its full IQ bonus to this. A bad manual adds its full penalty (yes, using a bad manual to do something will give a worse Skill total than having none). To get the bonus, a character will have to read through the manual for every action, directly prior to taking it. Doing this takes half a minute per page. The number of pages is determined as for use with a Skill default.

Familiarity penalties can be offset permanently by thorough study of the entire manual, accompanied by practice with the unfamiliar item. This works as per the regular rules.

Manuals occasionally are written in foreign languages. To use them, the character needs to be able to read the language they are in. If his Language Skill is 10 or higher, a single language roll suffices and he reads the manual at no time penalty. If the Skill is between 7 and 10, add 50% to the time required. If his Skill is below 7, the time required is doubled and a language roll is required for every page. A failed roll means that the page is not understood -- try again at a cumulative -- 1 penalty, or find a dictionary.

Handbooks, Dictionaries, and Manuals in Play

Obviously, handbooks and dictionaries fit in best with a TL5-8 campaign with a more complex plotline and an overall "academic" bend. The occult, with its emphasis on obscure knowledge and ancient lore, is perhaps the most obvious area for extensive handbook use (these rules were developed for a ***GURPS Horror*** campaign set in 1950s America). However, any modern background that allows room for academic characters can accommodate handbooks. The town physician in a cop campaign having to examine the body of a murder victim may well be happy to have brought along a book on gunshot wounds.

The most obvious characters to use handbooks are academics, both realistic ones and pulp scientists. Given time and

the opportunity to prepare, they may select the appropriate handbooks to take along on any given adventure. Even Indiana Jones may be happy to have a book on Mayan architecture when adventuring in Yucatan, and any fearless vampire hunter used to the Transylvanian breed can certainly use a volume on the Chinese kind when setting out to free Chinatown from a supernatural menace. After a while, academic characters will probably get into the habit of collecting handbooks. That's perfectly all right, real-life academics do it, too.

Another area in which handbooks could be introduced is fieldcraft, especially in military campaigns of the ***GURPS Special Ops*** type. Modern armed forces were never adverse to liberally supplying their personnel with field manuals on any conceivable task they might face. While these are difficult to use under battlefield conditions and very unpopular with infantrymen (who have to carry them on their own backs), one or two may well find their way into the hands of a platoon of PCs, particularly if they are motorized. Civilian PCs are even more likely to take along something like a boy scout fieldbook on an outdoor trip. Anything else is up to the imagination of the players and the patience and tolerance of the GM.

Manuals are useful in settings where the PCs are likely to be confronted with a lot of gear they do not know how to use, or aren't sufficiently familiar with. Military campaigns come to mind, but a science-fiction setting could also benefit from these rules. The tension that builds up as completely unskilled PCs scramble to hook up a satellite communicator, page by page, before the launch window opens and unwitting astronauts are hurled to a fiery doom in a sabotaged spacecraft, is hard to beat as a plot device.

by Alex van der Kleut

Art by andi jones

In ***Shadowrun 3rd Edition,*** adepts are among the most flexible types of characters available. Instead of using their magical powers to cast spells and summon spirits, they ground their powers through their bodies in order to perform extraordinary physical feats. Between the new basic book and the sourcebook ***Magic in the Shadows,*** there are 38 powers available for a character to learn. The problem lies with the types of powers available. Being part of a game that can be very combat intensive, powers that help the adept in combat are, of course, common. While ***Magic in the Shadows*** helped by introducing diverse powers, there is still a need for more powers that focus on areas other than combat.

Most of the powers described here are most useful for characters following the Invisible Way (***MITS,*** p. 25), although they are suitable for any type of adept. Most of them are made for players who wish to give their characters a subtler bent, concentrating more on becoming a ghost than a combat monster. A GM may simply insert these new powers into the campaign and let them be learned by any adept. New advances are being made all the time in the realm of magical research in the Sixth World.

However, a more realistic (and fun way) to introduce players to these powers would be to make them available only to a few magic groups made up of adepts specializing in the Invisible Way. Adepts from these groups would be some of the most sought after thieves in the world, trained to slip in and out of locations that are supposed to be impregnable. Perhaps the players are hired to try and find one of these thieves, or discover one trying to steal the same prototype that they are.

The end of this article gives a brief description of such an initiatory group that could be used as a plot device to introduce players to these new powers, provide a group for an adept to join, or become a recurring enemy.

Except where noted in the text, a character cannot have more levels of a power than his Magic Rating.

Face of the Masses

Cost: 0.5
Using a form of instant hypnosis, the adept blocks people from consciously remembering what he looks like. All descriptions will be of someone being there, and maybe a general description of being "about average." Hypnosis, spells that access the subconscious and similar methods may be able to help an individual to remember more details, but all target numbers are doubled.

This power only has an effect on people that the adept can affect directly, generally those within (Magic Rating) meters. Technological devices (security cameras), people using some

means of improving how far they can see (someone at a distant with binoculars), and non-sentient animals are all unaffected by this power.

Lock Sense

Cost: .25
While mechanical locks are not as common in 2061 as maglocks, enough are still used to make having a skill for picking them worthwhile. A few adepts study these skills to such an extent that they are able to heighten their senses purely for the task of opening locks. Halve the base target number to pick any mechanical lock, or to open a combination lock.

Luck

Cost: 3
For some adepts, everything just seems to fall into place. The most useful (and perhaps most dangerous) skill he can possess, Luck effects the OOPS Rule. Anytime that the adept rolls more one's than his skill level, he has a chance of either a Critical Failure or a Critical Success. Make a Magic Rating (10) test. *No* successes indicate a Critical Failure. One success means that there was no effect, so the action will succeed or fail as normal. Two or more grants a Critical Success.

A critical failure works in the normal manner of rolling all ones, i.e. something *bad* happens. Examples would be accidentally shooting a teammate, dropping the detonator down the sewer drain, or accidentally setting off a car alarm during a B&E. A critical success is something *good* happening. Missing with a thrown knife, but having it cut down a sign, which falls and knocks out an opponent, would be a critical success.

Melee Sense

Cost: .5 per level
The adept is particularly skilled at keeping track of and fighting multiple opponents in the same melee. Each level of this ability can be used to offset the penalties associated with Friends in Combat. Each level eliminates one opponent for purposes of figuring out the Friends in Combat penalty. Opponents also lose their bonus for each level of Melee Sense.

Photographic Reflexes

Cost: 2 per level
The adept has amazing reflexive memory, his body "remembers" how to perform physical tasks. This gives the character a bonus to any Active skill of +1 die per level (see Enhanced Articulation). He may also attempt any

maneuver or skill that he has seen another person perform at a lesser default penalty. Subtract one per level of the power, up to the base Target Number.

It is also easier for someone with this power to learn Active skills. Add the level of reflexes to the number of dice used for learning these skills (***SR Companion,*** p. 32). The character will never forget where he left off in training, and can start right back into a skill after months off.

Sleight of Hand

Cost: .5
Sleight of Hand allows an adept to stealthily move small items; actually making them disappear for a short amount of time. He may either keep the item on his person or place it within 1 meter of himself. The item must be small, nothing more than can fit comfortably in a normal human's hand. A credstick, small knife or holdout pistol are all about the right size.

When making the switch, the adept makes an Open Stealth Test. Anybody with the ability to see the switch must get at least one success on a Perception test, against the result of the Open Stealth Test. If the adept is actively being watched, reduce the Target Number by 4.

There/ Not There

Cost: .5 per point
By mystically manipulating the blind spot of an individual, an adept using There/ Not There can appear to disappear from a person's eyesight. This power works over all forms of sight, including thermographic and lowlight systems. Non-vision systems are not affected, nor are technological devices such as cameras. Use of the power requires a Simple Action to activate and deactivate.

Each point purchased adds +1 to Perception tests to notice the adept. Also add this modifier to all attacks against him. For characters able to see the adept from an oblique angle, or out of the corner of their eye, there are no modifiers, as the adept cannot place himself in their blind spot.

Spatial Perception

Cost: 2 The adept has the ability to instantly acclimate himself to his surroundings, like he had been born and raised there. Make a Magic Test (4) as modified below. If the adept gets any successes, the area is treated as his Home Ground (***SR Comp 2,*** p. 18). If he fails he cannot use the power again until the location has been altered in some significant way. Each use of this power requires one Combat Turn of concentration.

This power cannot be used for any area larger than a building, or one city block on the streets. The adept may only Spatially Perceive one location at a time, and loses the bonus if the location is significantly changed between the test and when he attempts to use the bonus.

Studying a picture: +6
Studying a diagram: +4
Studying a video: +2
In the location: 0
Studying a 3-D model: -1
House size: 0
Small Office Building: +2
Medium Size Office Building: +4
Large Office Building: +6
Skyscraper: +10
Part of building only: reduced by percentage of building studied

The Guild

Type: Conspiratorial
Members: 20
Strictures: Belief (Thievery), Fraternity, Obedience, Secrecy, Limited Membership (Adepts following the Invisible Way only), Oath.
Resources/Dues: High

Customs: The Guild is a group of Adepts following the Invisible Way who specialize in every sort of thievery imaginable. For those with connections in underworld circles, they are known as some of the best B&E specialists around. While this is something of an open, if not well known secret with criminals, admitting to The Guild's existence or to membership is punished severely. Honor is very highly regarded in the guild, which is known for taking slights against their members very seriously.

The group maintains a High lifestyle in a medium sized office building located in a suburb of Detroit. Training facilities are located on the premises, as well as living quarters for members who are in the area. Dues are 500¥ a month, which can be prepaid from portions of lucrative jobs. The Guild is known to be well connected with multiple fences and middlemen throughout most of North America. Most members operate throughout the world for various employers, and only assemble when called together by the guildmaster.

by Dave Chalker

Card: The Game is a card game that uses cards from every collectible (and non-collectible) card game you may own. You play against other people with their own collections of cards. The object of the game is to be the last player with cards in your deck. In the game, you take the role of one of the characters that you have included in your deck. You travel from place to place, battling other players' characters while recruiting allies, equipping yourself with all manners of weaponry and items, and by playing other miscellaneous cards.

Before the Game

Make your deck. Your deck can include cards from *any* collectible card game, *any* other card game, or even playing cards. Mix and match. Go nuts. Deck size is very important, however. How big your deck is depends on how long a game you want. Thirty cards is not that long a game, and is recommended if you have a big group of people. 60 is a good number of cards for a game with a few people. All players in the game must start off with the same number of cards in their deck. For composition of your deck, see "Deck Guidelines," below. Also before the game, the players need to find a referee. The referee's job is to mediate what actually happens in the game. More will be explained in the Game Rules section.

Card: The Game

Deck Guidelines

The following percentages are only intended as rough amounts. It is up to each person to decide how many of each type of card he puts in his deck, except that there must be at least one card from each category.

15% Main Characters. Main characters are cards that are big deal figures in games. They might not necessarily be *the* only main figure from the game, but are still important characters. Examples: Hulk from ***Overpower,*** The Bavarian Illuminati from ***Illuminati: New World Order,*** Washu from ***Ani-Mayhem,*** Agent Mulder from ***X-Files,*** or the Shivan Dragon from ***Magic: The Gathering.***

15% Places. Places are, well, places from the various games. Places will be used to define the environment where the game is played. Examples: Mars Colony from ***Babylon 5,*** Planet from ***Galactic Empires,*** the Ocean Terrain from ***Wyvern,*** any Land from ***Magic: The Gathering,*** or virtually any of the missions from ***Star Trek TNG*** and ***X-Files.***

20% Equipment. Equipment cards are the cards that you equip your main character with in order to help your fight. This includes vehicles. Examples: U.S.S. Enterprise from ***Star Trek TNG,*** First Battle Fleet (Minbari) from ***Babylon 5,*** Flak Jacket from ***Rage,*** Blanket from ***Dragonstorm***, and Jedi Lightsaber from ***Star Wars.***

50% Other Stuff. This is everything else that doesn't fit into other categories. Minor allies, combat maneuvers, actions, events, playing cards, anything else that doesn't qualify in any of the other categories. Examples: Fnord from ***INWO,*** Conditioning from ***Ultimate Combat,*** Poke in the Eye from ***Three Stooges,*** Giant Space Hamster from ***Spellfire,*** and Puppy Dog Eyes/Dodge from ***Ani-Mayhem.*** And the list could go on and on . . .

Beginning the Game

Card: The Game

Once the deck has been assembled, a referee has been found (captured/bribed/etc.), and everyone is ready to play, each player separates the deck into the different sections listed above (Main Characters, Places, Equipment, and Other Stuff). The referee shuffles each player's Main Characters deck, and deals each player two characters from his or her own deck. Each player chooses one character, which goes into that player's hand. The character not chosen is shuffled back into the Main Character pile. Each player is then dealt a Place from his or her own pile, one Equipment card, and three Other Stuff cards. Each player then puts his Place card in the center of the table, next to the other player's places. (This can be most easily done by giving the referee all the places, then having the referee arrange them however he pleases.) Each player rolls a die, highest goes first, reroll ties. Play proceeds clockwise (or, if the group is feeling really adventurous, *counter*-clockwise.) All players shuffle their remaining cards into one big deck. This becomes the player's draw deck.

Game Rules

Each player's turn is split up into several phases.

1. Draw a card from the top of the deck.
2. Play a card from your hand, either face up or face down.
3. Attack.

At any time it's appropriate: Do something else the referee says is OK.

Phase One: Draw

Draw a card from the top of your deck. If there are no cards to draw, you can't draw any cards. (duh.)

Phase Two: Play

Play one card from your hand either face up or face down.

Playing a card face up:

If the card is played face up, the card immediately goes into effect. If you don't have a Main Character in play to represent you, then the card played *must* be a face up Main character. If the card is an Equipment card, it is played on the character in play, or referee willing, somewhere else. If the card is a Place card, it goes next to the other places in play, or referee willing, replaces a Place already in play. If you play a character and already have one on the table, the new card replaces the old, and the old card is discarded. All other cards attached to the old character transfer to the new one.

Now, playing other stuff is a bit trickier, but is also one of the most important parts of the game. When you play a card that doesn't fit into one of the other categories, *make it up.* That's right, make it up. If it's good and plausible and you don't ask for too much, the referee should allow it. The rationale can be any element of the card -- the picture, the title, the flavor text, numbers on the card, or (the most preferred method) what the card actually does in its "home game."

Example #1: Josh is playing Washu, the Greatest Scientific Genius in the Universe (from ***Ani-Mayhem***). Josh decides that he doesn't like the Incredible Hulk, being played by Richie. Josh plays the card Black Hole (from ***Super Nova***) to destroy the planet that the Hulk is currently on. The referee says that it's OK, especially since the Black Hole card itself says it destroys a planet. However, since it wouldn't be any fun to have a player wiped out with a single card play, the referee also rules that the Hulk manages to escape. The Incredible Hulk, however, has lost his base of operations, something he won't soon forget . . .

Example #2: Andrew, playing Grand Moff Tarkin (from ***Star Wars***) is still a little damaged after having a run in with a Gladiator Prime Executioner (from ***BattleTech***), being played by Danny. Andrew doesn't want to be attacked until he recovers a bit more, so Andrew plays Body Odor (from ***Ultimate Combat!***) to stop any would be attackers. The referee likes this, and tells Andrew to roll a d6 to determine how long his repulsive BO lasts.

Example #3: Chris, playing a Furmling (from ***Rage***), has been wrestling for control of the planet Dorvan V (The mission Evacuation from ***Star Trek TNG,*** treating it as a place) against Mike, currently Agent Fox Mulder (from ***X-Files,*** what else?). Chris recently has been losing this battle, as Mike declared himself Queen of the planet by playing . . . a Queen of Hearts (from a normal deck of playing cards.) Mike also has been sacrificing Treasure (from ***Spellfire***) to the Dark Gods of the planet, to further insure his rule. Chris, however, has discovered the 3 diamonds of Citarak (the 3 of Diamonds, also from a deck of playing cards). The referee has been allowing all this, as he's been rolling on the ground laughing the entire time. The referee finally comes to his senses, and gives Chris a bonus to attack Mike this turn, and if Chris wins by enough, Mike's queen days may be over . . .

Playing a card face down:

Card: The Game

First of all, one thing to get straight. No cards can be played *from your hand* as an "Instant." Hand size is very important to the game, and allowing card plays at any time would just throw everything into confusion (well, even more so). However, you may play a card face down on your turn, holding it "in reserve." Whenever another player does something that you want to react to, you can flip over a face down card, and it takes effect right then and there and will have to be explained immediately. Cards played this way are discarded immediately after use, while cards played face up remain on the table, and their effects will (obviously) last longer,

Example #1: Eric, playing the Elvish Impersonators (from ***Magic: The Gathering Unglued***) wants to protect himself from Chris, now having revealed himself as the insidious Lawyers (from ***INWO***). Eric takes a card from his hand, Dodge (from ***Rage***) and plays it face down. Not only is Eric protected from one attack in case the Lawyers decide to launch an offensive, he also has a ***Rage*** card sitting in front of him, which is good for sheer intimidation/bluff value (some of those cards are pretty nasty in combat!)

Example #2: Richie is planning to take his revenge against Josh. Richie starts playing cards face down in front of him that he can reveal once he finally decides to attack. He plays cards like Dragon Form (from ***Dragonstorm***) and Fireball (from ***Wyvern***) to make sure when he hits Josh, he hits *hard.*.

Phase Three: Attack!

Attacks are mostly the referee's decision. Usually, attacks can only take place when the attacking character is in the same Place as the defending character. The referee starts with the attacker's base number. This number is any number from the character card that seems appropriate. (Some quick examples: Power from ***Magic: The Gathering,*** Level from ***Spellfire,*** Power from ***INWO,*** Little Energy Icon from ***Ani-Mayhem,*** Power from ***Star Wars*** -- you get the idea). The referee then adds any other bonuses that are appropriate for the attack: Equipment that adds a number to an attack, other cards that give bonuses to attack that have just been played, a particularly clever use of a card, etc. The roll of a d6 (rolled by the attacker) is then added to this total. This is the attacker's total. The referee then takes the defender's

base number (Some games have different numbers for attack and defense, some don't) The referee then adds any other bonuses (like above, but for defense) and the defender rolls a d6 and adds this. This creates the defender's total. Whoever has the higher total wins the combat, and loses cards to the discard pile equal to the difference between the two totals. Got all that?

Card: The Game

Example: Richie (still using the Incredible Hulk) is finally prepared to attack Josh. Richie has spent several turns stockpiling attack cards by placing them face down in front of him. He finally moves to where Josh is, and declares an attack. Richie reveals his Dragonform (from ***Dragonstorm***), and his Fireball (from ***Wyvern***). The Hulk has Strength 8, which will be used because Richie said he was going to try to smash Washu. The Dragonform card says it gives +6 STR, which the referee decides he'll use. The Fireball says Strength Modifier: +4, so the referee will add this in. This gives Richie a total of 18 (Hulk is 8, Dragonform +6, Fireball +4). Richie also rolls a die that comes up 4. This gives Richie an attack total of 22. Josh isn't going to take this sitting down. While Richie was declaring his Dragonform and Fireball, Josh responded by revealing the deadly Giant Space Hamster (from ***Spellfire,*** as well as rather appropriate for Washu). Josh also reveals his Half-Trolls of Far Harad (from ***Middle earth: The Wizards***). The trolls have an attack of 10. In addition, Giant Space Hamster's text says that every friendly ally played after it gains +3 levels. The referee factors this in. Washu's defense is 4, so the referee calculates the total to be 20 (Washu's 4, plus 3 from the Hamster, plus 10 from the Half-Trolls, plus an extra 3 for the trolls because of the Hamster's special ability). Josh rolls, and gets a 5 -- making his defense total 25. Richie lost the combat by 3 (Josh's 25 minus Richie's 22). This means that Richie would have to lose the top 3 cards from his deck to his discard pile. Richie was prepared for this eventuality, however, as he was already equipped with a Flak Jacket (from ***Rage***) that he discards to stop the damage. (Flak Jacket states that it can stop up to 4 damage) All the cards flipped face up at this time are placed in their owner's discard piles. The combat yielded no results this time, but Richie should watch out for Josh's retaliation on his turn!

But, my card doesn't have any numbers!

Relax. When attacking and using a card without numbers, either make something up, or if you're feeling uncreative, a card without numbers adds an extra d6 to the attack (roll each time used). Main characters without numbers roll 2d6 when attacking.

At Any Time Appropriate: Other Stuff the Referee Says is OK.

This includes the other stuff that will undoubtedly come up during the games. Movement is easy, if you have a Ship of some sort (a piece of equipment), the owner can simply declare once a turn that he is moving to another place by using the ship. The other way to move is . . . to make something up with the cards! The most creative use I saw of a Move Left card from ***Ultimate Combat!*** was to step from one planet to the one on the left. Of course, this is just one example, and no rules could possibly cover every possibility. This includes seduction attempts, buy outs, inciting revolutions, subverting allies, firing on other ships, forming a peasant militia, stealing, attacking specific cards, etc. My advice to any referee trying to handle this: take any numbers that seem appropriate for both sides, and treat it like an attack. If the attacker wins, he gets what he wants, if not, the defender gets to destroy something used in the attempt. That's just a rule of thumb, the referee is free to alter this as the situation demands.

Appendix

Hand Size

Hand size is pretty important, so referees and players should always try to make sure that hand size remains constant. For example, if someone draws an extra card, that player should discard a card from his or her hand in order to make

up for it. Exceptions to this are cards that increase hand size specifically.

A Note on Planetary Bombardment

Nearly every game I've refereed, someone gets a nice, brand new spaceship (or in some cases, a fleet) and decides that this means air superiority. So he bombards a planet that another player is on, doing damage to the player on the ground and leaving the character in the ship fully protected (theoretically). My advice to referees that see this? Don't let them. First of all, the chances of hitting one solitary person from orbit are quite low. Secondly, this kind of ruins the fun of the game if only one person gets a ship, and just sits in it and blasts the other players from space while the ground-bound players are helpless to retaliate.

Power Gaming

I already know that some people, somewhere, will make a ***Card: The Game*** deck stacked with cards with the biggest numbers so they do the most damage and have the biggest bonuses. It's no fun to be pounded on by someone who actually designed a deck to *win,* but there is a way to counter-act "power-gaming" in ***Card: The Game.*** This balancing mechanism is called the referee. The referee is encouraged to make sure the power gamer doesn't steam-roll over everyone else. Allow other players more ways to counter-act the huge creatures used by the Power Gamer. Not that I'm advocating the referee take sides or anything, just noting that the referee's job is to make sure everyone has *fun.* If you don't have a referee (see Variants), then everyone should attack that person. As soon as possible. This isn't a rule, just a suggestion.

A Note on Storyline

I could have come up with a complex story involving Extra-dimensional body inhabiting lifeforms and alternate dimensions, but why bother? The game when actually played becomes very tongue in cheek very quickly, and will develop a life of its own anyway. The game is for fun, and although some semblance of a storyline goes on during the game, that's no reason for me to set anything.

Variants

One Big Deck

This is how ***Card: The Game*** was originally played. Me, the guy with all the card games, made a big deck and dealt everyone cards from the same pile. Then, after the initial hand, the big deck was divvied up evenly among each person so that each had a deck to play from (for card drawing and life point purposes). If you want to try it this way, be my guest.

No Referee

I personally would not recommend this variant, but sometimes it is necessary. I know that sometimes it can be tough to find someone to be referee. The referee isn't a player as such, and can't actually win, and most people would rather play (who can blame them?). So, when there is a situation that says the referee decides, the decisions are made by *all* the players. Majority rules, die rolls settle ties. Simple as that. I don't recommend this variant, as all the parties voting will have some stake in what happens unlike a third party referee. However, sometimes there is no choice.

Quick Start

Don't like to separate your deck at the beginning of each game? If everyone agrees, all players pick whatever Main Character, Place, and Equipment cards they want to start with, then shuffle the deck, and deal themselves the top three cards to complete the hand.

Ante #1

This is for people who want to take a little piece of players they destroy with them. When you defeat a player by removing the last cards from his deck, you get to keep -- permanently -- a number of cards equal to the "overkill." That is, if you deal 10 damage to someone with only 6 cards left, you get to keep 4 cards chosen at random from that player's deck. Add those cards to your own deck, as spoils of victory.

Ante #2

Not for the faint of heart or for those who are planning to stock a ***Card: The Game*** deck with rare cards, this Ante variant allows players even more chances to keep other people's cards. Whenever a player does damage to another player, instead of placing the cards from his deck into his discard pile, the cards go to whoever dealt the damage. For example, if you deal 6 damage to another player, the 6 cards from the damaged player go into your discard pile. If there's a card you absolutely want to keep, well, get it into play as soon as possible!

Credits

Game Design by Dave Chalker
Lead Playtesters: Chris Fike, Eric Frock, Andrew O'Carroll, Mike Roop, Danny Rupp, Josh Sako, Richie Schanberger, Justin Worrell, All the people who tried it out and loved it at Balticon 33.
Special Thanks: Laura Barkley, of course; The music of They Might Be Giants; Eris.

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by Ben Vandgrift

Art by andi jones

Shooting From The Hip

The auburn-haired woman stood on the dock, fidgeting nervously. The early Massachusetts winter had painted the area with snow, and Jeannie hugged her coat around her. Her directions led here, and there had been no mention of a rickety dock at the end of a gravel road. After a few impatient minutes, she heard the high-pitched whine of a boat motor drifting across the foggy lake.

A bass boat parted the mist, heading for the dock. Even as it pulled alongside, Jeannie couldn't make much out of the driver. The hood of his dark colored parka and stringy hair blurred facial features. He climbed onto the dock and looked critically at Jeannie.

"Can I help you?" he asked.

"I need to speak with Marus, I have some questions for him."

"Marus?"

"Master of the Shadow Oaks Coven? I was sent by Jessica of the Sacred Grove."

"Ah," the man nodded, and handed Jeannie a life jacket. "Climb in, then."

*****

Jeannie had followed the man silently. It was warmer than she expected on the island, and the pilot had already taken off his parka and hung it on a nearby tree. As they reached the first budding saplings along the ever-warming path, he turned to her and smiled.

"So what did you want to talk to me about?"

It happens to every game master at some time or another. A player drives their character deep into unknown waters, leaving your carefully constructed plans sitting on the shore. They call up a half-forgotten contact, take an unplanned trip out of town, or decide to make a deal with your shadowy antagonist, usually the result of a Brilliant Idea. What's worse, it's a Brilliant Idea that you didn't have, and didn't prepare for.

You are now firing from the hip. You are forced to make up the story as they go along, fleshing out the individuals and locations even as the protagonists of the story meet them. You are bound by duty to keep the world consistent, and to adhere to two laws of the theater: never let 'em see you sweat, and the show must go on.

First, let's back up a minute, and talk about how you got yourself into this situation, beginning with the type of story you're writing. Almost every game can be described as either event-driven, or character-driven. The type of story can affect your likelihood of getting into a blind spot.

An event-driven game is centered around certain events which drive the story. The referee details these events, who's present, where they are, and when they occur. The story follows a simple path from A to B to C, based on the information they have. The referee doesn't have to have much material on the world, or even the actors in the scenario.

In this type of story, the protagonists are faced with a finite, usually small, number of decisions, all of which the game master has prepared for. If they choose something else, he's in trouble. The more choices he's prepared for, the less likely the game master will get into hot water.

In contrast, a character-driven game has no finite set of choices on how to proceed. The storyteller must lay out his world and the people who live within. The game is driven by the actions and motives of the world's inhabitants and the story develops much more organically.

While this is a much more difficult game to predict and plan, prediction and planning becomes less necessary. Provided the proper work has been done on the background, history, off-camera action, and people involved, an entire game can be run off the cuff. Since the storyteller knows most of the world by heart, or at least has notes, it's much more rare for the players to wander outside of known space.

Jessica looked down the trail at the blooming trees, as the smells of spring drifted through the air. She looked at Marus again, his features not covered by the parka hood. His cheekbones were high and his face was chiseled. He was in his late 20's, and needed a shave.

"I'm looking for some information about a group you used to be involved with. Jessica said you could tell me something about them -- the Order of the Cloven Hoof?"

Marus turned to look Jeannie, as if evaluating her. She noticed his eyes, and shuddered. Where the iris should be, there was only black. The wind blew aside a few strands of greasy hair, and he looked momentarily thoughtful.

"Did she? What do you want to know?"

"I'm actually trying to find a man named Slaine. The last time anyone heard from him was several weeks ago, when he destroyed the Order. I need Slaine to tell me what his motives were."

Marus smiled again, further discomfiting Jeannie.

"Well, let's go ask him, then."

Everyone has to run blind sooner or later, but there are a few things you can do before hand to make sure that things go smoothly. Ideally, you don't want your players to know they've wandered into terra incognita, and a few preparations can provide a pool of resources you can draw from when things get hairy.

First, be sure you have some skeletal characters around that you can use. As a new person is drawn unexpectedly into the story, you can flesh them out on the spot. As you see more of them, fill in the details. It's much easier to build an on-the-spot character when you already have a skeleton. It's a good idea to make a few of the skeletons fit vague templates, like Policeman, Thug, Punk, DJ, or Student. Your selection becomes even easier with added information.

Buy a book of names. Look in the children's section of your local book store, and you'll find a dozen books on how to name your kids. This is a indispensable resource for naming characters. Before the game, write a dozen or so names in the margins of your notes. Fill in last names from the phone book, class list, or baseball roster. When you need a character name, flip to your name list. In a fantasy or alien setting you'll have to spend a little more time on the names, but it's well worth the investment.

Have a few extra buildings lying around, unassigned to permanent locations. A trip to a pawn shop, grocery store, or apartment can easily go foul if unprepared. Once they enter the game, make a note of where they are, and flesh them out based on their location.

Leave holes in your stories. While this may not be intuitive, leaving small shadowy, undeveloped places in the fabric of your scenario allows you to pull an instant character into the hole with a loose selection of friends, associations, and history. Be careful to leave such a position as flexible as possible.

Everything was just a little too surreal. As Marus opened the door to Slaine's cell, she gasped. Slaine was chained and staked to a cross, hanging limply. Though his hair had since gone white, she realized he'd seen him before, just before Ray vanished.

Marus pulled the stake from the man's chest and lifted his head up.

"You behave now, I'll be paying attention." Marus waved the stake at Slaine, and left, closing the door behind him.

Slaine's head rolled from side to side, blood dropping from his lip onto his chest. He raised his head and looked at Jeannie. The fluorescent lights accented the bruises and lack of color in his face. There was a look of recognition, and a sharpening of his gaze as his mind figured out how to work again.

"What do you want?" Slaine held his head up, grimacing.

"What are you doing here?"

"Suffering."

Now that dark water is looking a little brighter, but preparation is only half of execution. Handling the unexpected can be stressful for a game master, and it's not always apparent what to do. When the players wander off into the unknown regions, there are a few simple rules to keep in mind.

Don't Panic!

Write this in big friendly letters in your notes. Remember, your players don't know you're out on that limb, and they never should. If your heart goes aflutter, flip through your notes, furrow your brow, and chuck some dice, grinning wickedly at the result. Use that time to collect yourself.

Pay Attention To The Details

If you're introducing someone you've just had to create, focus on the little things. A nervous twitch or peeling wallpaper add enough depth to satisfy the aesthetic cravings of your players. Simple descriptions work wonders as the players' imaginations fill in the details. While Marus' description in the above encounter was not explored, his eyes' unique nature satisfied the players' curiosity about his appearance.

Watch Your Players' Reactions

The bards of old watched the crowd for hints for where to take the story. This is no different -- take note of what your players are responding well to, and focus on that aspect of the story for a while. Jenn, playing Jeannie, likes slightly creepy with a generous helping of conspiracy. Because of this, Slaine, who she'd not met, became someone she had met very briefly, in connection with her boyfriend's disappearance.

Remain Cryptic

When you've just created a person or object, you don't necessarily know how much information they have. This can be solved by being cryptic. A well-placed word or vague allusion will lend the illusion of knowledge to a character who

may have none. Below, Slaine dances around a question, directing Jeannie's attention to the altered time-stream.

Don't Railroad Your Players

You will be tempted to make every venture into unknown areas unpleasant for the characters, to bring them back to the planned material. However, if they're taking a reasonable course of action, they should be able to follow it through.

Know When To Quit

Sometimes, that long fly into left field smacks you in the head. It's okay to stop there. Admit you're stumped and take some time to prepare more material. Spend the ten minutes working it up. You may have to cancel until next time, but there's a time for that, too.

"You've been here all along?"

"I've been here for a while, yes." Dirty white hair hung long and unkempt in front of his face. His hands clenched reflexively. "What do you want?"

Jeannie straightened her back and steeled herself, not wanting to be frightened by this man. She looked at his face, ignoring the chains, the cross, and the disconcerting tear in his chest, slowly reweaving.

"Why did you destroy the Order of the Cloven hoof earlier this month?"

"Earlier this month?" Slaine chuckled. "My dear child, that was almost half a century ago."

No one can anticipate every situation, nor should they try. Play sometimes ranges off the green and into the rough. Every storyteller must be ready to improvise the edges and corners of his story. It comes with the job and the rulebook. When a storyteller can play the hole out of the sandtrap, the possibilities for roleplaying become truly endless.

Shooting a pistol from the hip is a skill that can only be developed through experience, and hard work. Likewise, playing off the cuff, shooting from the figurative hip is just as difficult a skill to develop. Don't be discouraged if you occasionally get flustered. Just play it by ear and prepare as best you can, your players will understand. It's a game after all, and should be fun -- for you and your players.

by Andy Slack

Art by Glenn Grant and Jason Walton

Ah, I see you have time on your dewclaws. Come; gather round, and I will tell you of rulings I have made, and the reasoning of them, that you may better understand the precedents and the laws by which the fteirle are governed.

I became an earleatrais 18 ftahea ago, on a planet the hisoli call "Earth"; the case then was a simple one . . .

In a way, designing the Aslan was like coming home for me; in a previous life, I was involved in a project to detail the Riftspan Reach for ***Classic Traveller***; that fell through -- all that remains of it now is the sector name -- but it began my involvement with the *fteirle*.

As Mary Norton said, no story ever finishes, it's just that at some point we stop telling it. That point has almost come for ***Alien Races 2,*** but let me tell you just a little more. To help me, joining me tonight are Iroioah of the Yerlyaruiwo Clan, from my playtest campaign, and Shel Meldol, IISS, who has been in the game -- how long is it now, Shel? (*Heh. Me and Franklyn go back to '78, but we're the only ones left from those days, now.*)

Rigidly Defined Areas of Doubt and Uncertainty

The ealeatrais is not moved by his own spirit alone; he must consider all that went before, every similar case considered by his honored forebears under the laws of his clan . . .

Thank you, Iroioah. In designing the Aslan for ***GURPS Traveller,*** I was bound by three main constraints.

The first was the commercial necessity of avoiding anything which had first appeared in a Digest Group Publications product, for copyright reasons. (*And it would have been an action without honor, for which your life would have been forfeit.*)

Thank you for reminding me. This ruled out about half of the published Aslan language -- including the gender-specific dialects -- and the majority of the high-level descriptions of sectors within the Hierate, but had little impact elsewhere. Many groups still use these, so I decided that if I couldn't use this stuff, I would at least officially not invalidate it! For this reason, I avoided making up new canon to replace DGP ideas wherever possible.

The second constraint was my desire to be faithful to all previous incarnations of the Aslan. I wasn't able to achieve this completely due to discrepancies between the published sources, but I hope I came close. Where conflict was inevitable, in the spirit of the ***GURPS Traveller*** line, I have given ***Classic Traveller*** precedence. Sidebars in the Aslan chapter suggest how to reconcile the remaining discrepancies in your campaign.

Thirdly, I wanted to leave some mysteries unsolved. If I'd answered every question, filled every loophole, it would have made life harder for future writers, who have to stay consistent with everything previously published; more importantly, every mystery explained is one less scenario your characters can play. Plus, the publisher has a word count target, and at the end of playtest I was 17% over it . . .

Loose Canon

When I started researching the Aslan, there were a few apparent inconsistencies from edition to edition.

Assassins in ***Classic Traveller (CT)*** were a kind of Aslan Special Forces -- assassin training is exactly parallel in the character generation sequences to commando training for humans. In ***MegaTraveller (MT),*** they became a combination priest/bounty hunter, tracking down the dishonorable and challenging them to duels. Special Forces seemed more logical to me, given the number of assassins produced by the character sequence; Marc Miller and Loren Wiseman agreed that this was a valid interpretation. Not wanting to invalidate the bounty hunter angle for those who prefer it, I got to wondering: How does an assassin get glory, honor and live fire training in between clan wars? Thus was born the idea that assassins who are "resting" or invalided out of the service can be hired to right wrongs, either via a female relative for cash or directly as a "favor" (debt of honor).

Female Aslan are officially noncombatants, yet in ***CT*** can learn Field Artillery skill. My thinking here was that males want to get up close and personal with the enemy, so indirect fire wouldn't appeal to them; therefore they redefine artillery as technical (women's) work.

Kuzu appears in at least three different places in ***Traveller*** canon; the main two are Dark Nebula 1919 and 1225. While it has little impact on the average game, I wanted to get it right. Hans Rancke-Madsen argued cogently for 1225, advancing the opinion that at two parsecs from the Solomani border, 1919 was too close to human space for the Aslan to have stayed independent. My main motivation was simpler; ***CT*** said 1225 (or sometimes 1226), and as far as I could tell Kuzu didn't move to 1919 until ***MT*** was published. Again, Marc, Loren and I discussed it, and reached a consensus on 1225, so Kuzu is back home again. If you think it belongs elsewhere, one of the sidebars in ***Alien Races 2*** offers you some reasons why it might be.

Ihatei and the *Aikoho Earleatrais* differ slightly from edition to edition. As far as I know, it isn't until ***Behind The Claw*** that *ihatei* are known not to be part of their clan until they claim new lands; if they're not part of a clan, why obey the *earleatrais?* Anyway, those who are not from *Tlaukhu* clans aren't bound by his decisions. I concluded that once settled and part of your clan again, you wouldn't want the *earleatrais* remembering you as impolite, and he probably knows local space better than you, so it makes some sense to listen to him. Add that to the fact -- stated in ***CT*** canon -- that disobeying an *earleatrais* in his jurisdiction is a crime of honor, and he probably has a lot of Aslan being polite to him, *ihatei* or not.

Vox Pop

*The **earleatrais** does not make his rulings in a vacuum, for he cannot impose them by force. Others abide by his decisions by their own consent, and this demands that their voices be heard before the final ruling is made.*

Thank you. The *Pyramid* playtesters came up with a lot of valuable comments, and some of them made me think again on key issues. The single most important change was that cultural Aslan originally had only one option -- to take all 41 points of "cultural" disadvantages, which counted against the 40-point limit. The playtesters pointed out that this made them all pretty much identical, so that was rewritten to the present position.

There were several hundred suggestions to clarify this or that paragraph, either by

rewriting it or moving it elsewhere in the manuscript. Most were adopted.

The Missing Links

There are a few things that didn't make it into the final cut, even though they weren't ruled out on canon grounds. As I write, the main cuts are expected to be a few starships and the proposed generic landhold description and map, but since they may appear in *Pyramid* later, I'll focus on other topics here.

Aslan weapons aren't specified in detail. Most of them are slightly heavier versions of their human equivalents, with slightly larger magazine capacities; a number are explicitly stated in ***CT*** to be copies of Solomani designs. It didn't seem to me like a good use of a page to fill it with weapon stats that are essentially the same as some you already have in the ***Basic Set*** or ***GURPS Traveller (GT).***

How do Aslan respond to *anonymous insults?* My personal view is that they ignore them -- anyone so cowardly that he dare not even identify himself when insulting you is beneath contempt, and his words carry no weight. An alternative would be for the insulted party to declare that he would be in the debt of whoever *can* identify the perpetrator.

Bardiche ("legally female" males) were suggested as a counterpoint to the "legally male" females mentioned in a sidebar. The reciprocity of this has a certain appeal, but personally I think Aslan society has enough females already. Your mileage may vary.

This *is* an issue for human clans, as they have a skewed gender distribution by *fteirle* standards -- too many warriors, not enough traders. Among the suggestions put forward to handle this on the playtest board and in the test campaign are infanticide, masses of eunuchs, bardiche status, raids by human clans across the border to steal women, and a thriving slave trade. Somewhere along the Aslan/human interface, there's a clan that's done whichever you prefer -- and there's a scenario for *your* campaign in each of them.

The *Pathfinder* and the story of how the Aslan reverse-engineered jump drive from a human shipwreck were omitted. The idea was Marc Miller's originally, but first published by DGP; the main reason for leaving it out, though, is that almost no-one in 1120 knows about it, and those that do aren't telling.

(*Fah! You would question our honor? We developed jump drive ourselves! Your words lead to the circle, hisol'i!*).

Look, Shel, take this guy outside and cause a diplomatic incident, would you?

(*You got it, boss. [Snick.] OK, Sparky, step this way . . .*)

Suppressed Transmission

My personal opinion is that the Hierate's multitude of competing states is a more likely future for humanity than a vast interstellar empire. Pursuing that thought backwards through canon history led me to note that the situation on Kuzu as the jump drive was discovered is a close parallel to Terra in the late 1940s, and you could make an interesting (if non-canonical) campaign by reversing the human and Aslan roles in history. Suppose the Roswell Incident in 1947 had resulted in an *ihatei* scoutship being dissected by a joint US/Soviet team, with other nations quickly building ships once the secret leaked out. The PCs are square-jawed agents of Majestic-12, troubleshooting among the stars using technology they barely understand, while a desperate UN tries to colonize nearby worlds before the *fteirle* find us or Earth's ecosystem collapses . . .

(*Boss? There are three guys in black suits out here. They say they told you not to discuss this . . .)*

Static.

(Ahem. This is the editor. Due to an unforeseen technical problem we will be replacing the rest of this item with some dance music . . .)

by Steve Kenson

Art by andi jones

Infinity Ops

You're in charge of policing not one, two, but hundreds of known parallel timelines. Your job is to protect the secret of cross-world travel from every greedy government, corporation, and individual who'd like to get their hands on it. You also have to deal with keeping it out of the hands of outtimers, stop governments from Homeline from abusing it, and rescue people who get themselves into trouble in some godforsaken parallel. As if that weren't enough, you are the best protection Homeline has against another parallel with cross-world technology, a parallel that would like to see your world deprived of the ability to visit other worlds at the least, a conquered protectorate of their Empire, at most.

For a job like this, you need to be the best there is in a hundred worlds. Fortunately, you are . . .

The "Infinite Worlds" setting from ***GURPS Time Travel*** posits the existence of numerous parallel worlds. Two of these worlds, Homeline and Centrum, have the ability to travel from one parallel to another. Homeline is much like our own world might be in 2015, with the addition of parachronic travel. Centrum is a ruthless, totalitarian culture that would like nothing more than to deprive Homeline of its ability to visit other worlds, giving them a monopoly on cross-world travel.

Parachronic technology on Homeline is controlled by an organization called Infinity Unlimited. They license their technology to various governments and corporations, but generally keep a tight control over it. Their enforcement arm is the Infinity Patrol, or the "I-Cops." The I-Cops are responsible for policing known timelines to protect them from exploitation, protecting Homeline from other worlds (especially Centrum), keeping the secret of parachronics in Infinity's (and Homeline's) hands, and protecting historical "echoes" of Homeline from Centrum agents. All in all, it's a big job.

The setting in ***GURPS Time Travel*** assumes a fairly "realistic" world, apart from the existence of parachronics. I-Cops are built on 100 points. They have TL8 equipment but, other than that, not a lot of advantages. 100-point agents are certainly hero material, compared to most normal people, but are they really going to have the skills needed to operate in virtually *any* conditions found across hundreds of different parallel worlds?

It's a simple matter to take the "Infinite Worlds" background and add to it the cinematic characters, rules, and material

from ***GURPS Black Ops*** to create a truly badass cinematic adventure campaign across an infinity of worlds. In an Infinity Ops game, the player characters are some of the Best There Is on *any* world, capable of meeting any challenge the continuum has to throw at them.

Infinity

In this world, Infinity Unlimited still created and controls parachronic technology. The prime difference is with the Infinity Patrol itself. The Patrol is organized more like Argus from ***GURPS Black Ops,*** and even the governments of Homeline are kept ignorant of just how capable of the Patrol is. Infinity spares no expense in recruiting and training its operatives and, as the wealthiest corporation in existence, it has money to spare.

The Academy

Agents are trained at Infinity's secret Academy, which is similar in design and function to the Academy from ***Black Ops,*** with one important difference: instead of being located in an isolated area of Homeline, the Academy is located in its own parallel! Infinity maintains the Academy in an empty Quantum 3 parallel (simply called Academy), an Earth where humans never evolved. Additionally, like Coventry (p. TT105) the parallel blocks the abilities of world-jumpers, the only way to reach it is by projector assisted conveyor from Homeline. Cadets who choose to go AWOL have literally nowhere to go.

Training is brutal and efficient, designed to take the very best Homeline has to offer and make them even better. Infinity ops are designed using the same guidelines given in ***Black Ops*** with only a few minor differences. Infinity even uses the same system of departments: Combat, Intelligence, Security, Science, and Technology, with a special Psi Department, which includes ops with the World Jumper advantage (p. TT32), or any other psionic abilities.

Infinity ops gain all the same advantages and skills, and follow the same departmental requirements, with the following exceptions:

* Ops learn more language skills. All ops speak English, Latin, Greek, Arabic, French, and Spanish (the most common languages in all worlds) with at least 1 point in each. Intelligence ops are required to speak at least two other languages, while others ops have at least one language "elective." Common choices include Chinese (Mandarin or Cantonese), Japanese, Portuguese, and German.

* All ops must know the skills of Parachronic Electronics, Parachronic Operation, and Parachronic Physics at level 12. Science and Technology ops must have these skills at level 14 or better, with Parachronic Physics at 16+ for Science ops and Parachronic Electronics at 16+ for Technology ops.

* Combat ops must have a History skill of at least 14, not 12.

* All ops must know the Beam Weapons (Stunner) skill at the same level as their Guns (Pistol) skill.

* Many ops train to improve their default levels with other Tech Levels (p. B187), allowing them to operate more efficiently in a variety of different timelines. Of course, most ops are already so skilled only enormous TL penalties really affect them at all.

Equipment

Homeline is Tech Level 8, so Infinity ops have access to mature TL8 equipment and some cutting-edge TL9 gear as well. Most of the gear from ***Black Ops*** works fine in an Infinity ops game (since the Black Ops are TL8 in many respects anyway). The GM may wish to include some TL8 gear from ***GURPS Ultra-Tech*** or ***Ultra-Tech 2*** for some additional fun and firepower.

The Infinity Ops use stunners as their prime weapons, since they are under order to avoid needless casualties. They

also use the Eraser drug (p. TT103), which may be a more advanced version of the memory-erasing "cocktail" from ***Black Ops.***

Historical Ops

Infinity does not generally recruit outtimers for its organization, due to their desire to keep cross-time travel a secret. Gamemasters looking for a truly unique Infinity Ops campaign, however, may allow recruits from other timelines, possibly including famous figures from historical echoes, presumably recruited after their death or disappearance and restored to full health by TL8 Homeline medicine. ***GURPS Who's Who 1*** can provide some ideas only playing famous figures from history (although most will need to be "beefed up" to meet the requirements for being an Infinity op!)

Centrum

Of course, in an Infinity Ops campaign, player characters' opposition is just as capable as they are, if not more so. Centrum Interworld Service agents are the Infinity Ops' opposite numbers. Their training is, if possible, even more brutal, since the Centrum does not accept failure. The GM can build Centrum agents using the same guidelines for Infinity ops, above.

If desired, the GM can give Centrum agents extensive bionic and cybernetic modifications (concealed beneath synthflesh) to make the agents of the enemy even more inhuman and unstoppable, giving them a "Terminator" feel. Perhaps Centrum relies more on technology to turn out capable agents than intensive training. Their agents have the same high attributes as the ops, but because of artificial enhancements. This provides some distinction between Centrum agents and the ops, and may give the ops a way of detecting Centrum agents (until they run into one of the non-cybered ones, at least).

Most of the information on Centrum and its goals from ***Time Travel*** remains the same. GMs can consult ***GURPS Alternate Earths 2*** (still in playtest) for more information and ideas regarding Centrum. In fact, an Infinity Ops campaign works perfectly well using the pragmatic and somewhat brutal Centrum as a home base for the player characters!

Other Threats

The GM may choose the use the various adversaries described in ***GURPS Black Ops*** or ignore them in the context of the Infinity Ops campaign. If the GM wants to include them, there's plenty of room among the infinite worlds for gargoyles, demons, giant bugs, dinosaurs, aliens, and rogue psis.

Aliens

One possibility is to replace Centrum with the Greys, making the Greys into cross-time travelers rather than extraterrestrials. Perhaps the Greys were stranded on Homeline by the destruction of their parachronic conveyor, or perhaps they are infiltrating Homeline in preparation for an invasion. Or, like Centrum, the Greys might originate from a parallel far enough away that they can't *reach* Homeline, but they have infiltrated dozens of other worlds.

Likewise, the Prima may have been cross-time travelers rather than extraterrestrials. Perhaps their parallel is still out there, waiting to be found. Whether or not the Prima still live there is in question. They may have abandoned it because they developed beyond it, or due to a biological experiment (like the brainsuckers) gone terribly wrong.

Monsters

The various monsters from ***Black Ops*** can turn up on other parallel worlds as a result of magic, genetic engineering, variant evolution, or science gone wrong. They might also show up on Homeline. Maybe they were always there, or perhaps they arrived through some kind of "wormhole" between worlds, which may or may not still be around. Either

way, the Ops have to deal with them.

Ghosts in particular may be beings from other parallels. Some ghosts might be "reflections" or "echoes" of events on other parallels "leaking" into Homeline.

Rogues

Rogue psis present a number of possibilities. Groups with the power and influence of the Lodge or Mind almost certainly have access to parachronic technology (through puppets in the government), there may even be world-jumpers among their number. Their psionic abilities allow them to secretly influence any number of other worlds, setting themselves up as wizards or even gods on primitive parallels.

Maybe all psis are potential world-jumpers. Perhaps psis aren't even from Homeline in the first place! There may be a parallel where psis originated, including world-jumpers who spread psionic genes to other worlds, leading to legends of "witches" and "sorcerers." If the Lodge or Mind spans multiple worlds, they become another adversary for both Infinity and Centrum. And what happens when a Lodge psi world-jumps to a parallel like Yrth (from ***GURPS Fantasy***) or Merlin (from ***GURPS Technomancer***) and discovers *real* magic? (To say nothing about finding out his formidable psi powers don't work on Merlin *at all*.)

World-jumping ramblers looking for a good time in any number of parallels and historical echoes can be a headache for the Infinity Ops sent to track them down and ensure they don't do enough damage to an echo to shift it into another quantum.

Campaigns

Any of the missions formats from ***Black Ops*** or ***Time Travel*** adapt easily to an Infinity Ops campaign. The ops police parachronic technology and timelines to ensure they are not abused by Homeline governments, protect Homeline from possible outtime threats, maintain Infinity's monopoly on parachronic technology, and protect Homeline and its echo timelines against the activities of Centrum agents and other threats (like the Greys, Mind, and the Lodge). They can go on rescue missions into other timelines after lost parties, and scout out newly discovered timelines.

Dimension War

Gamemasters looking for a *very* lively setting can incorporate J. Hunter Johnson's "Banestorming Infinity Unlimited" article into an Infinity Ops setting, bringing several other players into the dimension war between Infinity and Centrum. A fully trained Infinity Op, based on 700 points, can be a match even for a super from the ***GURPS IST*** world! The GM can also allow ops to take Magical Aptitude and learn spells, although they won't work on many parallels.

Alternate Earths

Gamemasters with ***GURPS Alternate Earths*** or ***Alternate Earths 2*** can get them in on the game as settings for Infinity Ops adventures.

Reich-5 cries out for a crack team of ops to ferment rebellion against the Axis regime, keeping the Nazis from developing parachronic travel and ensuring the safety of Homeline. Shikoku-Mon is a likely world to develop parachronics on its own, making it a target for an extraction, destroying the technology and kidnapping the scientists involved to Coventry. It could also become a potential ally of Homeline, if approached properly. Gernsback has extensive weird science and a pulp-action feel to it well suited to cinematic adventures.

With the addition of psionics, arcane magics, or martial arts, Ming-3 is the perfect location for high-powered action-adventure stories, as is Midgard (Infinity ops vs. Viking warriors). Ops can help support the republicans on Aeolus and thwart Centrum schemes on Cornwallis, and how can Homeline resist the lure of Caliph's advanced technology?

The introduction of parachronic travel and parallel worlds can even liven up an ongoing ***Black Ops*** game, either as a short change of pace adventure or by shifting the campaign over to an Infinity Ops format. Imagine the surprise of the Black Ops who discover there is a whole infinity of Earths out there. That's a whole lot of butts for them to kick.

by Loki Carbis

Art by andi jones

Historical Note" "Andrew Season!" was inspired by Steve Jackson's visit to Conquest '99. Steve requested that all Andrews present stand during a presentation at the award ceremony. They numbered a little under 10% of the convention's total attendees -- clearly, a plague of Andrews. This scenario for ***Killer*** attempts to address this imbalance.

Andrew Season!

The rules of this scenario are very simple: It's open season on Andrews. All players are divided between Andrews and Hunters. The Hunters should outnumber the Andrews by approximately 4 or 5 to 1, to make sure that competition for kills is sufficiently intense. This is a trophy game, where kills must be clean enough to leave the body more or less unmarked for purposes of trophy collecting. Therefore, kills that disfigure or destroy bodies are frowned upon. The default setting is modern day -- GM's are free to experiment with fantastic and futuristic variants if they so desire. This game works equally well as a convention game or a regular game. It is also possible to turn it into a campaign, as a series of games, as detailed below.

Only Class A and B weapons are permitted -- and from these, only projectile weapons, bombs and various sorts of trap are permissible. Since Andrews are considered to be small and more-or-less defenseless animals, all weapons used must be able to work on animals (ruling out poisoned cigarettes and the like). Each Andrew killed is worth 10 points. However, if the weapon used would (in the opinion of the GM) cause the destruction or disfigurement of the Andrew, the kill is only worth 3 points. The best weapons for such a game are, therefore, projectile weapons like guns, or traps such as a pit trap, which leave the target undamaged. Bombs and fires of all sorts (including electrocution) are much worse. Hunters may collaborate, but any points gained from such kills will be evenly divided amongst the Hunters (rounding down). The only group attack from the rulebook that may be used is Trapping (although solo attacks made in concert are fine). For obvious reasons, weapons involving the use of accomplices, animals, or direct physical attacks such as garroting or tripping, are not permitted in this scenario.

The targets, all of whom are hereby designated "Andrew", are poor defenseless animals who are ruthlessly hunted down by the Hunters. Andrews have no money -- and they may not use weapons, although they are permitted to use their animal cunning to draw Hunters into their own traps, and even gain points for doing so. An Andrew who leads a Hunter to his death is awarded 15 points. This award is doubled if the trap the Hunter falls into is his own. GM's option

as to whether a Hunter should also have points deducted from his score in such cases.

There are a number of ways to end the game -- the GM should choose one of the following: when all Andrews have been killed; when a designated score is reached; or after a certain period of time elapses. Note that for the latter two variants, it may be necessary to allow players to come back to life after a short period. In most cases, the latter two variants work better at conventions (since they allow everyone to keep playing).

Variants

Edible Andrews: as above, but poison is now considered to be a disfiguring weapon, since it renders the victim inedible. To counterbalance this, the GM may rule that the use of fire as a weapon is considered to cook, rather than burn, the Andrew.

It's Like He Can Understand Every Word I Say: Andrews may not talk to Hunters. Hunters may say what they wish to Andrews or each other, but Andrews may talk only amongst themselves. Additionally, Andrews may only speak when there are no hunters in their line of sight.

You Can't Shoot Him Now, You Have To Take Him Home And Shoot Him: as above, but only traps may be used. All Andrews must be captured alive.

Campaign Rules

This scenario also lends itself well to a campaign. Keep running totals of scores from game to game, so as to increase the competitiveness of the players. Every player is required to be an Andrew at least once per four games -- the best way to handle this is with a roster. There are only two exceptions to this rotation: (1) The top-scoring player (and the top-scoring Hunter, if they are different) may choose whether or not they want to be an Andrew; and (2) any Hunter that scores less than the lowest scoring Andrew must play an Andrew in the next game.

by Phil Masters

Art by andi jones

Editor's Note: Like the article on the Djinn that previously appeared in *Pyramid*, the following is basically an extract from the delayed upcoming ***Castle Falkenstein*** supplement on the lands of the Ottoman Empire. Not that Arabia is completely under Ottoman control . . .

Tom Olam Writes: *Bayern has troubles enough in Europa, without wanting to worry too much about events out East. However, the Second Compact has to think about the whole planet, one way or another -- because we know all too well that our opponents do. And as I've told the others, we have to think in the long term; one day, that area will become important for its oil -- and we have to assume that the Unseelie know that as well as I do.*

So our overworked Secret Service has thrown together at least a few notes on that part of the world, for reference when the subject arises. Suitably edited and annotated, they should be of use to Hosts when the Great Game takes their Dramatic Characters off to the lands of burning deserts and hawk-eyed tribesmen.

Editorial Notes: The small package that Tom sent through the Faerie Veil this time does indeed make interesting reading. The really weird thing is that, when I checked, I found that most of the stories that it tells seem to have happened exactly the same way in our universe.
-- Philip Masters, Magister Artium Cantabrigiensis

The Politics of Arabia

Notes by the Bayern Diplomatic Service

The Ottoman Empire has nominally controlled Arabia for some few centuries, but in practice, their authority is weak; the governor of even a large city is regarded as strong if he can exert authority an hour from his gates, and most desert towns and oases are ruled as independent fiefs by tribal leaders.

The Role of the Sheikhs

Sir Richard Burton comments that, in the East, "there is a Shaykh for everything down to thieves;" this is, if you like, a hold-over from the days of unvarying tribalism. The Dervishes have their Sheikh-teachers; the villages have their Sheikh-headman; indeed, the city thieves possess ad hoc guilds with Sheikhs in charge; and the tribes are ruled by Sheikhs.

The word might be translated as "chief" or as "old man;" for the Arabs, in the way of tribal people, have vast respect for age and

mature judgement. Yet Mr Doughty, who tells us that a great Sheykh should "bear himself as a nobleman," and with "mild impartiality," also remarks that "the dignity of a Sheykh in free Arabia is commonly more than his authority." With the right to rule given partly by birth, partly by charisma, and partly by ownership of a strong hand, Arabian politics can be unpredictable and chancy.

Arab leaders range from honourable chieftains, by way of "Wahhabi" religious fanatics, to fearful Shakespearean schemers, who live their lives in terror of poison, plotting against their own families. A somewhat typical, if especially powerful, bizarre, and important, example are the lords of the town of Hayil, or Hail.

The Emirs of Hail

Hail is the capital of the region of Jabal Shammar. The story of its ruling house is, in fact, curious enough to make one suspect sorcery, and we suggest that agents be employed at some time to investigate the matter.

In 1834, a chief from Hail, Abdallah ibn Rashid, assisted the then-leader of the Wahhabi, Faysal, in his struggles, and was made Emir of Hail as reward. His son, Talal, obtained more power, becoming overlord of northern Arabia; European visitors considered him an excellent and admirable ruler. However, he died by his own hand, in 1867, apparently in the belief that he was becoming mad. His son, Mtab, reigned until 1871, when he was assassinated by his own nephews, Bandar and Badr. One of the assassins seized the throne for a few months, until another of Talal's brothers, Muhammad ibn Rashid, slew him and ascended the throne. With the current weakness of the Wahhabi, this prince may hope to become the dominant power in Arabia.

One may detect magickal involvement in much of this family's history. Legend says that Abdallah was saved, when left for dead after a battle, by the miraculous intervention of a flock of birds and a swarm of locusts, which tended and shielded his wounds. Talal's self-murder is certainly curious, and Mtab was allegedly slain with a silver bullet, because he was thought immune to mere lead. We have heard from Mr Charles Doughty, an eccentric but insightful British traveller, on the matter of Muhammad ibn Rashid, who the Bedouins told him had "committed crimes which before were not known in the world," such as personally stabbing his own nephew, and cutting the feet off his cousins before leaving them to die:

A fearful necessity was laid upon Mohammed: for save by these murders of his own nigh blood, he could not have sat in any daily assurance . . .

. . . Never prince used his authority, where not resisted, with more stern moderation at home, but he is pitiless in excision of any unsound parts of the commonwealth . . .

Similarly, we have heard a striking description of the Emir from Lady Anne Blunt, a more conventional English lady traveler:

His countenance recalled to us the portraits of Richard III, lean, sallow cheeks, much sunken, thin lips, with an

expression of pain except when smiling, a thin black beard, well defined black knitted eyebrows, and remarkable eyes -- eyes deep sunk and piercing, like the eyes of a hawk, but ever turning restlessly from one of our faces to the other, and then to those beside him. It was the very type of a conscience-stricken face, or one which fears an assassin. His hands, too, were long and claw-like and never quiet for an instant.

But the Emir's is a wealthy court; when receiving visitors, he looks a grand king, clad in purple and wearing gold-hilted daggers and a gold-hilted sword, while his stables are celebrated, his gardens hold gazelles and ibexes, and his armory holds imported Western weapons. When he dispenses justice in the town square, as is the ancient Arabian tradition, eight hundred soldiers stand at attention. (Though we must not exaggerate the size of this state; in the event of a war, he can put perhaps three thousand men in the field, many of them ill-armed Bedouin.) He rules with the assistance of his cousin, Hamud, who appears to be a more sophisticated and thoughtful character, and his chamberlain and guard-captain, Imbarak, who Doughty calls "a pleasant but fanatic strong man," risen through the ranks of his mercenaries.

If we do commission a party of adventurers to determine the true history of the family of Ibn Rashid, we must caution them not to be distracted by this spectacle. As Lady Anne observes, the city is a lion's den, however polite the lion.

Mecca

Tom Olam Comments: *Oh yes, Mecca. Every Europan has heard of it, but very few have ever been there. That, of course, is because it is the Sacred City of Islam, barred to Unbelievers. On the other hand, every Moslem is required, as a religious duty, to visit it, during a particular month of the lunar year, at least once in a lifetime. Most also take in Medina, three hundred miles away, which is almost as sacred. The whole south-western coastal plain of Arabia is effectively a "Holy Land."*

The history is well-known. Mecca has been a centre of worship since ancient times, and it's where the Prophet Mohammed started out. Medina is where he and his followers settled for a few years. Mecca is also the direction towards which all Moslems pray. At the heart of Mecca is a huge mosque; in the middle of the mosque is a rectangular, dark stone building, and inside that is a black stone that is said to have fallen from Heaven. The Hajj pilgrims visit that, and also do a lot of marching around and listening to sermons in the open. In the Arabian heat, that's a fair sign of devotion.

One can learn a bit about these places by asking Moslems -- there's few great secrets involved -- and some of the pilgrims are Europan converts, of varying degrees of sincerity. Even the sincere ones can have problems with xenophobic locals, and fakes are really living dangerously. Which is where Sir Richard Burton comes in . . .

Of all the Second Compact's allies, I wonder most about Burton. (Second to Auberon, that is.) Not that he's ever been anything other than a good ally, and his skills, as a sorcerer, swordsman, and explorer, are darned useful. But . . . In India, when he was starting out, his fellow officers used to call him "Ruffian Dick," and meeting him now, you can understand why. His trip through Arabia illustrates the point.

What he did was certainly impressive; he passed himself off as a Moslem Arab for several months, in which time he visited Medina and Mecca. Brave to the point of foolhardiness, that, not just because of what the Moslems would have done to him if they'd caught him -- but because the more obscure corners of Arabia are full of really strange dangers, and Burton poked around those, too. But you could hardly call it tactful; yet Burton, who professes respect for all "natives" and all beliefs, just laughs everything off.

In fact, there's a rumour that one fellow-pilgrim did see through his disguise, and Burton took the only solution available. It's clear, from his accounts of other adventures, that he has no qualms about killing when he sees the need. He's also reckless in pursuit of magickal secrets; I don't think his book tells everything about his detours in pursuit of ancient lore. Somewhere along that coast, there are supposed to be whole ancient cities lost in the sands -- "Ubar," or "Irem of the Pillars." They were like Sodom and Gomorra -- destroyed by God for their sins. I doubt that the Arabs would approve of anyone digging around them. I doubt that this would stop Burton.

But anyway, he certainly saw some interesting bits of everyday life along his way . . .

(Note; for more on "Ruffian Dick," see the ***Castle Falkenstein*** rulebook, p.41, 169, and 202.)

Arabian Scenes

From Burton's "A Pilgrimage to Al-Madinah and Meccah":

A Caravanserai: The "Wak'lah," as the Caravanserai or Kh'n is called in Egypt, combines the office of hotel, lodging-house, and store. It is at Cairo, as at Constantinople, a massive pile of buildings surrounding a quadrangular "Hosh" or court-yard. On the ground-floor are rooms like caverns for merchandise, and shops of different kinds -- tailors, cobblers, bakers, tobacconists, fruiterers, and others. A roofless gallery or a covered verandah, into which all the apartments open, runs round the first and sometimes the second story: the latter, however, is usually exposed to the sun and wind. The accommodations consist of sets of two or three rooms, generally an inner one and an outer; the latter contains a hearth for cooking, a bathing-place, and similar necessaries... In the court-yard the poorer sorts of travellers consort with tethered beasts of burden, beggars howl, and slaves lie basking and scratching themselves upon mountainous heaps of cotton bales and other merchandise.

An Arabian Coffee-House: It was a building of artless construction, consisting of little but a roof supported by wooden posts, roughly hewn from date trees: round the tamped earth floor ran a raised bench of unbaked brick . . . In the centre a huge square Mastabah, or platform, answered a similar purpose. Here and there appeared attempts at long and side walls, but these superfluities had been allowed to admit daylight through large gaps. In one corner stood the apparatus of the "Kahwahji," an altar-like elevation, also of earthen-work, containing a hole for a charcoal fire, upon which were three huge coffee-pots dirtily tinned. Near it were ranged the Shishas, or Egyptian hookahs, old, exceedingly unclean, and worn by age and hard work. A wooden framework, pierced with circular apertures, supported a number of porous earthenware gullehs (gargoulettes, or monkey jars) full of cold, sweet water . . .

A Cross-Roads Town: The Shaykh or gentleman is over-armed and over-dressed, as Fashion . . . dictates to a person of his consequence. The civilised traveller from Al-Madinah sticks in his waist-shawl a loaded pistol, garnished with crimson silk cord, but he partially conceals the butt-end under the flap of his jacket. The Irregular soldier struts down the street a small armoury of weapons: one look at the man's countenance suffices to tell you what he is. Here and there stalk grim Badawin, wild as their native wastes, and in all the dignity of pride and dirt; they also are armed to the teeth, and even the presence of the police-man's quarterstaff cannot keep their swords in their scabbards . . .

After sailing down the Red Sea Coast from Egypt, Burton travelled swiftly overland, and so reached Medina one morning:

Before us lay a spacious plain, bounded in front by the undulating ground of Nijd: on the left was a grim pile of rocks, the celebrated Mount Ohod, with a clump of verdure and a white dome or two nestling at its base. Rightwards, broad streaks of lilac-coloured mists, here thick with gathered dew, there pierced and thinned by the morning rays, stretched over the date groves and the gardens of Kuba, which stood out in emerald green from the dull tawny surface of the plain. Below, distant about two miles, lay Al-Madinah . . .

. . . And behind, in the most Easterly part of the city, remarkable from afar, is the gem of Al-Madinah, -- the four tall substantial towers, and the flashing green dome under which the Apostle's [Mohammed's] remains rest . . .

The Great Mosque at Mecca: There at last it lay, the bourn of my long and weary Pilgrimage . . . The mirage medium of Fancy invested the huge catafalque and its gloomy pall with peculiar charms... the view was strange, unique -- and how few have looked upon the celebrated shrine!

The Bedouin

Tom Olam Comments: *Even the most observant Europan travellers have mostly told us little about the lives of the desert tribes; most stick to towns, or, like Burton, tag along with large groups of urbanised travelers.*

Doughty has come closer to the real desert-folk than most. He notes that their greatest virtue is "es-subor, a courageous forbearing and abiding of hunger." They are a poor people who extract a living from an impossible environment, "an iron desolation . . . a hard-set face of nature without a smile for ever, a wilderness of burning and rusty horror of unformed matter."

Burton describes Bedouin ways, saying that they "are free and simple . . . Yet their manners are sometimes dashed with a strange ceremoniousness. When two friends meet, they either embrace or both extend their right hands, clapping palm to palm; their foreheads are either pressed together, or their heads are moved from side to side whilst for minutes together mutual inquiries are made and answered . . . Usually they are a mixture of worldly cunning and great simplicity, sensitive to touchiness, good-tempered souls, solemn and dignified withal, fond of jest, yet of a grave turn of mind, easily managed by a laugh and a soft word, and placable after passion, though madly revengeful after injury." He often compares their ways to those of the "Red Indians" of America -- with implicit admiration for both.

Raiding

Although leaders from Mohammed onwards have tried to call a halt to it, the Bedouin regard raids, *ghazzu*, as a routine activity and frankly something of a sport, and theft and banditry generally is part of their lifestyle. Doughty tells tales of wealthy cattle-traders who still ride out on raids -- and sometimes get themselves killed trying to steal a single camel.

The Bedouin are serious about all this -- they carry real weapons, and are prepared to use them -- but that isn't the point of the exercise; a clever theft of horses or camels, undetected by the victim until you are miles away, is far more clever. And the rules of loyalty and hospitality always apply; a traveller who can demonstrate that they are a guest of some clan-chief can change, in an instant, from robbery victim to guest for coffee.

On the other hand, Burton, in company with a party of Moslems on their holiest pilgrimage, found himself under fire from Bedouin bandits who took cover on a rocky hillside and merely sniped away for as long as possible, killing twelve of the travellers to no profit or advantage.

Banditry shades into tribal conflict, which in turn shades into politics; governments are too easily tempted to try playing one band off against another, which leaves them with a country full of armed, confident brigands. To quote Burton: "The Sultan pays pensions in corn and cloth to the very chiefs who arm their varlets against him; and the Pashas, after purloining all they can, hand over to their enemies the means of resistance."

Arab Characters in the Great Game

The Arabs of the ***Castle Falkenstein*** world make interesting game characters. They should come across as a little alien to New Europans but not incomprehensible, honourable but unpredictable, likeable when you get to know them, but with powerful motivations of their own. Playing them as Dramatic Characters demands that you develop a working understanding of Arabian culture, and prepare for difficult moments -- especially if and when the campaign moves away from Arabia -- but you'll be playing as tough and dramatic a hero as you could ever hope for.

Abilities

Athletics: Bedouin tribesmen lead, to say the least, Healthy Outdoor Lives; even among the townsfolk, only the richest can afford to loll about on cushions getting fat. Furthermore, Arabs are legendary horsemen, and greatly admire the skill.

Charisma: The stereotyped Arab hero is the strong, silent type, implying Average Charisma or a little better. However, great leaders and sheikhs have to be able to inspire the tribe.

Connections: For an Arab character, this reflects acquaintance with sheikhs, tribal leaders, wealthy merchants, and

noted religious leaders. As such, it's very useful in a tribal society -- but it should rarely rise above Good, or perhaps Great at best, unless the character has travelled unusually widely.

Education: Decent formal schooling just isn't available in the desert, but some of the towns have mosque schools which give solid, rote-based teaching with a local slant (Moslem doctrine, Arabic literature, and so on). Getting more than an Average Education means spending time in a larger town or city. For an Arab character, "the classics" means the magnificent Arabic and Persian literary tradition of heroic epics, love poetry, and mysticism.

Fencing: The Bedouin don't have fancy fencing styles, but they still carry swords, and you'd better believe they know how to use them. Rename this ability "Swordsmanship" for Arab characters to get the feel right.

Marksmanship: The typical Arab raiding-party carries a terribly dated assortment of firearms, including a lot of smooth-bore matchlock muskets. A lot of Bedouin can't afford any guns, but get by with swords and spears; rich chiefs may carry Europan rifles. Of course, learning with a handicap means that those matchlock-wielders who persist can get very good indeed.

Performance: Tribal poets and coffee-house story-tellers can be spellbinding talkers, and Arabs respect talented singers. However, they have no real theatrical tradition, and dancing is left to harem-women and some Dervishes. This ability should not be raised above Average without good cause.

Physician: The Medieval Moslem world developed the science of medicine to new heights. Unfortunately, nobody ever taught it to the desert tribes. Visiting Europans with even the most basic medical training can often make both money and friends by performing services for the Arabs, who are often downright Poor in this (and who may be unnervingly quick to apply red-hot irons to every problem).

Social Graces: This is, in effect, replaced by Tribal Etiquette (below). An Arab transplanted to Europan society starts with Poor Social Graces, although polite Europans will make allowances for ignorance, and the visitor may well be seen as possessing a certain impressive natural dignity. Hosts should be generous to Arab characters with high Tribal Etiquette ratings in this situation, as they will probably learn the local rules, and hence improve their Social Graces, fairly rapidly.

New Abilities

Animal Handling (heart)

This is an optional addition to the Abilities list, but it can be appropriate to characters who spend time among the Bedouin. Such Arabs are famous for their horses, depend on camels for many essentials of life, and have a great fondness for falconry.

Poor Animal Handling ability means that animals actively dislike you; horses try to throw you, camels are even more foul-tempered than usual, and falcons just won't return to your gauntlet. You are automatically Poor at riding, no matter what your rating in Athletics; you might manage a fancy leap into the saddle, but the horse will then try to get you off again. Average Animal Handling means that you don't bother animals, and they don't bother you; trained dogs and horses behave as they are supposed to provided that you keep your cool, and you understand how a falcon should act, even if you haven't mastered the art of commanding it. With Good ability, you are clearly used to animals, or unusually empathetic; you can make a horse stay calm under fire, a falcon returns to your fist first time, and camels only bite you out of habit. At the Great level, you are an expert with all furred and feathered things, capable of giving exhibitions on the stages of New Europa or working in the stables of the Sultan himself; horses obey your spoken commands, you could direct a falcon onto one hare in a field of half-a-dozen, and camels become mysteriously half-hearted about spitting. Excellent ability means that you can direct a horse through fire and storm, falcons actually seem to like you, and camels surprise themselves with their tolerance. Extraordinary Animal Handling means that you don't talk to animals, most of the time; they respond to your thoughts, or at least your subtle physical cues. Superstitious folk treat you like St Francis of Assisi.

Incidentally, the Arabs have no great liking for dogs, regarding them as unclean, but may use them in hunting. Great Arab rulers very occasionally acquire cheetahs and other large cats for the hunt; these are like falcons -- they can't be tamed, only trained, and they are usually carried with eye-covering hoods to keep them docile until the prey is in sight. They are also virtually impossible to breed in captivity. (And they look wonderful in "richly decadent Eastern court" scenes.)

Note: Arab characters might take this as one of their Poor Abilities, but it will make life in the desert much harder.

Trader (heart):

This is the skill of buying, selling, bargaining, and thus making a more-or-less honest profit. It includes a working knowledge of the values of goods, but mostly, it's a question of persuading someone to give you the best price for something, and judging when they'll shift further and when they're really going to stick.

Most people are capable of haggling a little, if only over the price of a horse, but in the East, it's raised to an art form. The talented Trader is regarded with admiration and caution rather than dislike, unless he or she gets a reputation for excessive or unfair greed.

If you are a Poor Trader, you are continually being swindled and tricked; you either lose track of true values, or become too quickly flustered and distracted in the bargaining process. Average ability means that you can get by from day to day in the bazaar, provided that you remember not to try buying from the most enthusiastic merchants. A Good Trader could be a merchant, although you'd need other advantages as well; you enjoy a lengthy haggle, and stall-holders who know you don't try any tricks. Great ability means that you can make a good living as a merchant or broker, or terrorize minor stall-holders when buying your groceries; you usually pay less than an item's value, while selling at a premium. Excellent ability means that you are a legend of the trade-routes; if you aren't a wealthy professional merchant, you've missed your vocation, and you certainly hold a complete set of prices and exchange rates in your head. An Extraordinary Trader is a wealthy merchant, if only in your spare time; people only haggle with you so that they can learn technique and for the pleasure of your company, and spend hours afterwards trying to work out how you convinced them.

Note: With the Host's permission, Europan characters who are going to spend much of their time in an area where prices aren't generally fixed can take Trader as one of their Poor Abilities. It's a serious disadvantage in such cases, as the character will find their money swiftly running out, and the bazaar regarding them with a mixture of disdain, amusement, and avarice.

Tribal Etiquette (heart)

This is Arab society's version of Social Graces. It does apply to town-dwelling Arabs who don't live in explicitly "tribal" groups; even they tend to be aware of tribal allegiances, and use similar (flowery) greetings and courtesies. The ability involves knowledge of correct forms of address and the essential rules of hospitality, the precise form of obeisance, bowing, or hand-kissing appropriate to one of a given social standing, and a working knowledge of family and tribal relationships and enmities. Newcomers to Arab lands are automatically Poor to begin with, although a little study and tact will avoid the worst blunders -- after all, a Farangi will not be expected to know everything, and won't have any specific tribal enemies to avoid, or allies to honour; adaptable Europans with better-than-Average Social Graces can often progress fairly quickly to an Average rating.

A Poor ability in Tribal Etiquette implies crass ignorance of the most basic rules; you are likely to fail to honour even the most venerable of sheikhs, will mention an Arab to his enemies with admiration, and probably don't bow to anyone. Of course, being ignorant of the rules of hospitality and surrender, you are likely to suffer prompt retribution. Average ability implies a capacity for getting by in the tents or the bazaar, not giving any great offence when a guest, granting acceptable hospitality when required, and being able to offer surrender when at a disadvantage with the expectation that it will be accepted. Good ability is that expected of the fortunate, wealthy, or respected figure, offering hospitality with instinctive grace and accepting it with modesty, while knowing enough of the web of tradition, obligation, and enmity that you can avoid embarrassment. Great ability is that of the famous sheikh and the wandering

(sane) poet; others will turn to you for guidance in matters of tradition and family relationships, and your salutations and compliments will be models of finely-judged pleasantry. Excellent Tribal Etiquette means that you seem to know everything about every tribe and family in Arabia; you can put anyone at their ease while convincing them of your honour with a bare phrase, or flatter them with a single reference. Extraordinary ability is the outward sign of the legendary hero or poetic ideal; your very appearance excites respect, you know more about family histories than the families themselves (and discuss such with perfect tact), and you gain a universal reputation for hospitality without even owning a tent.

Note: With the Host's permission, Arab characters might take this as one of their Poor Abilities. That, however, is a risky proposition.

Arab Dramatic Character Roles

Tribal Warrior

You are an Arab born and bred -- a true Arab, a Bedouin of the desert, not a soft town-dweller. You have learned to ride, to use a sword, and to conduct yourself in peace, on a raid, or at war. You are, most of all a free wanderer; your allegiance is given for honour and tradition, not because some distant foreigner demands it!

Strong Suits: Athletics, Swordsmanship, Tribal Etiquette.

Possessions: Bedouin Robes; a plain steel sword; an antiquated matchlock musket; a good Arab horse.

In Your Memory: Your family and tribal lineage for a dozen generations; the names of those with whom you have sworn blood-brotherhood, or on whom you have sworn vengeance.

Why You're Here: Perhaps you are working for your tribe, opposing some villain who threatens them and who has also made enemies of these Farangi. (They may be infidels, but they seem honest enough, and they have abilities which will help you.) Or perhaps you have simply fallen in with these strange travellers after working for them as a guide or guard as they travel round the desert; having eaten their bread and salt, there is a bond between you and they, and you want to see how matters come out for them.

For that matter, there is no dishonour in working for hire. Your ancestors served the Caliphs (the true Arab Caliphs, not some Turkish pretender) for fair pay. You know the desert better than anyone, an Arab warrior is as fine a mercenary as any foreigner could wish, and this could be an interesting adventure.

Arabian Merchant

Let the Farangi think that all Arabs are nomad bandits; your people have been great traders for as long as they have been soldiers. The Prophet himself, Peace Be Upon Him, was in his time a merchant. Furthermore, trade brings you into contact with folk from all across the world; you have visited the ports of the Levant and the Red Sea, and talked with sailors and imams, Farangi explorers and Turkish officials (little as you love the latter, with their accursed taxes). You probably have a cousin who has sailed to India, and seen the strange ways of the folk there -- and the even stranger ways of their Inglese overlords. You have read the news-papers of Damascus, as well as listening to bazaar gossip; you can discuss not only the Mad Sultan of the Turks, but also the wars of the Farangi. For example, you know of the war between the Vizier Bismarck, with his Efreet allies, and the Sultan Ludwig, whose mechanic-wizards have forged a fleet of flying ships!

You have not lost the wisdom of the desert; you can ride competently, and shoot if you must, you know a hundred oases and a thousand paths, and your family is large and loyal. But most of all, you enjoy the trading itself; you can happily spend hours in the bazaar, sipping mint tea as you shave a few piastres off the price of a fine Persian rug. You cannot keep all the wondrous goods that pass through your hands, for your livelihood depends on selling as well as buying, but you would not want to; to have seen and handled such things is reward enough. Provided that the son of a

camel who runs that shop in Damascus doesn't swindle you again, of course.

Strong Suits: Charisma, Perception, Trader.

Possessions: Good-quality robes; a short sword; an out-dated but functional gun of some description; assorted trade goods.

In Your Diary: Detailed accounts of your trading (in a private shorthand, in case the tax officials get hold of them); notes on trade possibilities; names of contacts and family connections.

Why You're Here: You are a merchant, and you go where the profit is -- but that doesn't mean you lack honour, or a sense of adventure. If you face an enemy, you can fight with steel or wits, and you are too sensible a fellow to turn down allies in such a conflict.

Furthermore, the Farangi seem an interesting band. Some of them may be rich, or they may be traders themselves; they might appreciate the silks and spices of your land. Their own machines and cheap fabrics are certainly worth trading for. Or perhaps trade has been poor lately, while these folk need a guide -- and none know the lands and pathways of Arabia better than a professional traveller like yourself.

Scenario Seed: The Empty Quarter

From the "Scientific Gazetteer and Steam Engineer's Almanac," 1872:

Readers may be aware that at the heart of the southern part of Arabia lies the Rub al-Khali, as the Arabs term the Empty Quarter, a region of true and ghastly desert greater in expanse than the nation of France, with sand-dunes towering five hundred feet high. No Europan -- nay, probably, no human being -- has ever crossed this land; even the few reports that we receive of our brethren in the Explorers' Clubs traversing the Peninsula from Persian Gulf to Red Sea describe expeditions in more northerly sectors.

And yet now, when even the bold determination of the Travellers quails before this Land of Burning Terror, we learn that this blot upon the honour of New Europan Science may be about to expunged -- by the Power of Steam!

For it is reported that Doctor Hector Phiblin, formerly of the University of Paris, presently of Independent Means and dwelling in the great City of Birmingham (where he may converse with a body of Engineers unequalled in any part of the Globe), has all but completed construction of his great Extended Endurance Desert Traversal Tractor. This vehicle employs the most advanced principles of Steam Engineering, and has been constructed with Arabian climes ever in mind. Dr Phiblin asserts that his creation can bear, not merely a small, well-equipped party of Adventurers, but also sufficient fuel to complete the traversal of the Empty Quarter -- and, indeed, that it has capacity to spare, as it may haul a full tender of highest-grade coals.

The Tractor employs specially-forged broad-rimmed wheels, enabling its builder to laugh at the suggestion that it might sink upon the Sands of Araby, and an Ancillary Solar Thermic Energy Conversion system, focusing the rays of the sun on its own boiler -- hence, it is claimed, the startling endurance of which it is capable. On other matters, Dr Phiblin remains, as yet, taciturn.

This true Hector of Science now proposes to demonstrate his Tractor's capabilities, by organising an expedition across the Rub al-Khali. He confesses that some matters remain to be resolved for this plan to come to fruition; he will require a crew of fellow-scientists, engineers, and guards, while the patronage of some far-sighted Person of Wealth and Quality may be needed, not least to arrange transport of the vehicle to some appropriate port in Arabia. But there are, surely, bold Adventurers enough in Europa . . .

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A Magical Invasion

by Stephen Kenson

Art by Sebastien Allard

Looking to add a little magic to your game world? This article looks at a major event that can radically alter just about any campaign by adding the magic, mages, fantasy races and creatures from the world of Yrth (described in ***GURPS Fantasy***). It can be a change-of-pace adventure or series, or a world-changing event that permanently alters the setting.

Yrth is a world existing in a dimension parallel to Earth, originally inhabited by three races: elves, dwarves and orcs. The pivotal event in the history of Yrth is the creation of the Banestorm. Nearly a thousand years ago, a cabal of dark elves decided to cast a powerful spell to bring down a bane upon the orcs and rid Yrth of them forever. In the greatest single spell failure in history, the dark elves' ritual tore the veil between worlds asunder and created a massive storm that plucked beings from other worlds and brought them to Yrth. Among these were many humans, taken from the Middle Ages on Earth, along with races like halflings, lizard men, goblins and others.

Over time, the newcomers to Yrth learned to use magic and set up civilizations of their own. Humans quickly built their own kingdoms, restricting the elves and dwarves to the forests and mountains. Technological development was slowed by the existence of magic (and by the wizards of Yrth ruthlessly suppressing any new technology that could challenge their supremacy). By the 20th century (according to the Christian calendar), Yrth's technology remained at the late-medieval level, with armored knights on horseback wielding swords. This is the world described in ***GURPS Fantasy.***

The Second Banestorm

Yrth's history diverges from what is published in ***GURPS Fantasy*** when the remaining dark elves formulate a plan to correct their earlier mistake. Some of the dark elf leaders were alive during the time of the first Banestorm (elves being nearly immortal), and they believe they've found a way to use that accident to their advantage. In another magical ritual, the dark elves attempt to reverse the Banestorm to remove the "foreign" races from Yrth and transport them elsewhere, along with their racial enemies, the orcs, leaving Yrth solely under the control of the elves and dwarves.

Due to the dark elves' own arrogance, or perhaps cursed with the same bad luck they've always had, their ritual doesn't work in quite the way they planned. It does massively empower the Banestorm and throw open the gates to other worlds, but instead of leaving the elves and dwarves alone, the Banestorm takes *everyone*, every living being on Yrth, and transports them . . . somewhere else. People are taken with only the possessions on their person and nothing else. What's worse, the spell strips Yrth of all mana, rendering the world magically "dead" and blocking any magical means of ever returning home.

The Arrival

A Magical Invasion

The people and creatures of Yrth appear on another world, simply materializing out of thin air. Their appearance is preceded by violent storms, so few natives are going to take the appearance of these strangers as a good omen. The populace appears in small groups for the most part, scattered over the surface of a continent or even the entire world. This can cause problems for people separated from their friends, family and allies and left in a strange new place. The Yrthlings will tend to seek each other out for mutual support and protection in the new world, unless they are remarkably similar to the natives and able to blend in easily. Remember, most of the human and humanoid inhabitants of Yrth are poorly educated by modern standards, and Anglish (the common human language on Yrth) defaults to modern English and German at -6. Yrthlings are likely to be very confused and frightened by the experience of being torn away from their lives and left stranded on another world.

How the dark elf ritual affects your game world depends on the original setting and the time that has passed since the ritual happened. The people of Yrth might all go to the same place, or they might end up scattered across many different worlds (perhaps everyone is sent back to their original home-world, with the elves and dwarves scattered among them). The different possibilities and permutations are nearly endless, but consider the following combinations:

Fantasy

There are two main possibilities in this type of setting. The first takes place in a campaign already set in Yrth, in which case the player characters might learn of the dark elf plot before their ritual happens. The characters try to stop the ritual but fail, and they and everyone on their world are transported somewhere else. This beginning can be combined with any of the other possible settings and outcomes and it can be an interesting way to breathe new life into a stale fantasy campaign. The world where the dark elves perform their ritual doesn't even have to be Yrth, although the background with the Banestorm is already in place there. It could be any fantasy world of your choosing, and the perpetrators of the ritual don't have to be dark elves, they could be human wizards, dragons, demi-gods or anyone with sufficient magical power.

It is possible the population of Yrth could end up on another fantasy world. It may be one quite similar to Yrth's pseudo-medieval fantasy or quite different (like the Mad Lands of ***GURPS Fantasy II***). The sudden influx of people and creatures from Yrth will certainly cause all manner of social and economic trouble for the world.

The influx of magic may be even worse, increasing the world's magical level, perhaps resulting in a High Mana or even Very High Mana world, where everyone can cast spells, but the slightest magical failure can lead to catastrophe. The magical flux can also lead to any sort of magical change you want, from a conversion to an Unlimited Mana campaign to a *decrease* in the new world's mana level, resulting a "low-fantasy" or even non-magical game world. A low- or no-mana world might result in the extinction of many of Yrth's magical creatures and an "industrial revolution" as the power of magic wanes.

New Frontier

The second Banestorm might transport the population of Yrth to a very primitive world or unpopulated world, much like Yrth was before the first Banestorm. In this case, the populace needs to address issues of food and shelter, and a gradual rebuilding of civilization. New kingdoms and power structures may emerge from the displaced populace.

Certainly the old nobility and the wizards from Yrth will do their best to hold on to their power, but the new frontier will create many opportunities for would-be warlords and land-barons to carve out kingdoms of their own. Steffan O'Sullivan's "Yrth: 1100" (in *Pyramid #13*) article provides ideas about how the first "visitors" settled in on Yrth that work well with this concept.

The new world might be the same as Yrth or quite different. Consider the effects of climate, period of rotation (day and night) and revolution (length of year) on the population. The new world might even have fantastic features like a hollow center (with a livable surface on the inside of the sphere) or a sun that orbits the planet. It could be a structure like a ringworld or even a Dyson sphere, providing millions of square miles of space and virtually limitless kinds of terrain. Such a setting could make for an interesting new fantasy campaign.

And, of course, there's always the possibility that the new world is not as uninhabited as it first appears. There might be ancient ruins and other evidence of a culture that died out long before the Yrthlings arrived, providing places to explore for treasures and magical (or even technological) secrets. Perhaps the previous culture hasn't entirely died out, but merely remains hidden from the newcomers, watching and waiting.

Historical

The Yrth exiles could appear on Earth in any period of history (using some of the various ***GURPS*** historical worldbooks). The sudden appearance of so many people, new races and fantastic creatures, along with functional magic, would change history irrevocably, creating an "alternate history" world diverging from the appearance of the Yrthlings. How far back in history the exiles appear affects how much history is likely to diverge. Appearing in the stone-age is little different than the New Frontier setting described above, with Neanderthals and primitive humans to contend with. The exiles could appear even earlier, and have to survive on a primitive Earth with dinosaurs, new "dragons" for brave knights to slay (check some of the campaign ideas from ***GURPS Dinosaurs*** and ***GURPS Ice Age***).

Later time periods allow you to create a "historical fantasy" world. Perhaps the people of Yrth arrive in ancient Rome or the Middle Ages. Exiled nobles and wizards from Megalos would find themselves right at home in Rome, and would no doubt immediately begin scheming to take control of the Empire. Knights from Caithness would fit easily into Arthurian Britain or the Middle Ages. In a medieval or earlier time period, the Yrthlings have the advantage of magic over the natives, allowing mages to quickly gain power in the new world. (Unless, of course, Yrth's former mana level did not come with the inhabitants.) As technology progresses, the advantage evens out. As the wizards of Yrth already know, gunpowder does a great deal to limit the influence of mages.

Sending the exiles to periods like the American Civil War, the Napoleonic Wars or World War Two can provide a very different outcome when both sides have to deal with millions of interdimensional refugees, many of whom can cast spells and are willing to offer their services to the highest bidder.

Modern

What if the exiled populace of Yrth appeared on modern-day Earth, reversing the original Banestorm? The effect might only send the humans or it might deposit all the inhabitants of Yrth on our world. The impact of millions of displaced people appearing around the world would be massive, to say nothing of the presence of dragons, or the sudden existence of magic. The authorities would have to find some means to deal with the newcomers. The population of the world increases by several million and Yrthlings have to learn to cope with the shock of modern technology and popular culture, while Earthlings have to contend with magic and fantasy races and creatures. The *Borderlands* anthologies, edited by Terri Windling, offer some possible ideas of the kind of world that might result from the appearance of magic and fantasy creatures in the modern world.

Supers

One modern setting where the people of Yrth might appear is an Earth with super-humans, like the setting of ***GURPS***

IST. A world with supers won't be nearly as shocked by the sudden appearance of people able to use magic or fantasy creatures. Even the most powerful wizard on Yrth is outclassed by a super capable of punching through tank armor and invulnerable to artillery.

The appearance of the Yrth exiles could form the basis for a comic-book style "mini-series" where supers work to deal with the influx of magic, mages and fantasy creatures while searching for a suitable home for the exiles. Perhaps magical supers can figure out a way to undo the effects of the dark elf ritual, or open a gateway to an empty world where the exiles can settle (kicking off a New Frontier setting, above).

Or the exiles might be there to stay, forcing the world to deal with magic and monsters on top of the presence of metahumans. Mages become one more type of metahuman in the world, although their powers may differ from native mages (depending on the options you choose for magic in the supers setting). Perhaps the sudden influx of mana even leads to some new origins or even the creation of supers in the first place!

Cyberpunk

Fantasy/Cyberpunk is a popular combo. The Yrthlings could end up on an Earth in the near-future, where megacorporations rule the streets and various types of mind/body alterations are available, like in ***GURPS Cyberworld.*** The mean streets of the One-and-Twenty would chew up the technologically-backward Yrthlings and spit them out, but hardy adventurers and powerful wizards will learn to adapt and turn the situation to their advantage. Some of the locals may learn to use magic, and turn to the exiles to learn more. The people from Yrth who manage to survive may adopt cyberware, or they may consider it an abomination. Certainly the ProGov, the NERCC, the Korps (and any similar totalitarian organizations) will be greatly concerned by the existence of millions of people who don't exist in any of their databases, some of them with the powers of magic at their command.

My own article "Magic on the Edge" provides some ideas for integrating magic and mages into ***Cyberworld*** that can easily be adapted for this scenario.

Space

There are many possibilities for dropping the population of Yrth into a space-faring campaign. First, the exiles may appear on Earth in the far-future, when humans have developed interplanetary or even interstellar travel. This is quite similar to the ***Cyberpunk*** setting described above, except the future-shock is even greater for the Yrthlings and the natives may be friendlier, depending on what Earth is like. If humans have made contact with other races, elves, dwarves and orcs are likely to be looked at as simply other alien races (and ones quite like humans, at that). Some races might even decide to settle their own colony worlds (dwarves would make excellent "belters" or asteroid miners).

It is also possible for the Yrthlings to end up on a new world somewhere in deep space. It might be a populated colony world, an alien civilization, or an uninhabited world on the fringes of known space. Presumably, the environment is one capable of supporting humanoid life, or else it will be a very short visit. Otherwise, it could be any type of world. The game might start off as a New Frontier, until a starship from Earth arrives and makes contact, at least. ***GURPS Unnight*** provides an example of a scenario somewhat like this.

In a ***Space*** setting, the impact of magic is an important question. Is mana a universal or a local force? Does the influx of magic from Yrth simply raise the mana level of a single planet or does it increase the mana level of the entire solar system, galaxy or even the whole universe? Can planets have differing mana levels and is mana restricted solely to planetary surfaces (leaving a no-mana void between the stars)? Depending on the answers, wizards may develop magical means of space travel, and gate and tech magic (from ***GURPS Grimoire***) is a definite possibility.

Time Travel

In addition to the historical settings mentioned above, the second Banestorm would be an interesting development in

an "Infinite Worlds" campaign for ***GURPS Time Travel.*** Yrth is a parallel undiscovered by Infinity Unlimited, until they detect a strange disturbance between quantum levels. Suddenly, Yrthlings appear on another parallel, perhaps even Homeline. Or maybe the Banestorm scatters the inhabitants of Yrth across a dozen different parallels. Suddenly the I-Cops are scrambling to try and clean up the mess.

They're also left with the question of what to do with the exiles. Do they settle them on a colony parallel, try to get them back home or leave them be? What if some Yrth wizard discovers a magical means of cross-time travel and is willing to share it? Does Infinity try to recruit him or make him disappear?

Perhaps the Banestorm has caused the Yrthlings to become "unstuck" in time, randomly sending them to one world after another. Worse yet, what if everyone with Magical Aptitude who passes through the second Banestorm becomes a World-Jumper, able to travel to other parallels at will? Hundreds of magically capable jumpers wandering through the multiverse could provide Infinity with no end of headaches. The Banestorm itself is also a serious threat if it doesn't stop with displacing the Yrthlings. The storm might "wander" through the quantum levels, randomly displacing people from one parallel to another, creating a massive tangle of timelines for the I-Cops to unravel.

If you're looking for a new and interesting twist for an existing fantasy game, or if you want to add some magic to another game world, have a group of knights and wizards, leading a rag-tag band of exiles, come riding out of a storm one dark night and watch what happens.

A Tasteful Interlude

by Rob Wieland

Art by Sebastien Allard

Ya gotta eat sometime. Whether he's coming home from a long cattle drive or a Texas Ranger driftin' from town to town dispensing justice with his six guns, every hombre in the Weird West appreciates a good home cooked meal after days of jerky and dried nuts. Most people are too busy worrying more about the walkin' dead than eatin' healthy, and cholesterol is a word some high-faultin' types have probably just invented back East. With that in mind, the following is an adventure for ***Deadlands*** with a recipe for terror that might have your posse swear off steaks for a while after playing it. Take a vengeful Indian, mix in some good ol' American greed, add some judicious amounts of ghouls for spice, cook for one or two game sessions, and serve to the posse on a plate full of hot lead and cold-blooded murder.

The Story So Far

When Raven busted into the Hunting Grounds, he brought with him the meanest bunch of Indians he could find. He called them the Last Sons. Most of the Last Sons never made it out of the spirit world, and those that did were marked; their hands were blackened by the spirit blood of the guardians they killed. One of the Indians with the blackest hands of them all was a Shawano named Angry Hawk. Angry Hawk's tribe had slowly wasted away due to some disease-infested blankets a sly trader had sold them during the winter of '53. When Raven approached him, he accepted his offer almost immediately. If it took unleashing Hell on Earth to get the white man back for everything he had done, so be it.

Once Raven and the remaining Sons returned from their vengeful quest, Angry Hawk quietly headed out West to watch what he had wrought. He's seen the carnage in the Great Maze, watched the War drag on like an old horse that just doesn't have enough sense to die, and laughed as the white men killed each other over the small pockets of ghost rock. But a man with a name like Angry Hawk isn't the kind to just sit back and watch the world go to Hell. He's returned from his exile with a devilish plan to turn the white man into the fiendish ghouls he sees them as.

The Best Way to Corrupt a Man Is Through His Stomach

Carl Brody was hip-deep in cow wafers. He had sunk all of the money he made from robbing banks into his dream. He wanted to own his very own roadhouse and hotel. Sadly, his rooms were emptier that Custer's revolver at the end of Little Big Horn. Even though he had spent most of his life robbing banks and trains, Brody considered himself a God-fearing man. As such, he would not employ saloon gals at his inn. Most cowpokes coming off a long cattle drive want some companionship as well as a good steak, so they drove right on past Brody's Bunkhouse into Dodge and to the warm arms of some soiled doves.

Carl was just about to close up shop when a weathered old Indian showed up in his door. He carried a burlap sack in his gloved hands and offered his services as a cook. Brody told him to shove off but the Indian convinced him to let him lay a secret Indian recipe for buffalo meat on him. Buffalo meat was cheaper but not as tasty as cow meat. Most

folks would rather eat their saddle than a buffalo. Brody took a bite and was in heaven. Dollar signs flashed before his eyes as the Indian grimly smiled. The gloved Indian, known to Brody only as Hawk, was hiding his black-stained hands from his future employer and pawn. But there was no buffalo in the sack that he carried with him. The tenderloin that Brody chowed down on belonged to a prospector Angry Hawk bushwhacked a few miles away. Armed with secret knowledge he had gained from a tribe of wendigo (not to mention seven secret herbs and spices), Angry Hawk set out to turn every cowboy that ate at Buffalo Brody's Bunkhouse into a ravenous cannibal. Soon he'll have an army of ghouls at his command, and the Last Son will sweep his lands clean of the white men he still hates after all these years.

Finger Lickin' Good

Now Buffalo Brody's Bunkhouse is starting to make a name for itself. Most people in Dodge have heard of it and a growing number have eaten there. Not everyone who eats Hawk's recipe becomes a ghoul; only customers who have eaten there repeatedly stand any real chance of turning. With the way the meat tastes, though, that isn't that difficult a proposition. Brody's best customers have dug a tunnel system that reaches all the way into Dodge to quietly procure supplies without the fuss and the muss of running into a heavily armed outlaw gang. Brody also wants to use the tunnels to help expand into the city so that they can get new customers from the rails. Buffalo Brody, as he calls himself now, has become a ghoul king and is obsessed with making sure everyone in the city has had a full meal at his restaurant and comes back for more. Hawk quietly cooks in the kitchen, watching his plans come together. Nothing can stop him now.

Course, that's usually when the heroes show up.

The Set-Up

Particularly ghoulish Marshals may have the posse eat at the Bunkhouse on their way into Dodge. If any heroes eat any meat while at the Bunkhouse, they must make a Foolproof (3) Spirit roll. If they succeed, no problem. Repeated dining increases the difficulty by one level to Fair (5), and the next time to Onerous (7) and so on. Also, once the second feeding has passed, the next time the character is offered some "buffalo," they must make a Spirit roll at one difficulty level lower than the first roll to resist chowing down. If they fail, the character begins the slow, torturous transformation into a ghoul. The process lasts for two days, and can only be halted if the ghoul king is slain before the transformation is complete. Until then, the character is plagued with a hankerin' for raw meat every time the dinner bell rings. Harrowed characters are not immune from this transformation.

The first clue arrives with a confident stride and the name Jack Haughton. He's a big cowpoke from out Arkansas way and he has just come into town driving a big ol' herd from Little Rock. He will also loudly run his mouth off on the topic of the fine time he had at Buffalo Brody's Bunkhouse last night. The drinks were strong, the food was great, and the girls were a sight for sore eyes. (After becoming a flesh-eating ghoul, Brody never quite makes it out to church anymore) He's heading back there tonight and suggests anyone looking for a great place to dine follow his lead. He'll be popping up again soon, but a little worse for the wear.

Another helpful hint to get the players involved might be adding a personal stake to the situation. Arrange for an associate of one of the posse to want a meeting. Maybe a Confederate spy needs to pass something onto the local Ranger, a huckster needs to collect one of his debts, or a mad scientist's colleague wishes to collaborate on a new invention. Whatever the case and wherever the meeting place, the hombre doesn't show. He's nowhere to be found. Poking around pegs the gent as leaving the Crystal Palace hotel last night. Good posse members will decide to give that place a good once-over.

Chapter 1

Located Just Down the Street From a Mouth of Hell

The Crystal Palace is definitely not a palace and the only Crystal inside it is the girl in room 3. Making their way to Ernest the bartender, he points the posse to room 5. The associate purchased the room, went out for a walk, and never came back. He will open the room for the heroes on a successful persuade roll of Fair (5). Failure means the barkeep asks for a $10 "investigation fee."

The investigators find no hairs out of place inside room 5. Everything is just as if the person had left for a moment or two. A careful search of Onerous (7) might even turn up the item the associate wished to meet with the players about. It will definitely allow them to find a bent horseshoe nail on the floor.

Suddenly, a muffled shriek is heard and the heavy sounds of a struggle come from the room next door. A figure bursts out of the room. If the posse investigates, they find Jack Haughton cornered at the edge of the railing overlooking the main floor area. Ernest and two surly hombres look ready to pound his head in. A saloon gal clutches to Ernest, her arm bleeding badly. Jack has a manic look in his eyes and blood dripping from his mouth.

"What . . . is . . . happening . . . to me?" mutters Jack. The two brutes move in and Jack leaps the ten feet to the first floor, crashing through the table and upsetting a high stakes poker game. Most dudes might take a breather. But Jack gets right back up without even stopping to brush off the chips from his shoulders. One of the gentlemen at the table offers his hand to help Jack up, who in gratitude bites off a finger. He recoils is shock, bumping into a raging drunk named Bull Redman.

Not surprisingly, a barroom brawl results. The heroes will have to make their way past Ernest and his boys to chase after Jack, who is holding his own in brawling with the four poker players. The brawl continues for five rounds, at which time Wyatt Earp comes in with some deputies to restore the peace. If Jack hasn't been put down, he has been sufficiently clobbered to be taken away quietly. Earp asks some questions about the fight and Jack's condition. If the posse is helpful and forthcoming with their information, Earp will be an ally in the future. If they are surly and uncooperative, he'll remember that if they want to visit Jack anytime later.

Jack Haughton

Corporeal: D: 4d8, N: 3d10, Q: 3d6, S: 3d8, V: 2d12
Mental: C: 3d8, K: 2d6, M: 4d6, S: 3d4, Sp: 2d4
Edges: Two-Fisted
Hindrances: Big Britches
Aptitudes: Gamblin': 2, Shootin': pistol: 2, Ridicule: 2, Fightin': brawlin': 2, Search: 2, Dodge: 3

Brawlers

Corporeal: All traits 3d6
Mental: All traits 2d8

Bounty

The posse finds the bent horseshoe nail: 1 White Chip
The posse don't get thrown in the clink: 1 White Chip

Chapter 2

If Wishes Were Horses, Ghouls Would Be Fatter

The next morning the posse has two avenues of clues to pursue. They may want to check up on Jack or get the law involved in the disappearance of their friend. In this case, they'll want to head to the Dodge City Jail.

They will find Earp at the jail questioning Jack about the previous night. Jack is very confused about a lot of things. He doesn't know why he's in jail, he doesn't remember much of last night after he entered Crystal's boudoir. He also feels like he's starving. If they are on cordial terms, Earp will let them sit in on the interrogation and maybe even let them ask a few of their own questions. Otherwise he will curtly ask them what their business is and turn his attention away from Jack.

Earp is not very much help when it comes to the posse's missing friend. He says he'll keep an eye out for him but that's all he can really do. He does mention there has been a rash of disappearances lately. Six people have gone missing and none of them have been found. Earp would be very grateful if the posse were to find the missing persons and report back to him. He won't offer monetary compensation but he could prove useful as a friend in high places.

The horseshoe nail comes from the recently closed Perkins Livery. Poor Ed Perkins had been plagued by a group of horse thieves that were able to make it into the stables after dark and get the horses out without anyone noticing. This was, in fact, the work of the ghouls that built their tunnels underneath Dodge. They were hungry after tunneling all night and decided to snack on the horses.

The main doors to the Livery are padlocked and knocking on them does no good. However, the door to the office is curiously unlocked. The office itself is vacant but anyone wandering into the dimly lit stable area can make a Fair (5) Cognition check. If successful, the hero hears a wet, slurping noise coming from the last stall on the right. When the heroes investigate, they find the proprietor of the stable. They also find two ghouls picking at him like a buffet table. They turn, feast their red eyes on the fresh meat, and attack.

Once the ghouls have been dispatched, a search of the stall the ghouls were in turns up nothing else. However, investigating the stall directly across from that stall finds a hole covered up by a pile of hay. That hole leads straight down for about ten feet. Ropes and lanterns are handy if the posse scrounges for them but the descent can be made with a Fair (5) Climbin' roll.

Once inside the tunnels, the heroes scrape along in the darkness for hours. Nothing happens to them, but that doesn't mean they need to know that. Do your best to creep them out. Split them up. Cover them in rats, bats, and critters. But nothing really interesting should happen to them until the reach the meat locker.

Ghouls

Corporeal: D: 2d8, N: 3d10, Q: 3d8, S: 4d6, V: 2d10
Aptitudes: Fightin': brawlin': 4
Mental: C: 2d8, K: 1d4, M: 2d4, S: 3d6, Sp: 2d4
Size: 6
Terror: 9
Special Abilities:
Night Vision
Sensitivity to Bright Light: -4 to all actions when exposed to direct and bright light.
Bite: STR + 1d8 (Note that these ghouls do not have a poison bite or the claws the ghouls detailed in ***The Quick and the Dead*** have. Angry Hawk hasn't perfected his recipe.)

Cold Storage

The posse eventually ends up in a small dark room with a wooden floor. The smell of rotting wood mixed with rotting flesh hangs in the air. This is the storage area for Brody's supplies. There are at least eight bodies here, most of which have been expertly butchered. It requires a Fair (5) guts check to view this scene of carnage. Sadly, the body of the posse's compatriot can be found after a quick search, but only if they state they are looking for him. Hopefully, any hero that lost her composure will be able to recover when the door on the other side of the room opens and a wrinkled old Indian enters with three more ghouls. He wears a blood-splattered apron and his hands are black as night. This is Angry Hawk, getting some meat ready for tonight's customers. He's not expecting anyone else in the locker, so the difficulty of the sneak roll to avoid being spotted is Foolproof (3). He orders one of the ghouls to drag one of the bodies upstairs for tonight and tells the other to head into town to see where his two brothers are. Wise posse members will slip back into the tunnel and hustle back to the Livery to quickly clean up any evidence connecting them to the deaths of the ghouls. Angry Hawk knows his ghouls won't wander off. If they don't come back, someone must be on to him.

If the posse tries to attack now, Angry Hawk unsheathes his butcher knife and calls for reinforcements. Ghouls enter the field once per round. His stats are at the end of the adventure for the climactic battle. The fight continues until the posse withdraws or until they become the main course.

The posse may go tattle to Earp about what they've found. By the time they return from the tunnels, night has fallen, and Earp can only be reached at home, a location the players only know if they are on good terms with him. On the way there, they pass by the jail. A piteous howling bellows from the cell that Jack is in. If the players investigate, they find him with his face pressed up against the bars and his eyes glow a dull red . . . he is now a ghoul. Players may insist on shooting him through the bars. He's not human anymore. Let them. Otherwise, the jailer will just find an empty cell with a hole burrowed in the floor in the morning. Once they reach Earp, he'll ask them why they're keeping him up at this God-awful hour. He won't go into the tunnel in the Livery and he won't believe any stories about flesh eating monsters. When they return to the tunnel entrance, they find it sealed off.

Bounty

The posse plays nice with Wyatt Earp: 1 White Chip
Eliminating the ghouls at the Livery: 1 Red Chip
Discovering the tunnels under the Livery: 1 White Chip
Sneaking into and out of the meat locker unnoticed: 1 Red Chip
Discovering the fate of the posse's associate: 1 White Chip
Putting Jack out of his misery: 1 White Chip

Chapter 3

Ghouls Just Want to Have Lunch

The posse should be very suspicious of Buffalo Brody's Bunkhouse by now and should want to take a ride out there to investigate the self-proclaimed Buffalo King of Kansas. The posse may skip directly ahead to this chapter and that's no problem; it'll be even more of a surprise when the ghouls start spilling out of the woodwork.

Brody's is located on one of the major cattle trails coming into Dodge about five miles southwest of town. The posse comes up over a ridge and they can't miss it. Brody has reinvested everything into the place and it shows. It's a big two-story building out in the middle of nowhere with fancy windows, a fresh coat of paint, and imported lamps twinkling in the windows.

When the heroes arrive, stable hands come out of the stable on the side of the building to water and freshen up their horses. This is a free service to all Buffalo Brody provides to get customers to stop in. Award a Fate Chip to the players that are wary of giving up their horses after what happened in the Livery.

The Bunkhouse is a well-built place and its class and style should impress the posse when they enter. Point out the Oriental rugs and the crystal chandelier. A grand staircase faces the main doors, leading up to a second level where private rooms can be rented. The bar slinks along the left and saloon gals weave through the tables set up on the main floor. Play up the heavy odor of sizzling meat, good booze, and heady perfume. As the heroes walk in, one of the saloon gals winks at him and sidles on over. "Welcome to Buffalo Brody's," she says in a voice as smooth as whiskey, "once you eat here, you'll never want to eat anywhere else."

Brody wants to quietly eliminate any curious folks without disturbing the rest of the ten or so customers in the bunkhouse. He will use a variety of tactics to take out the posse one by one if they start to get curious. Such tactics include:

1) The saloon gal that greets the posse is a ghoul, as are all the employees of the bunkhouse. They mask their odor by the very heavy smells of food and drink that hang in the air of the closed up saloon. As long as the ghouls stay within the confines of the saloon, they look human. She introduces herself as Lola and sits them down at a table. She flirts a bit and asks if they want any drinks from the bar. She's basically a good little waitress but she's also Brody's first line of spy defense against the posse. She listens to the conversations the posse members have as she shuttles back and forth from the bar and the kitchen. If they mention anything about the Livery or Dodge around her, she takes a special interest in the one doing the talking and offers to take that hombre on a "private tour" of the restaurant. If any heroes are beguiled enough to take her up on the offer, she escorts him upstairs to a nicely decorated bedroom complete with a canopied bed, a full-length mirror, and two ghouls waiting to turn the hero into an entrée. Don't forget to make a surprise roll at the beginning of the combat. If any big ruckus occurs that would be loud enough to be heard over the general din of the saloon downstairs (such as a gunshot) or if the hero makes it out of the room, skip ahead to "Serving an All-You-Can-Eat Lead Buffet."

2) A stable hand comes into the saloon looking for one of the posse. He is very excited and says that someone has stolen his horse. If the posse dashes out as a whole, nothing is amiss and the head stable hand chastises the boy for playing a prank. If the posse splits up, the doors lock behind them and the posse inside gets attacked. See "Serving an All-You-Can-Eat Lead Buffet." Meanwhile, the posse on the outside has to deal with ghouls equal to the number of posse members that went to check out the horse theft. Once they are done with that, the only way back into the bunkhouse is a pair of Onerous (7) climbin' rolls to an open window on the northern side of the second floor. Failure of the first roll just means the hero can't shimmy up the side all that well. Failure of the second roll means he takes 1d6 Wind damage as he falls from the ledge.

3) Brody himself comes out to work the room. He's a big man with a broad smile and a firm handshake. The only thing that's strange about him are his crooked yellow teeth that all seem to come to a point (as a ghoul king, he can't fully cloak his nature). Noticing this takes a Hard (9) Cognition roll. He claps his customers on their backs and chats them up a bit. Brody is a friendly, if boisterous, dude. If Lola has tipped him off about the posse, he concentrates most of his gabbing at their table, offering drinks on the house and free samples of food. Trying to fake eating dinner required a Fair (5) sleight-of-hand roll. Anyone not taking him up on that offer gets a good-natured ribbing along the lines of "Why have you come to the finest diner this side of the Rockies and decided not to eat?" He then offers to take anyone not willing to eat the food on a private tour of the kitchen area. He will take two people at a time into the kitchen where Angry Hawk awaits. Brody and Hawk lull the characters into a false sense of security and then bushwhack them. If successful in taking out the posse members, Brody goes back to the table and says that there has been an accident and the others have fallen down the stairs. If they don't fall for it, the big melee in the main room begins.

4) If he is still around, Jack Haughton makes his way to the saloon and sits down at the posse's table. He jabs a hogleg into the rib of the nearest player and suggests the rest of the posse eat up otherwise they'll be sharing their friends lunch splattered all over the table. This is a good one to play on the posse members that don't go on Brody's tour while the others are on the tour. If they drop Jack, the scent of the fresh blood and meat sends all the ghouls into a feeding frenzy.

An All-You-Can-Eat Lead Buffet

This is it, the big ol' melee at the end of the adventure that the posse's been saving chips for. The front doors lock and the ghouls line up for the dinner bell. There are about 20 ghouls in the Bunkhouse as well as ten customers besides the heroes. After all has been said and done, it should just be the posse and about two ghouls per character as well as Brody and Angry Hawk. On the way to that number, make sure the customers don't sit idly by and try to hold their own in the fight as well. You don't have to necessarily do any bookkeeping, just roll dice, scribble notes, cackle maniacally and describe scenes of ghouls gettin' sent back to Hell and cowboys getting eaten. If the posse is handling the situation too well, send more ghouls after them and let the customers purchase agricultural property a lot easier. Allow Brody to get his hands on the double-barreled shotgun under the bar. If the posse is floundering, give some customers lucky shots. Also keep in mind that it's just around sundown and busting open the shaded and shuttered windows of the place would put many of the combatants at a serious disadvantage. One of the customers crashing through a window and the ghouls screeching away from the light might be a good clue in this direction. If all else fails, and you don't want to have to go through everybody making new characters next session, have Earp arrive as the proverbial cavalry.

Brody and his ghouls will fight to the death, but Angry Hawk is a little craftier. If he sees the fight isn't going his way, he makes a fighting retreat to the stairs. He bolts up to the second floor, crashes into one of the rooms and out a window on the west side of the building. That's the side with the stables, and he proceeds to steal one of the horses and ride away. Let the posse give chase if they wish, and let them take him out if they can, but you should invest Fate Chips in keeping Angry Hawk alive. He makes a wonderful recurring villain.

One the smoke clears, they posse may return to Dodge to report to Earp. He will listen to their story, nod his head, and not ask any questions. After they finish talking, he mutters something like "Damn Rangers were right," and thanks them for their help. He offers them to replenish their supplies in town and let the Sheriff's Office foot the bill for compensation. After that, the posse is free to continue West, looking for more adventure and excitement.

"Buffalo" Carl Brody

Corporeal: D: 3d8, N: 3d10, S: 3d10, Q: 3d10, V: 2d10
Aptitudes: Fightin': brawlin': 4, Shootin': shotgun: 3
Mental: C: 2d8, K: 2d6, M: 2d8, S: 2d6, Sp: 2d8
Ridicule: 3
Size: 7
Terror: 9
Special Abilities:
As ghouls above, plus Claws: STR + 1d10
Gear: Double-barreled shotgun (kept under the bar)

Angry Hawk

Corporeal: D: 3d8, N: 3d10, S: 3d12, Q: 4d8, V: 2d12
Aptitudes: Bow: 3, Shootin': Pistol: 2, Throwin': 3, Fightin': brawlin': 3, Fightin': knives: 6* (Due to Angry Hawk's Relic, his knife skill is doubled. It normally is 3)
Mental: C: 3d8, K: 2d10, M: 3d8, S: 2d6, Sp: 4d10
Language: Shawano: 4, English: 2
Leadership: 2
Overawe: 5
Guts: 5
Special Abilities: Last Son: The inky black hands he possesses give him a +2 on all overawe rolls.
Butcher Knife: Angry Hawk's butcher knife has become a Relic. Power: The knife doubles its wielder's skill Coordination as well as doing STR+2d8 damage. Taint: As long as the knife is in his possession, the wielder gets a -3 Hankerin' for human flesh.

Bounty

A posse member survives an attempt on her life: 1 Red Chip for the player that survived.
The posse kills ghouls: 1 Red Chip for every two ghouls.
The posse kills "Buffalo" Bill Brody: 1 Blue Chip and +1 grit.
The posse kills Angry Hawk: 1 Legend Chip and +1 grit.

Boot Hill

Ghouls

Quickness: 3d8
Attack: Bite: 4d10/3d6+1d8
Defense: Brawlin': 4
Hits: 28

Buffalo Brody

Quickness: 3d10
Attacks: Bite: 4d10/3d10+1d8; Claws: 4d10/3d10+1d10
Defense: Brawlin': 4
Hits: 36

Angry Hawk

Quickness: 4d8
Attacks: Knife: 6d10/3d12+2d8
Defense: Knife: 6; Brawlin': 3
Hits: 40

Jack Haughton

Quickness: 3d6
Attack: Pistol: 2d8/3d6
Defense: Brawlin': 2
Hits: 30

Crystal Palace Brawlers

Quickness: 3d6
Attack: Brawlin': 3d6/3d6+1d6(club, chair leg, etc.)
Defense: Brawlin': 3
Hits: 20

Due Diligence

The deal has potential, but will it end badly?

by John A. Nephew

Most game manufacturers would agree that Alliance Games Distribution, Berkeley-TopLine and Zocchi are the three largest U.S. game distributors. This past week, the news came that all three are being bought by iEntertainment Network (NASDAQ: IENT), an Internet company and former CD-ROM game publisher that is largely unknown to our industry. (See the original Pyramid story and the followup story for more information.) This caught a lot of us by surprise. Just what the heck is going on here?

I run Atlas Games, a small adventure game publisher. These are three very important customers for my company, so I figured it would be well worth my while to find out something about the corporation they are merging into. Happily, the Internet is full of resources to make such research possible. Most important is the Securities and Exchange Commission's Edgar database (which you can find at www.sec.gov): Since the stock of iEntertainment is traded on the NASDAQ (under the ticker symbol IENT), they are required to file detailed reports about their business on a regular basis. The Internet makes such reports available to individual investors and the merely curious. With the SEC site alone, to say nothing of search engines and news providers, an almost overwhelming amount of information is available with a few mouse clicks. (If you plan to do your own search, remember that until recently, they went under the name Interactive Magic and the ticker symbol IMGK.)

Coupling this research with my personal knowledge of the game industry, in which I've been a professional for more than 13 years, I've put together a theory as to what is going on behind the scenes, and what makes this deal appealing to its participants. I can understand why such a deal needs to happen; if not this particular deal, then something similar. Unfortunately, I have also found a number of red flags in the public data on IENT. I'm afraid this deal, as best as I can understand it within the data available to the public, looks very dangerous for these distributors, their shareholders, and the game industry. Out of their own self-interest, if not for the good of the industry, I hope that the deal will at least be structured with care to protect the distribution business from the risks of the Internet business, while taking advantage of the immense potential that the combination of these four businesses offers.

What Do The Distributors Need?

What are these three distributors looking for, that IENT can provide? I have four ideas as to what may have inspired their deal making.

Bigger is Better

We know from the press release that the three distributors had already been talking about merging. Bigger is better, the saying goes. It is particularly true in the business of distribution, where maximum volume and minimum overhead are the key to profit. Moreover, if you want to have every game in print in stock, it's a lot cheaper to have one central warehouse for the obscure stuff -- say, with three copies of each obscure item -- rather than trying to stock eight different locations. Any kind of merger seems appealing to the owners, if it means cutting costs (letting employees go, closing warehouses) and improving efficiencies.

It's tough to say what this means for the rest of us. The combined entity might finally realize the promise of what the Chessex-Armory merger, which created Alliance, was meant to do, in terms of better fill rates and so forth. Though Alliance has clearly made great strides in bringing the two organizations together into one, disappointed retailers have told me that it often has not worked out well in practice. Atlas Games has found that the combined Alliance does less in sales with us than the sum of its Chessex and Armory parts did. The industry is constantly evolving, though, so it's

difficult to lay the blame for any changes like this at one specific cause. One can at least assume that servicing the debt that Chessex brought to Alliance has been a drag on their potential.

The Future is Now

The game industry needs to modernize. Before the Alliance merger, Chessex, the largest distributor at the time, didn't even have computerized inventory. (Implementing such a system has been one of Alliance's big successes.) E-commerce is the wave of the future. This means not just companies selling direct to consumers via the web (like Steve Jackson Games' Warehouse 23), but suppliers and customers all through the chain using the Internet for up-to-the-second communication. We at Atlas Games are able to use UPS Online to find out where the packages we ship are en route, for example, or to order supplies.

The distributors have been working to add Internet functionality to their business, but it requires a lot of investment and expertise. They've watched as e-tailers and manufacturers have enjoyed skyrocketing online sales; at the same time, their customers are surely demanding faster service, better information, and all that good stuff. When a customer wants a game not on a store's shelves, wouldn't the store's owner love to click a few buttons and find out which of his suppliers have it in stock? In the current system, the retailer usually places the order, and then waits to see if it shows up in the box with the rest of the order. If it doesn't, he goes down the list to his next supplier. The consumer may wait weeks, and not know if he'll even get his game in the end.

These distributors' competitors are working on e-commerce, too. Diamond Comic Distribution has a website with growing functionality, and they are using it to expand their selection of backlist games. Other game distributors are also rumored to be working on Internet systems to deal with their retailers.

By joining with IENT, the distributors plug into an existing Internet infrastructure, with the experienced technical staff and resources to make it all work. IENT has invested millions into their operations. By joining forces, millions should be saved by the distributors. In theory, e-commerce should be a boon for everyone, bringing better service and more sales for manufacturers and retailers. There are risks, however. The IENT press release did not make clear whether IENT would be using the distributors to fulfill consumer orders. A later press release from Zocchi stated that there is no plan to bypass retailers and sell direct. However, once the systems are in place, it may be difficult not to take that logical step to maximize utility (especially when shareholders are demanding profits). Even the mistaken perception that a distributor is looking to run around the retailer may drive their retailers to other distributors, and inhibit grand plans for business-to-business e-commerce.

If You Can't Beat 'Em, Buy 'Em

Over the past year or two, we've seen a shake-up in distribution. Perhaps the biggest winner has been Zocchi; earlier this year, I calculated that our sales to them were up something like 300% over a year earlier. Meanwhile, the other big boys in this deal du jour -- Alliance and Berkeley-TopLine -- have both turned in far less impressive sales growth. It's no coincidence that both have been digesting their mergers, trying to combine operations and diverse corporate cultures. Whatever the reason, Zocchi appears to have been a major beneficiary of the opportunity that arose for an alternative supplier.

If I were in the shoes of Zocchi's competitors, I'd be wanting to buy them, too. If we were all bought by a third party, that would serve the same end.

As a manufacturer, I'm not sure I like this marriage, as matter of competitive principle. I worry about having too many eggs in one basket, and I'm worried that the difficulties that earlier mergers have experienced would only be magnified by the scale of this one. On the other hand, we have the incredible dynamism of Zocchi, and the resilience of the Alliance and Berkeley-TopLine organizations, tempered by the mergers they've already forged their way through. There are a lot of quality people in these organizations, with smarts and experience, and the possibility of uniting them under one banner is intriguing. Their combined size may enable them to promote the growth of the whole industry in ways that no existing distributor can.

Liquidity

IENT has something that is almost unheard of in the adventure games industry: stock that is publicly traded.

Atlas Games is privately held, just like the three distributors. If I decide that I need money -- to buy a house, a car, a college education for my future kids -- it's tough to get it. I might take the money from the cash flow of the company. Ouch! That would mean cutting back on new releases, or delaying a reprinting of some old favorite, or not being able to afford to hire a new employee. In short, it's going to affect the business, unless things are going so well that we're rolling in cash. Alternatively, I might get a loan, if a bank will accept something as collateral. If I'm offering my share of the business to back the loan, I will have to pay to hire someone qualified to estimate its value. We're talking about a lot of hassle.

But when a company's stock is traded on the open market, if you are an owner and you decide that you'd like to, you can sell part of your stake. There's some paperwork to file (since you're an insider), but it's relatively easy, and it's not going to have an impact on the business itself like the options I described for a private company. Whether you want to cash out a small part of your hard-earned sweat equity, or if you are retiring and switching all your assets to government bonds, a publicly traded stock gives you liquidity, the ability to convert one asset (a percentage of a company) for another (cash).

This is a very big deal to an owner, believe me.

A publicly traded stock makes it easier to award meaningful stock options to your employees. This may help the company hire and retain better qualified people, and may encourage everyone to be more zealous in making the company succeed. This should be good for the whole industry.

Publicly traded stock also creates many financing alternatives, when a company needs cash to fund growth or to survive losses. Sadly, IENT has turned to some less savory financing alternatives. But we'll get to that later.

There is another big advantage for the rest of the industry in the stock issue: Public companies like IENT have to make regular filings, including quarterly and annual reports, and you can get them through the Internet. This would give everyone interested a lot more detailed information about what is going on, in terms of sales and profitability -- information that you can only get from a private company if for some reason they consent to give it to you. Besides letting us all be nosy, this public information may make it easier for game industry entrepreneurs to make business plans, to attract venture capital financing, to get bank loans, etc.

Add It Up

So let's go over the selling points for the distributors:

1. Economy of Scale -- A larger and more profitable combined operation.

2. Cutting Edge Technology -- Bringing the future to us faster by piggybacking on IENT's Internet know-how.

3. Buying the Competition -- It'll be easier to digest another big merger if Zocchi isn't out there eating market share while the merger is digesting.

4. Liquidity -- All the advantages of the stock market.

(Another advantage I haven't brought up is that iEntertainment's past losses can be counted against the distributors' future profits, to reduce their tax burden.)

What does this bode for the rest of the industry? Well, it's tough to say. If things go well, it could all work to everyone's benefit. Even the combined entity's competitors will be given opportunities as the merger unfolds, and will be kept on their toes by technology-powered competition. If things don't go well, the new entity will merge badly,

provide lousy fill rates, sell direct to consumers at a discount via the web, and still manage to go out of business thanks to imprudent financing arrangements, while letting distribution profits be eaten by cash-sucking Internet projects.

On the whole, the promise of e-commerce to support retailers is so exciting that I would like to see our distributors use it. Though I don't care for the IENT merger, I do think a partnership with a healthy, Internet-savvy entity would be great for a distributor, to the benefit of manufacturers, retailers, and consumers.

Why Does iEntertainment Need the Distributors?

When you stop and think about it, there's a lot for distributors to like. But what would possess a slim computer/online company to buy three hulking, capital-intensive, brick-and-mortar operations? Are they reinventing themselves again, just months after selling off most of their CD-ROM game business, and hardly a year after their Initial Public Offering? Does their love of simulation games extend from the T-1 line to the tabletop?

Shotgun Wedding?

A cursory look at recent press releases and filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission provides Reason Numero Uno for IENT to need to buy (with stock) or merge with someone, and the distributors are just about an exact fit for what they need.

According to a July 30 press release, iEntertainment was notified by the NASDAQ (the exchange where their stock is traded) that they do not meet the minimum requirements for listing on the exchange. In particular, IENT fails to meet the required net tangible assets of $4 million.

The stock exchanges are interested in selling shares of large, legitimate operations, so they have standards that they expect of any company listed. One of those standards is that when you add up the tangible assets of a company (inventory, land, machinery, cash in the bank, etc.), and subtract the liabilities (bank loans, accounts payable, and whatever else you owe people), you must get a positive number of at least $4 million or you don't make the grade. You're too small to be of interest to this part of Wall Street; you'll be banished to the "over-the-counter bulletin board" and the "pink sheets" where illiquid penny stocks are traded. All those good things about having a publicly traded stock are not nearly as good if you're not listed on the respectable big exchanges.

IENT hasn't made the grade. As an Internet company, they don't have a lot of tangible assets. One can debate whether accounting principles today ought to take better account of assets of the sort that Internet companies create (such as intellectual property, or the value of a widely recognized brand name), but the bottom line is that these folks need a bunch of tangible assets ASAP or they'll lose that "traded on the NASDAQ" status which, as we explained, is itself an important asset, and very expensive to get in the first place. I've been told by folks who were trying to take their company public that it costs a minimum of about $1 million to make it happen.

Distributors have tangible assets. Lots of them. In fact, it's often a problem that they have too many -- inventory in the warehouse rather than cash in their pockets to buy something newer and faster-selling. Picture that old peanut butter cup ad -- "You got your net tangible assets in my NASDAQ listing requirements!" -- and you get the picture. Well, actually, they may not be two great tastes by themselves, but the quirks of the stock market's requirements make this a very sensible wedding for IENT. And the sooner the better, because a NASDAQ appeals panel is standing out on the porch with a shotgun waiting to be convinced that this match will make everything legitimate.

All of this may seem to mean little to the rest of us in the industry. However, as a general rule, delisting or its threat is not a sign that a company is in healthy condition. And this is only the tip of IENT's financial iceberg.

But Wait! There's More!

Before we get to that iceberg, we should mention that there are other ways that this deal can play to IENT's benefit.

Distributors can be a great source of cash flow -- money is constantly moving through them. If you can get your customers to pay you COD, while delaying payment to your suppliers as long as you possibly can, it's like a revolving, interest-free bank loan. Getting your customers and suppliers to go along is a lot easier if you control a lot of market share, as the three combined distributors do.

Moreover, if there is profit from the distribution business, that would help IENT, which is losing money on its Internet business just about as fast as it can raise it.

It is also important to IENT to get good press right now, when so much of its recent news has been bad. The news of the purchase drove its stock up more than 125%. That was a nice one-day return!

Finally, with its online gaming business, IENT is already cultivating an audience of subscribers who are likely customers for off-line games, like these distributors sell. They call it "synergy."

If everything goes well, IENT will be diversified, strengthened, and will get all the benefits the distributors crave . . . because now they will be part of it. On the other hand, the rest of the industry may fear tightening credit (if you're a retailer), slower payment (if you're a manufacturer), and the general fear that rather than reinvesting profit in the distribution business, IENT will instead lose it on their Internet business. In the worst case scenario, if the Internet stuff doesn't pan out at all, we could wind up with a bankrupt company even if game sales are booming, going out of business owing a huge load of money to game manufacturers, who would likely go out of business en masse as a result. Even if game sales were setting new records. Not pretty.

The Iceberg

It's cliché that Internet companies lose money, and sometimes the more they lose, the more it seems that Wall Street likes them. I don't buy that cliché. As a private investor, I've made money buying and selling the stock of Internet companies, like Amazon.com and eBay. These are companies that have articulated a business plan, and have demonstrated their ability to deliver. Some plans involve losing a lot of money over a period of years (like Amazon.com); others show profits already, small but growing at a spectacular rate (like eBay). Wall Street rewards execution, and tries to figure out what something will be worth in the future; past performance is useful insofar as it is believed to predict future results. Of course, Wall Street makes plenty of mistakes.

I agree with the chairman of the Federal Reserve, Alan Greenspan, who has stated that while some Internet companies will be wildly successful, many will fail. I've made money, as a private investor, selling some of them short. Short selling is when you borrow shares of stock and sell them. You expect to buy them back for less in the future, thus making a profit. Instead of buy low, sell high, you reverse the order -- sell high, buy low.

IENT is a stock that I would sell short, if I could. (Because its price per share is so low, I cannot sell it short as a private investor of limited means. Some institutions and foreign brokerages aren't subject to the same restrictions.)

Here are six reasons to sell it short.

1. The Delisting. Delisting is prima facie evidence of a troubled company, thus a good short sale prospect. Some folks pull the trigger on this news alone and don't even look any further.

2. The vision thing. This is a company that went public as a maker of CD-ROM games and online games. It has already jettisoned the CD-ROM business, ostensibly to focus on the online world; now it's going heavily into bricks-and-mortar by absorbing three distributors in a parallel, but different, industry. (The IENT press release calls them "Entertainment Companies" . . . like my local grocer is an Entertainment Company, since he sells the *Weekly World News* at the check-out counter.) Maybe now they've found a combination of businesses with genuine synergy and shared potential; on the other hand, maybe they'll decide in a year to sell off part of their business again and draw up a new game plan.

3. Accumulated deficit and operating losses. Over its five-odd years of existence, IENT has had losses totaling at

least $25.9 million, according to the latest form SB-2 filed with the SEC (p. 5). The same document (p. 18) reveals that, since dropping the CD-ROM biz, sales have dropped 75%. You'd expect savings to go with that? Nope. In the same time frame, first quarter 1999 versus first quarter 1998, expenses have actually *increased* 37% (p. 20). Rising expenses added to falling sales spell disaster. Can the profitability of game distributors change this equation?

4. It's not enough. Let's do some math. In 1998 IENT had a net loss of $11.65 million. (That was before that 75% sales drop and the 37% expense increase occurred.) According to the press release, the distributors are expected to have combined sales of $50 million this year. In rough numbers, we can suppose that distributors buy from manufacturers at 60% off retail and sell to retailers at 50% off. (The numbers vary by manufacturer and whatnot, but let's keep it simple.) That means that on $50 million in sales ($100 million worth at full retail), the distributors' combined gross margin -- sales minus cost of goods, before any expenses at all -- is about $10 million. So even if the distributors had no expenses, no salaries, rent, heating, electric, shipping, telephone bills, nothing -- even then, the combined entity would still show a hefty operating loss. As a supplier who might extend this combined entity credit, I'm nervous; as a short seller, I rub my hands with glee.

5. The hype. Short sellers love to sell on the hype, when the market thinks a corner has been turned but we think we know better. Someone who doesn't know the adventure game industry might look at the sales figures and say, "Whoa! These distributors are growing 25% a year! Lemme get a piece of that!" (Remember, they're looking out to the future; they want years of that kind of growth, the way companies like Intel or Microsoft have delivered.) We know the industry better, however, know that 1999 vs. 1998 is like the Renaissance versus the year the Goths sacked Rome. 1998 was a very challenging year, especially in its first quarter; my company's sales are up 37% this year to date, for example, but a lot of that is just getting back on our feet after a serious kick to the kidneys. We also know that there are special factors this year, such as ***Pokémon,*** which are likely to result in some flat or down years when the fads peter out. Even with all the good things we know about the three companies IENT is buying, it's just not worth the 125%+ spike that the market is awarded. Selling opportunity.

6. The Toxic Convertible. The number one reason to sell IENT short. This one is going to require some explaining.

The Tip of the Iceberg

A puritan minister once wrote that the road to hell is paved with the skulls of unbaptized children. Well, the portion of that road labeled Wall Street is actually paved with floorless discounted convertible debentures and preferred stock. Many a fallen company has walked this painful path.

Suppose your company needs money. You spent a lot last year, and lost millions. You think your business plan is coming together, but you don't have much tangible to show for it yet. How can you raise funds?

You might go to a bank. They want collateral. If the company had assets to pledge, it could get a loan. Maybe you, as an individual, pony up your own assets as collateral. If the company fails, you'll lose your house.

IENT has such an arrangement already, according to SEC filings. Its bank line of credit is personally guaranteed by the company's former CEO. The company pays him 6% per year of the outstanding loan amount in exchange for the guarantee. That's better than the interest rate you or I get on actual cash in a savings account. It must be risky for him to demand so much -- and for the company to deem it worth the expense.

But you need more money. Tapping out that line of credit will only keep the doors open another month or two. You might buy time by selling off part of your business, if there are any divisions or segments that can be easily separated and sold off as a piece.

Remember that CD-ROM business that IENT divested? While they may have simply wished to reorganize and refocus their business, I suspect that their reorganization was inspired by their need for cash.

What do you have left to sell?

There is that asset of your stock itself, which that precious NASDAQ listing makes into a liquid commodity. For a number of reasons it's difficult (and time-consuming) to simply issue stock and sell it as you please on the open market. Instead, you make a deal with some investment partners who help troubled companies like you . . . for a price.

In iEntertainment's case, the investors are an outfit called Rose Glen Capital Management, running a fund called RGC International Investors, LDC. They lent IENT $4 million.

Here's the deal. The investors offer you cash. You give them a promissory note. Instead of paying them back in cash (which you won't have to spare any time soon), you will pay them in company stock. They can sell the stock on the open market, get back their money (and profit), and voila! It's like free money. You work out a formula, where the recent stock price is calculated; then you apply a discount, so that the investors are sure to make a profit.

In the IENT-Rose Glen deal, the conversion is set at 85% of the average of the lowest closing bid prices of the stock on any two trading days during the 22 consecutive trading day period ending on the trading day immediately before the day the investors pick up their shares to sell. Isn't that a mouthful!

Whatever the details, the general outline is that the investors get shares of stock at a discount to the market price. You, running the company, exchange tomorrow's stock certificates for today's desperately needed cash; the investors make a tidy profit with minimal risk. Isn't everyone happy?

Well, no, not quite. Stock prices are determined by supply and demand. By producing more shares, you're increasing the supply. Unless there is a lot more demand (you'll turn out some optimistic press releases to drum up buyers, but that can only do so much), the increased supply will drive the price down. Those investors want to sell, get their money, and do another one of these deals ASAP.

The investors may be so impatient to sell that they'll start doing it even before you've given them their shares! They can profit two ways: just like regular short sellers (sell high, buy low), but also because they are guaranteed however many shares it takes to add up to the principal plus that discount cushion. The lower their short selling drives the price, the more shares they wind up owning, which means they can sell short even more.

The SEC filings indicate, in fact, that Rose Glen is explicitly permitted to sell short, driving the price down as far low as they please. There is no "floor" or limit to how many shares can be issued to them.

Let me make up some numbers to illustrate how this might work.

Your company has 10 million shares of stock, with a price of $5, when you consummate a financing deal like this. To keep it simple, suppose there's no discount. I lend you $4 million, and turn around and sell short 800,000 shares. That's $4 million worth, so if you turn around and hand me my shares from conversion, I come out clean. However, those are a lot of shares for the open market to absorb. With so much selling, the price is driven down to $2 per share. Now my 800,000 shares short are only worth $1.6 million! So I sell 1.2 million shares more, bringing me back up to $4 million worth in my short position. Of course, this drives the price down even further, to an even dollar. I sell again, 2 million shares this time, bringing me again to $4 million short. I then call in your debt to me, demanding my $4 million worth of shares. At the current price, $1 per share, that's 4 million shares. I add up my winnings: $4 million (800,000 sold at $5) + $3.4 million (1.6 million sold at $2) + $2 million (2 million sold at $1) = $9.4 million. That's all my investment back, plus 135% profit, probably in just a few months and with relatively little risk.

You and the other shareholders, meanwhile, are left with a lot more shares in circulation, and a much lower stock price. Converting the loan to stock added 40% to the number of shares outstanding. That means each share, as a percentage of the company, is about 30% smaller than it was before.

This hypothetical scenario is relatively benign. In one convertible deal I witnessed (as a shareholder, much to my chagrin), a mortgage company called Cityscape, I saw the number of shares outstanding multiply several times over as a result of their convertible. I had bought shares at $18 apiece, and was lucky to receive pennies for them when I sold, before the stock was declared worthless and the company liquidated.

You can see why some short sellers call this kind of financing arrangement a "toxic convertible"; the feedback loop driving the price ever farther down is fondly known as the "death spiral."

The SB-2 is the form that iEntertainment files to register the shares that the conversions will create. Since the filing has not yet been declared effective by the SEC, the new shares haven't yet appeared on the market. The effect of the convertible has already been felt, as shares have dropped from the $12 range to the $1 range over the past year.

Beneath the Surface

You can see why this kind of financing deal is bad for the shareholders, who see their stock price drop and their ownership diluted by new shares. But why should the rest of us, who don't own the stock (and know better than to buy any), care?

This kind of deal, as I've emphasized before, is made by managements that are either a bit clueless (which I assume is not the case here) or simply have nowhere else to turn. They've exhausted their options, and this is the best they can do. Like any iceberg tip, what you can see above the surface is only the beginning of the story; more serious problems probably lurk out of public view. (As detailed as the SEC filings are, they rarely tell the full story.) A toxic convertible is a visible symptom of deep-seated financial distress, the kind of distress that most companies do not survive.

The greatest danger to the game industry is that our largest distributors are strapping themselves to the *Titanic*, heading full steam into an iceberg of financial calamity.

Another danger has to do with ownership. We're all used to dealing with the good folks who own Zocchi, Berkeley-TopLine and Alliance, and their plan is to be significant owners of the newly combined entity. (The details of stock and ownership have not been made public, so we can only speculate as to percentages and whatnot.) If a flood of new shares are issued, IENT may wind up in the control of persons or institutions that know and care little about the game industry. This means that the good intentions and promises of the distributors (not to sell direct to consumers, for example) may be overruled by owners who are interested in short-term profits, or who see game distribution merely as a source of cash for the Internet business.

In other words, as much as we in the industry may have faith in the owners and managers of these distributors, the toxic convertible increases the odds that they won't be in control of the new entity.

Averting Disaster

I realize this article is somewhat apocalyptic, but now is the time to sound the alarm, when the parties to the deal are performing their due diligence and working out its final details. There is much good that can come of this merger, but the worst visible pitfalls must be avoided.

Here are some positive steps that might be taken.

1. Reveal the terms of the deal. Given the risks presented by the toxic convertible, the terms of this deal need to be made public. Shareholders of IENT and the customers and suppliers of the distributors all need to analyze its details in the larger context of IENT's finances. Otherwise we have to make assumptions and prepare for the worst. (Based on my analysis of public information, for example, Atlas Games could not in good conscience extend credit to the merged corporation.) I hope that the deal already includes provisions that will prevent the worst scenarios I laid out in this article. We can only know by actually seeing the deal's provisions.

2. Preserve the distributors' ownership stake. The deal should be structured so that the ownership stake of the three distributors is not adversely affected by the toxic convertible. We in the game industry want to make sure that people who are knowledgeable, experienced, and trusted remain at the helm when decisions are made about the distribution business. There are numerous ways this can be achieved. For example, the purchase by IENT might be made with preferred stock or a new class of common stock with special voting rights. Such special stocks might be convertible into regular common stock at some point in the future, if the risk of dilution from toxic convertibles is gone.

3. Preserve the autonomy of the distribution business. As far as I know, the distributors are all profitable. If things don't go well for the combined company, suppliers and customers in the game industry would like to know that the distribution business is easily severable, either to be spun off as an independent entity again or sold like the CD-ROM business. That would be better than being pulled underwater by problems in the Internet business, if things there don't turn around.

Both (2) and (3) might be achieved by structuring the distributors as a subsidiary of IENT, with a large (or even majority) stake of the subsidiary corporation held by the original distributor owners.

4. Present a credible plan for the long-term health of IENT. It is not enough to promise that profit from distribution will not be used to cover losses from the Internet business. IENT must set forth and implement a plan for cutting costs and reducing or eliminating losses, both to assure that distribution will have the ability to reinvest its profits toward future growth and to assure that no more toxic convertibles will hurt IENT in the future. Even if continued losses are necessary in the near future, stronger finances from the merger and cost cutting should at least make it possible to obtain future financing on less draconian terms. Promises are nice, but action is necessary to reassure customers and suppliers.

5. Articulate a vision for the combined corporation. It's a shame that the original IENT press release seemed targeted at investors rather than customers and suppliers of the distributors. From conversations with retailers and other distributors, I gather that many retailers came away from the press release with the impression that IENT was chomping at the bit to become an online seller of games to consumers, and promptly began seeking new suppliers. This deal has the potential to transform the game industry for the better, but success will require the support and cooperation of customers and suppliers. To get that support, IENT must refine and communicate its vision for the future of the game industry. We can speculate as to why this deal makes sense and might benefit the industry, but guidance from the actual parties to the merger is needed.

Conclusion

Without these or similar steps, the merger looks very bad for the game industry. Based on the public information, it appears that the distributors will be bought with the stock of a company that loses more money each year than they can generate. The value of the stock is about to be slashed by a toxic convertible, meaning the current owners who have experience and interest in the game industry could be outvoted by shareholders whose interests may lie elsewhere. Faced with this situation, and without evidence to the contrary, many retailers will look for new distributors, and suppliers will tighten credit. Such moves may make prophecies of doom self-fulfilling.

The people running Berkeley-TopLine, Zocchi and Alliance are all savvy business people. That's how they reached their positions of leadership in game distribution. I trust they are studying iEntertainment and planning the merger with great care. I look forward to seeing them apply their business acumen (and maybe their creative imaginations as gamers) to the unique problems that this merger presents.

There is a lot to like in the planned merger. All of us in the game industry just need detailed reassurance that the perils are being avoided.

by Greg DeAngelo

Introduction

A long time ago, in a land far, far away, a ring was forged . . .

The concept for ***Star Wars: the Middle-earth Variant (SW:TMEV)*** is pretty simple. Combine the flavor and characters of the ***Star Wars*** collectible card game (***SW:CCG***) with the roleplaying, storytelling style of the ***Middle-earth: The Wizards (METW) CCG.*** The impetus was one too many late night discussions among our gaming group of pet peeves with the ***Star Wars CCG,*** most notably the inability to build unusual decks or to do mechanistic things with the game that we wanted to do. Specifically, I wanted to build a deck made up entirely of dark side Mos Eisley cantina musicians jetting around the galaxy in stolen X-Wings. The inherent inability to play with light and dark side cards in the same deck was a major flaw in our minds, as was the limited game mechanics in terms of how to win.

Since we were big fans of the roleplaying, storytelling style of ***METW,*** and since the ***SW:CCG*** cards have so many numbers on them, we came up with the following set of rules. They worked for us, but that was (as I think I mentioned) fairly late in the evening.

These don't seem to be complete rules for a game.

The rules for ***SW:TMEV*** assume that the reader is familiar (although not necessarily fluent) with both the ***Star Wars*** and ***Middle-earth*** games. I am by no means an expert on either of these games, but if you understand the basics of the games then you should be able to follow these rules.

Are there any general or all-purpose rules?

Yes! The following rules apply to this entire variant. This is a conversion of some of the actions from the ***SW:CCG*** and their equivalent under ***SW:TMEV.*** Note that you will need some six-sided dice.

(1) There are no "force draws" or "destiny draws."
(2) Whenever you are required to "use force," you must tap a character.
(3) Whenever you are asked to "draw destiny," roll 1d6. (If the ability of the character responsible for drawing destiny is 3 or more, you can specify +/- 1 to the roll before throwing the die).
(4) A "matching force icon" for a character or other card is light for light side cards, dark for dark side cards.
(5) Whenever you are directed to "lose X force," either discard X cards from your hand, discard X cards from the top of your deck, or forfeit a total of X points from characters in play.
(6) If you run out of cards in your deck, you do not lose the game. Simply shuffle your discard pile and start over. (To limit the time of a game, you can specify 1-deck, 2-deck, or 3-deck games.)

(7) If a character or card is specified to be "dead" or "eliminated," then it is removed from the game (not discarded).

Companies & Setup

Starting Company

The starting company typically consists of 3 to 5 characters plus 1 or 2 pilot-equipped starships, light and/or dark. Flip for who declares their starting company first. Each side plays one character at a time, following the rules of ***SW:CCG*** for character uniqueness.

Your location cards are kept in a separate deck. As in ***METW,*** you can look through this deck and select the location cards representing the site or system to which you want to move (see movement, below).

Characters are brought into play at a site; pilot-equipped starships (those with a permanent pilot on-board) are brought into play at a system or docking bay. Starting location cards are played at the same time as the starting characters. Multiple characters can be placed at the same starting site. But, the starting site for a light character must have at least one light side force bar. Likewise, a dark side character must start at a site with at least one dark side force bar.

The total "free" ability (see next section, below) of your party is limited to a maximum of 10.

Free Ability

Total free ability can never be higher than 10. Your total free ability is the sum of the free ability of each particular character (including the ability provided by starship permanent pilots). The free ability of a character is the ability on the card minus the ability taken up by controlling other characters.

This limit on total free ability includes all your characters on the table, not just the characters at a particular location. (Treat droids as having an ability of 1 for purposes of assessing your total free ability.)

So, to bring out additional characters, you must have some of your characters "controlled."

Controlling Characters

Leaders can control any other character or characters, up to their free ability. Otherwise, a character type can only control other similar character types. Smugglers can control smugglers, and musicians can control musicians. Any droid can control any other droid. No character already under control may control another character.

Ability is considered "free" if it is not being used to control another character.

Example:: A leader with 3 ability can control 3 characters with 1 ability each or 1 character with 3 ability.

Example: A player has two diplomats, each with 2 ability. That is a total of 4 free ability for the pair. If she then reorganizes the company and puts one diplomat under the control of the other, that is a total of 2 free ability for the pair, freeing up 2 ability with which to deploy additional characters.

In the starting company, characters cannot be played under control of other characters.

Starting Items

Each player can start with up to two items, one of which may be a weapon.

Opening Draw

Each player draws 8 cards to form their opening hand.

Characters & Items

Bringing Characters Into Play

Characters and pilot-equipped starships not in your starting company can only be played at their home site (or in space) and only if the site has the matching force. To play a character in space, however, you must either have a spaceship waiting or play one at the same time.

Home Sites

Humans: any exterior site.
Aliens: any docking bay.
Droids: any interior site.
All: any space site.

To attempt to play a character, you must "enter the site" during the site phase (see turn order section, below). You enter a site by tapping the site; you have to go inside to find the person you're looking for . . .

Once you have tapped the site, you face any "on-guard" hazards keyed to the site (again, see turn order section, below).

After successfully dealing with any on-guard hazards, then you may tap a character at the site and roll 1d6 (2d6 for pilot-equipped spaceships and vehicles) with the following modifiers:

+1 if you tap another character at the same site (cumulative).
+1 for each similar force icon at the location.
-1 for each opposing force icon at the location.

For characters, if the total of the die roll plus or minus modifiers is equal to or greater than (deploy + forfeit) of the character you're trying to play, you get the character! Otherwise, discard the character.

Bringing Items Into Play

Items include spaceships and vehicles without permanent pilots, weapons, devices, etc., and they can only be played at a site (tapped or untapped) with at least one matching force icon. You simply tap a character at the site in question to play the item.

Note that spaceships can only be brought into play at either a system location or a docking bay. Vehicles can only be brought into play at the appropriate location indicated by the card in question (i.e., interior versus exterior locations).

Turn Order

Summary

(1) Untap & Healing
(2) Draw
(3) Organization

(4) Movement/Hazard
(5) Site Phase
(6) End of Turn Phase

Untap & Healing

Untap all non-wounded characters. All characters that are not wounded (upside down, see movement/hazard section below) untap.

Wounded characters that are at a location with at least one matching force icon heal; they go from wounded to tapped status.

Draw

Draw 1 card for each site you control. (Control here means the same as in ***SW:CCG*** -- you have ability at the site and your opponent does not.)

Organization

Characters and items at the same site can be reorganized however the player sees fit. You can transfer items from one character to another character at the same site. You can also transfer control of characters among the leaders at the same site.

Remember that you must have a total free ability (sum of all companies at all sites!) equal to or less than 10 at the end of the organization phase.

Movement

Movement generally follows the same rules as the ***SW:CCG,*** with some modifications. You do not have to expend force to move. You may only move each character once. You can tap one character in a company at a docking bay to transfer the company to another docking bay.

You may search through your location deck and play one location card each turn. The placement of location cards follows the rules of ***SW:CCG*** (for example, the 2nd marker exterior site of Hoth must be played between the 1st and 3rd markers).

You can split your party (collection of all characters) into as many companies (groups of characters at different locations) as you wish. However, all characters at the same site are considered to be in the same company. You can move any number of characters at a site to another site at the same time; but all the characters you are moving count as a single company that is moving. Once they safely arrive (*if* they safely arrive) at the new site, then all the characters at that site are now in the same company.

Example: You have Luke, C-3P0, and R2-D2 at Lar's Moisture Farm. You want to move Luke and Artoo to an adjacent site, the Dune Sea, where Lando is waiting with the Falcon. During movement, Luke and Artoo count as a single company for purposes of facing hazards. Then, following movement, Luke, Artoo, and Lando make up a single company because they are all at the same site.

When you move a company to a site, you draw a number of cards equal to the number of force icons on your side of the site card to which you are moving. Your opponent draws cards equal to the number of force icons on his side of the site card to which you are moving. Note that you draw cards for each separate *company* that moves, not each separate character.

Hazards

There is a limit to how many hazards your opponent can play during your movement phase. The maximum number of hazards is equal to the size of the moving company. The minimum number of hazards that *can* be played is 2. Your opponent does not have to play any hazards.

When your company moves to a new site, your opponent can play hazards keyed to the force icons on his side of the location card. Your opponent is limited to playing one "character hazard" for each force icon on his side of the location card.

Example: You have 1 red icon on your side of the site card to which a company is moving. The company that is moving to that site has 3 characters. You can play 3 cards (hazard limit is 3, the number of moving characters), including 1 character (only one character can be played because you have 1 icon on your side of the card). You decide to play 1 dark side character, give it a dark side weapon, and play a dark side effect.

If you choose not to move a company, your opponent can play hazards keyed to the site where you stayed. Nobody gets to draw any cards, and the upper hazard limit is the number of characters in the company.

Your opponent can also place hazards "on-guard." He must still operate under your total number of hazards limit, but any number of character hazards can be played on-guard. On-guard hazards are placed face-down, and are not triggered until you enter the site (tap it). On-guard hazards must be keyed to the force icons on your opponents side of the location card. Your opponent is free to bluff all he wants; a bluffed card (wrong force type, not a hazard, etc.) is simply discarded when the site is entered.

Site Phase

During the site phase, you can take several actions at each location:

1) Enter the site to attempt to play a character (see characters and items, above);
2) Enter the site to attempt to play a faction (see factions, below); and/or
3) Tap a character to play an item (see characters and items, above).

You do not have to take any actions during this phase.

End of Turn Phase

At the end of your turn, rotate all tapped site cards. The force icons that were on your side of the card at the beginning of your turn are now on your opponent's side of the card! Essentially, you "untap" the tapped location cards, switching the force icons with your opponent. Location cards that are not tapped do not rotate.

Also at this point, you may discard a card to draw a new card. Note that you cannot play this new card until the beginning of your opponent's next turn.

Resources

Characters and items are discussed above. Characters and items are *not* resources. Resource effects are essentially all non-character, non-item cards, and they can be played at any time on your turn. They are played on your characters or on sites you control.

Factions

Kangaroo court is now in session! Hear Ye! Hear Ye!

Factions are cards like "Han's Back" and "Nabron Leeds." They are effects and other non-character cards that represent a human, alien, droid, or group. If you can convince your opponent that a card should count as a faction, then go for it!

To play a faction, enter a site (tap it) with force icons matching the faction you are trying to play. Do this during your site phase. Then, once inside the site (and having dealt with any on-guard hazards), tap a character to make an influence roll (1d6) modified as follows:

+2 if the tapping character is a diplomat.
+1 if the tapping character is a spy.
-2 if the tapping character is of opposing force to the faction card.

If the (influence roll) + (free ability of the tapping character) + (modifiers) is greater than or equal to 7, you get the faction (put it to the side in a marshaling point pile, it doesn't directly impact play). If the total is less than 7, discard the faction.

Also, note that the actual card takes precedence. If you are counting "Old Ben" or "Luke's Back" as a faction and an actual Ben or Luke character comes into play, then you must discard the faction.

Examples: "Takeel" is a burned-out mercenary haunting the cantina at Mos Eisley, but if you can convince him to join your crusade, he's worth some points. "It Could Be Worse" features a picture of Leia, and as a faction it represents the support of the Royal Family of Alderaan. "Kintan Strider" is a hologram alien, and yet could be a powerful ally if turned to the Dark Side. And "Fall Back!" features a great shot of the advancing AT-AT's on Hoth, signifying the support of the Imperial Machinists Union, Local 1138.

Combat

First things first; fire your weapons.

First, choose targets and fire any weapons (both sides . . . and remember, you tap the character to "use one force." Use the ***SW:CCG*** rules for hits on characters. If a character is hit, it is wounded and must make a body check.

A body check is a 1d6 roll. If the roll is greater than or equal to the character's forfeit value, then the character is dead.

Then, fight any hazard characters.

The defender chooses which characters in the company will face the strike from any hazard characters. All hazard characters are therefore assigned to a defending character before strike rolls are made.

After everybody is assigned, make a strike roll for each attacker/defender combo. The defender rolls 1d6 + (power of the defending character) + (the following modifiers):

Defender Strike Roll Modifiers

-3 if untapped character chooses not to tap.
-2 if character is wounded.
-1 if character is tapped.
-3 if facing multiple hazard characters and defender ability is less than 3.
-1 if facing multiple hazard characters and defender ability is 3 or 4.
+0 if facing multiple hazard characters and defender ability is 5 or greater.
+1 if another character at same site taps to help you out (cumulative).

+1 if character is a warrior at a planet site or in an open vehicle.
+1 if character is a pilot at a space site or in a closed vehicle.

The attacker rolls 1d6 + (power of the hazard character) + (the following modifiers):

Defender Strike Roll Modifiers

+1 if character is a warrior at a planet site or in an open vehicle.
+1 if character is a pilot at a space site or in a closed vehicle.

The highest strike roll wins. If the defending character loses the strike roll, it is wounded and must make a body check. A body check is a 1d6 roll. If the roll is greater than or equal to the character's forfeit value, then the character is dead.

If the hazard character loses the strike roll, it makes a body check (1d6). If the roll is greater than or equal to the character's forfeit value, then the defending player gets the hazard character and places it in the marshaling point pile. If the character makes the body check, it is simply discarded.

Things really get interesting when you fight an opponent's company . . .

Inter-company combat can only occur between companies on different sides of the same site. On your turn you can tap a character to initiate the battle during your movement/hazard phase. You can move then battle, or battle then move. But, a single character cannot move, then battle, then move again.

All characters at the site (i.e., all members of the company) must join in the attack. The defending player chooses attacker/defender match-ups as per fighting hazard characters (see above). The only difference is that both sides are subject to the defender strike roll modifiers. (Note that a tapped or wounded character *can* attack, it just does so at the listed penalty.)

After the attacker/defender assignments are made, make strike rolls and check for casualties among the losers (by making 1d6 body checks) . . .

Winning the Game

You win the game by gathering marshaling points (MP). The MP value of the cards are as follows:

Characters: MP = deploy - destiny.
Factions: worth 1 MP each (2 MP each if opponent does not control any factions).
Hazard Characters: 1 MP each for each hazard character destroyed.
Capital Starships: 1 MP each (3 MP for control of the Death Star).
Complete control of a system (no opposing characters on any of the site cards): 2 MP each.
Items or Weapons: no MP value.

Once one player has reached 20 MP, he calls the Council of Alderaan. After he finishes his turn, his opponent gets one more turn to play and gather as many MP as possible. At the end of the opponent's turn, the MP totals are calculated and the winner is heralded!

Or, you win the game by eliminating all of your opponent's characters. "Wipe them out, all of them."

Or, you win if you can manage to either blow up a planet using the Death Star or blow up the Death Star itself. (No matter who thinks they are in control of the Death Star at the time.)

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by Ben Vandgrift

Art by andi jones

A gamemaster will use many tricks to communicate tone and feeling, and most of them involve giving players information. Through intricate description and dialogue, a gamemaster can touch some emotional thread. Here, an alternate means of evoking certain emotions is presented: giving them no information whatsoever.

Lack of information is as powerful a tool for a gamemaster to use as the information itself, provided the blanks appear in the right places. It can be used to evoke useful emotions in characters, all of which lend themselves to a more immersive roleplaying experience.

Roleplaying games are played for the enjoyment of the player, so it's often the player that you want to affect. Terrifying a character is easy: chuck some dice, and say he's terrified. Terrifying the player is at the same time more difficult, and satisfying, both for the player and the GM.

Curiosity

Full Immersion

A blank door in an otherwise well-labeled hallway is a plaything for the imagination. Unmarked office buildings, electronic locks, even a simple "Keep Out" sign compels nearly everyone to wonder what is within. Whether it is a door, drawer, locked book, or mysterious newspaper article, our instinct is to root out this information. It makes us curious, and in a game situation, curiosity is one of the most useful tools in the gamemaster's garage.

The wonder evoked by such scenery is compounded when it doesn't belong. A numberpad on a plain door in an interstate rest stop is much more interesting than the same door in a computer lab. A shoddy outbuilding with a dollar store "Keep Out" sign doesn't pique the imagination as would an expensive, laser-etched metal plate on the same shoddy building. Whether you wish to compel the characters to act, or merely make sure some small fact sticks in their head, the amount of curiosity evoked can be adjusted to suit the scene.

An adventure often begins with curiosity. Many stories begin with little more than a small investigation to satisfy a personal mystery. As more secrets present themselves, the character is drawn more deeply into the story. But this technique isn't just for the beginnings of stories. It's possible to add wonderment to any scene. Add something as

simple as a few large stainless steel cylinders attached to pipes, all unmarked, in a building where they wouldn't be expected. Put frosted glass in them and let the players wonder what the light within conceals. Small secrets, even unrelated to the story, can make for great entertainment for all.

Danger

Facing the unknown is cause for apprehension, even fear. If a party of adventurers find a temple where none should be, they hesitate, regardless of how benign the temple may seem. Crossing the line from simple curiosity to trepidation requires two things: personal stake, and possible threat. Being signaled over by an unmarked black sedan is cause for much more dread than seeing someone else pulled over. The plain, unmarked door looks much more intimidating if you have to go through it, uncertain of what lies beyond.

When creating scenes designed to provoke this reaction, watch for overkill. A player will enjoy the subtle hint of danger more than obvious jeopardy. Consider the sedan mentioned before. If five agents armed with MP-5s get out, players reach for their dice. If it just sits there, waiting, players begin to wonder. Let their imagination do the work.

Again, a hint of hidden danger spices up any scene. A street in broad daylight takes on a dark tone if brick dust sifts down from the building you're standing under, indicating someone unseen on the roof. From a sudden crackle of static on a cell phone to the snapping of a distant twig in the forest, little details add dread to an otherwise normal moment.

Terror

Danger and curiosity are subtle feelings. Not all occasions call for such subtlety. Sometimes you want to reach out and grab your players. (Try it sometime, watch the ensuing mayhem.) Lack of information can also cause alarm, horror, even panic in a character. To get the proper feeling though, you must not hit hard enough to make the player reach for his sheet. A few seconds of pure fright first will be much more memorable.

The tools for terror are the same as for danger, only the threat shouldn't be obvious. A known threat is easily dealt with. A previously unknown threat's sudden appearance can cause a strong, memorable reaction. Displaying events from another point of view can also be disconcerting and a great source of player dismay.

Consider the following scene:

Eli and Ryan (both PCs) are talking on the phone about some strange and uncomfortable events. Both have seen things in the past few hours to make them feel unsafe, and more than a little paranoid. Interrupting Ryan midsentence, the GM describes to Eli's player the sound of a phone being dropped and hitting the floor. He hears nothing. After a few seconds, the phone is hung up on Ryan's end. Nothing has been said to Ryan's player at this point. Eli listens for a moment longer, then hangs up, dismayed.

Before this scene, curiosity and suspicion have led to no small amount of paranoia. Neither character can put a face on the present threat, and have no idea how powerful it is. The seeds of terror have already been sown. When that scene is executed, the Ryan's player has no information, but knows that his phone has been dropped and hung up. He will start to feel some panic, then horror. Likewise, Eli's player is shaken, and more paranoid than before. A good gamemaster would cut away at this point, leaving them to consider the fates of their characters before returning to resolve the situation. The result? A memorable scene, enjoyable by both player and GM.

Conclusion

The key to pulling off emotional scenes is subtlety, especially when dealing with potentially dangerous situations. There is a point at which a player will begin to consider the mechanics of his character to resolve the situation. Avoid pushing the player to this point and maintain the emotive force of the scene. Hold the feelings as long as possible before rolling the dice. The payoff is big -- watching your players sweat is one of the great rewards a storyteller has.

by Phil Masters

Art by andi jones

[*Editor's Note:* A large part of this article originally appeared in Issue 17 of *The Journal of the Travellers' Aid Society* in 1983. The ***GURPS*** stats, of course, are new.]

The Jgd-ll-Jagd are a gas-giant dwelling intelligent species originating on a world on the coreward edge of the Imperium. Although technically a minor race, they possessed very advanced technology even before they were first contacted by Vilani explorers in about -4200; in the period since, for obscure reasons, they have never employed jump drives of their own, although their slower-than-light ships have ventured many parsecs from Jagd, and Jgdi colonies are spread across several subsectors. Jgd have very occasionally traveled further afield than this in heavy life support units carried by bulk transporters, and Jgd travelers have even collaborated with Humaniti on a few exploration and resource-exploitation activities.

Biology

Jagd is a gas giant, slightly smaller than Sol's Saturn (110,000 km diameter). As such, its atmosphere is hundreds, if not thousands, of miles deep, and consists mostly of hydrogen with an admixture of other gases; at the vast pressures of its depths, the gas becomes liquid, then a metallic solid, but these conditions are too extreme for life.

Generally, gas giants are unsuitable for the evolution or continued existence of life, but in a few cases, organic molecules have not only formed, but developed into something more. The conditions under which this becomes possible are not entirely clear, and some scientists insist that the intervention of highly advanced races (perhaps the Ancients) must have been required, but it appears that a sufficiently high level of heavier gases permits the formation of complex molecules, a layer or two of dense clouds of various chemicals (such as ammonia) can give them an environment in which to evolve, and a continuous "rolling boil" of activity in the planetary atmosphere prevents heavy compounds from sinking into the lethal depths too easily. Multi-cellular gas giant life often develops internal "gas-bags" of near-pure hydrogen at above ambient temperatures, enabling it to float around like balloons; this is certainly the pattern on Jagd.

The Jgd have roughly spherical bodies, about nine or ten feet in diameter, dotted with clusters of sensory cells, and with three long manipulative tendrils distributed regularly round the "equator". The densest mass of sensory organs, plus a large number of manipulative "feelers" and feeding structures, are sited on the lowest point of the body. The species' internal structures are based on a number of thin-walled compartments, one of which (near the body center) houses the brain (or at least the largest neural nexus), but most of which are empty but for hydrogen secreted by the body chemistry. Control of secretion rates and partially-directed release of gas give the Jgd considerable control over their atmospheric buoyancy and direction of flight, but these "living balloons" are still rather susceptible to atmospheric currents; it is generally believed that accidental population redistributions were common in primitive Jgdi society, leading to loosely-bonded communal organization and exceptional homogeneity in Jgdi culture.

Insofar as such terms have meaning in this context, the Jgd seem to spring from omnivore/intermittent stock. There is only one sex; genetic interchange is achieved by air-borne spores, and reproduction is achieved by a sophisticated form of binary fission. Their senses are based on extreme awareness of atmospheric vibration, plus very limited response to a very wide range of electromagnetic waves. Jgd can communicate limited information over tens of miles, using pitch-modulated ultrasonic "whistling," but the primary form of "speech" involves electrical impulses transmitted by direct physical contact. It is thought that this allows the transfer of very large quantities of information at the semi-subconscious as well as the conscious level, further enhancing the homogeneity of Jgd culture.

The Jgd live extremely long lives; apparently, no condition of "old age" exists, although eventually a fissioning Jgd undergoes division of the parent brain, rather than generating a new "child" cerebrum. Average life of an identifiable Jgd individual, barring accident, is approximately 630+ standard Imperial years.

Society

The Jgd-ll-Jagd

The Jgd developed their basic form of technology when they learned to manipulate crystalline matter which they derived from various communal microscopic life-forms that they found among the ammonia clouds of their homeworld; crystallography is as central to their technological history as metallurgy is to Humaniti's. They developed activities akin to farming rather late, but their social systems are immensely refined, and spring from the need to organize for food-gathering, crystal-seeking, and hunting. The basic social unit is termed the "hunt" by human xenologists, and consists of a cooperative body formed for a specific purpose -- not always anything as short-lived as a hunt for food. Many "hunts" are millennia old, but even disregarding natural mortality, the membership is extremely flexible, with individuals leaving and joining quite frequently in most cases. Hunts to some extent resemble human businesses, trusts, or colleges, or Hiver nests, but each hunt actually holds a rather deeper role in Jgdi culture than this implies, in a way that only the Jgd themselves really comprehend. The crew of a short-range spaceship will usually comprise one hunt, while an interstellar craft will have three or four "active" hunts aboard, plus the social nucleus of several more that become active as and when the ship establishes a colony or base on a new world. The system is remarkably flexible but robust.

The other key element in Jgdi psychology is what is usually referred to as an obsession with balanced exchanges, apparently running at least as deep as human curiosity, Aslan land-hunger, or Newt orderliness. A Jgd is almost physically incapable of "unilateral behavior." For example, the Jgd never initiate exploration for its own sake, but only send ships where there is a very high probability of finding exploitable resources, or of establishing a colony that might eventually send vessels back to Jagd. This obsession, apparently linked to the inherently bilateral nature of Jgdi conversation, has resulted in almost all contact between Jgd and other races taking the form of trade. It also causes the Jgd to operate a peculiar (and slightly brutal-seeming) legal system; theft is always punished by fines, violence by violence, and so on (in short, "an eye for an eye"). It is even hypothesized that the Jgd commenced interstellar travel when and only when they were first contacted by Humaniti because only then was a degree of symmetry implied by the activity.

The homogeneity of Jgdi culture is a major factor in Jgd society, but it must not be overstated. Jgd are discrete and independent individuals, with distinct personalities and powerful personal drives; they have an idea of private property; they have personal violence, if not wars. Nonetheless, it is important to note that education -- in the sense of a transmission of data -- is extremely easy for them; hence almost any Jgd can employ almost any Jgdi device or technique with at least minimal competence. This does not imply that the race lacks individuals specializing in particular fields of competence, merely that total incompetence in any field is rare.

Jgd In Interstellar Society

Jgdi thought is alien to all other races' intelligence; hence, communication is a persistent problem. The obvious difficulty of simply conversing is generally solved by use of powerful human or Jgdi computer translators, but even these tend to struggle with many concepts; nor is pronunciation of synthesized phonemes always easy. (The name for the race used by humans is a human corruption of something produced by an early Jgdi machine.) In general, relations with Humaniti and other races are restricted to trade and informational exchanges.

The Imperium classifies the Jgd as a friendly associate species with autonomous government; actually, no formal pacts exist, although relations are in a state of stable equilibrium. Jgd-inhabited systems will always be "patrolled" by a number of large and powerful vessels (see below); these rarely take much interest in human affairs unless Jgdi interests are threatened. The chief point to note in such systems is that fuel-skimming a Jgd world is extremely unwise; shock waves from the pass may cause severe damage to the beings and their environment, and their response is certain to involve high-energy weapons fire. For this reason, Jgd systems are well-marked with navigational beacons.

Other races get on with the Jgd even less well than does Humaniti (although there are Jgd colonies or outposts in or near K'Kree space; the K'Kree generally find these beings too alien to contemplate in detail, and hence cannot decide whether to worry about their diet); mankind at least has long experience with the race, and the Jgdi exchange-obsession corresponds effectively to the human tradition of mercantile economics. There are no records of the Jgd hiring alien mercenaries for any but short-term jobs, or of small Jgd groups or individuals settling for long with other races save out of necessity.

The Jgd failure to construct jump drives is a mystery to most humans; the task could easily be performed by Jgd technology. The usual explanation is that the race actually refuses to do so because it is impossible to enter into an "exchange relationship" with hyperspace, making the subject anathema to them. Other popular arguments hold that jump travel is somehow dangerous to them, which is clearly true in some ways; after all, the Jgd travel units occasionally loaded onto human jump ships carry extremely heavy insulation (though this is more a matter of preserving their internal environment in the conditions of a human ship).

A few xenologists have acquired a slightly deeper grasp of Jgdi psychology, and recognize the greater problem here. What they have come to understand is that Jgdi behavior evolved, from a very early stage, as a set of responses to the stormy, energetic climate of their homeworld atmosphere. Some scientists say, not entirely as a joke, that the Jgd-ll-Jagd had developed a detailed understanding of Newtonian dynamics millions of years before they developed sentience. Thus, Jgdi physics is not so much an advanced study as a refined instinct.

This makes their science very powerful in some ways, but terribly limited in others. Their grasp of action and reaction, force and flow, is immediate, but any theories that go beyond this -- particularly theories built on asymmetry or paradox -- offend them at a level below thought. Human minds have enough trouble encompassing quantum physics or jump-space theory; to the Jgd-ll-Jagd, they are the essence of insanity. Worse, a member of the species cannot feel safe if it does not have a clear and continuing comprehension of the physics and dynamics of its environment; anything else is deeply horrifying. And it cannot not think about this.

In other words, to the Jgd-ll-Jagd, jump travel is about as pleasant as a human would find being swung over a pit full of jagged spikes, on the end of a fraying rope, for several days continuously. The only members of the species to travel thus are slightly crazy volunteers, and receive the nearest approximation their metabolism permits to anesthesia -- and they still sometimes suffer something like nervous breakdowns thereafter.

Jgd in Play

Jgd should only be played and handled as NPCs; in the unlikely event of any PC interacting with one on a personal, violent level, a typical specimen has ST 12, DX 10, IQ 12, and HT 12/25. Their tough outer integument gives them PD 2 and DR 5, and they can have a Move and Dodge of about 4. Their internal gas-bags make them highly vulnerable to penetrating attacks under some circumstances, but their internal structures are complex and robust; they never simply "burst."

Jgdi encountered on worlds where they can live unprotected (about 5% of gas giants) or with minimal protection (another 15%) will generally have only the equipment their current circumstances demand. In other cases, Jgd usually use small sealed-environment capsules with heavy heat shielding and armor, each holding 3-10 Jgd; less often, they wear cumbersome personal protection comparable to battle dress, complete with strength augmentation. An armed Jgd -- a rare sight, which will only appear for a good reason -- usually carries plasma or fusion guns, with a few lasers or gauss guns when the situation demands something relatively subtle.

Jgdi skills are generally specific to Jgd technology and society; the main points to note here are that all members of the race have at least basic knowledge of most Jgdi devices, while specialist Jgd tend to be very well-trained; ships and weapons are seemingly invariably handled at skill levels of 15+. Beyond this, the referee should assign whatever skills seem appropriate.

Jgdi ships can be treated as TL11 constructions with TL12 power plants and maneuver drives; no jump drives are ever fitted. Even their smallest in-system shuttles are in the 2,000 ton range, while their interstellar craft range up to 400,000 tons or even more; Jgd like a lot of personal space in their crew quarters, have no equivalent to low berths, and make shameless use of very large fusion power systems. If fitted, weapons are generally bay-mounted TL12 fusion guns, along with possibly some TL11 repulsors, nuclear dampers, and some meson screens; missiles and sandcasters are rare, and limited to TL9 quality.

Refereeing Jgd

Jgd are utterly alien beings, and may be quite tricky to referee. (Jgd player-characters are out of the question). The main problem is their apparent obsession with balanced exchange in all relationships; practical environmental factors must also always be borne in mind. Nonetheless, the race is neither irrational nor erratic, and basic impulses such as self-preservation are common to Humaniti and Jgd alike.

Player-characters may encounter Jgd in a variety of circumstances. Trade is an obvious possibility; Jgd understand the concept of money, but prefer barter-type systems, and the more symmetrical the exchange the better; a party seeking low-temperature crystals will probably achieve the most return if they trade with industrial diamonds or refined titanium. Partnerships in exploration are possible, but harder to negotiate.

Jgd never, ever voluntarily travel by jump ship except in insulated capsules; if asked why not, they will be evasive, and what they do say will defeat any translator. (They are not lying or prevaricating; they are struggling to express a deep-seated sense of wrongness.) One kidnapped into such a trip will almost certainly go into a state of neural shock the instant jump space is entered, rapidly deteriorating into death. (And few hospitals have personnel with the proper expertise or properly heat-insulated equipment to perform delicate medical work on a Jgd.) Bear in mind that Jgdi "vengeance" will subsequently be certain and thorough. On the other hand, Jgd slower-than-light ships, taking Jgd lifetimes to cross the interstellar void, are strange and interesting encounters for players. Jgd colonies and outposts should be noted as precluding hasty fuel scavenging.

Finally, note that human social skills are of little use when dealing with Jgd, although high levels of Xenology may help; perhaps the most useful skill when dealing with the species over an extended period are Computer Programming or Electronic Operations, as translator systems may often need fine-tuning.

Lost Souls

by Kris Overstreet

Art by andi jones

[*Editor's Note:* The material in this article laid the groundwork for the section on ghosts in the ***Corporeal Player's Guide.*** Where there are conflicts between this article and that book, consider the information in the ***CPG*** as official canon.]

In the universe of ***In Nomine,*** mortals often have close brushes with the supernatural, as celestial and ethereal beings struggle for advantage in the great War. These are often reported as sightings of angels or demons, but also as ghosts or spirits or elves or haunts of every shape and description. Every once in a while, though, a report of a haunting may be just that -- a sighting of a soul so troubled, so angry, so stubborn that it resists the pull of Heaven or Hell to remain in the corporeal realm after its life has ended.

When playing ***In Nomine,*** ghosts make interesting NPCs and can provide ways for deceased human PCs or NPCs to continue on after their death. Ghosts, in general, should not be PCs and should definitely not be used as starting characters, but there are few adventure seeds more engaging for gamemaster and players alike than a good old fashioned ghost story.

How Ghosts Are Made

Ghosts are the human souls, or fragments of human souls, which remain when a human feels he or she has left something unfinished on Earth. This can be due to a sudden or violent death, an obsession, a personal tragedy, or just dying at an age the deceased considers "too young." In any case, resisting the call to the Great Reward requires a massive effort of Will *and* a sacrifice of a bit of themselves . . . maybe more than a bit.

The secret behind a soul remaining on Earth is in anchoring itself to a particular location or object in the corporeal realm. This may simply be an empty point in space, or a family heirloom, or a tree or a rock or even, in extreme cases, another person. Once anchored, that soul can remain on Earth, but only within a certain radius of the point or object it is anchored to.

A human soul must have a minimum of two Celestial Forces to attempt to remain in the corporeal realm. With the celestial realms pulling on the soul, each attempt results in a Force tearing itself away from the soul and flitting off to whichever realm the soul was intended to go -- this Force is usually a random Force from any of the three types the human possesses. If, after the Force is lost, the soul still has two or more Celestial Forces, and succeeds in a Will roll to bind itself to Earth, that spirit becomes a ghost; if its effort of Will fails, then the soul may try again, losing a Force in each attempt, until it finally anchors itself or drops to one Celestial Force. At this point, the rest of the soul is reunited with those Forces previously torn away -- in whichever realm it was destined or fated for.

A ghost usually retains the skills and abilities it had in life; however, if a ghost loses a type of Force entirely, all Skills it may have had related to that Force are lost forever.

Ghost Mechanics

Ghosts act differently than Celestials in celestial form on Earth. Nobody has explained how or why this is, but the best guess anyone has is that human spirits have a natural affinity to the corporeal realm which allows them to affect that realm even after death.

For their ability to linger after death and affect the physical world, ghosts sacrifice their freedom of mobility. Ghosts can only move (Will x 10) units from their anchors. If they have two Celestial Forces, the distance is measured in yards; with three Celestial Forces, in acres; with four or more Celestial Forces, in miles.

Ghosts can manifest visibly in the corporeal realm without expending Essence on Songs or other mechanisms. Depending on their strength, this manifestation may be limited to dark rooms or moonless nights, or they may manifest even in the brightest sunlight with all the appearance and tangibility of a living being.

Observers can spot ghosts through a handful of clues. Ghosts do not appear in mirrors or cast shadows, and their luminescent glow does not cast a beam or cause shadows. Recording devices like cameras often show ghosts only as overexposed patches on the film, if at all. Ghostly speech can be recorded electronically, but except in the case of the most powerful ghosts such recordings end up with faint, garbled moaning sounds, no matter how clear the speech may be to eyewitnesses.

Ghosts' appearance depends upon their Ethereal Forces. Only ghosts with Ethereal Forces will manifest in humanoid form, although ghosts with only a few Ethereal Forces (one or two) may only manifest from the waist up. Ghosts whose Ethereal Forces have been stripped away no longer remember what they looked like in life, and manifest as glowing balls of light, if they manifest visibly at all. Many of these types remain invisible to Corporeal senses and can only be detected by a sensation of cold when standing near -- or even within -- them.

Of course, ghosts may be detected celestially, as with an angel or demon in celestial form.

Only ghosts with Corporeal Forces can affect objects in the corporeal realm, and this power of manipulation is usually clumsy at best. Any effort to affect corporeal objects must be preceded by a successful Will roll; otherwise, the ghost is unable to touch that object that round.

Ghosts regenerate Essence at noon as they did in life, under normal circumstances. They have no need of nourishment, do not grow, do not reproduce, and do not produce waste product. As time goes by, some ghosts may develop a Rite associated with their anchor to draw more Essence from the Symphony. Ghosts do not cause any Disturbance except by the purposeful expenditure of Essence.

If a ghost knew a Song in life, and still has the Forces related to that Song after becoming a ghost, it may still use that Song. It is extremely rare for a ghost to learn Songs after death; few enough ghosts have the six Forces, including at least one of all types, to learn, and fewer Celestials have the inclination to teach them.

Exorcising A Ghost

Getting rid of a ghost is difficult, but possible, for talented mortals. For Celestials, it can be easy, especially with their superior Perception and Will. Depending on the situation, exorcists may choose to persuade the spirit to depart of its own accord or to confront the spirit and drive it away from its anchor.

Ghosts can release their anchorage at any time they choose; when they do this, they are again subject to the pull of the celestial realms, which they may choose to obey this time or fight by choosing a new place or object to tether to, losing more Forces in the struggle.

The best way to convince a ghost to end its haunt is to complete the business the ghost did not finish in life. Sometimes, this will be as easy as the ghost telling someone goodbye; sometimes it will be downright impossible,

although the ghost may not recognize it as such.

Malevolent or stubborn ghosts can be driven away from their anchors by someone with high Perception *and* Will. First, the exorcist must track down and confront the ghost through a series of successful Perception rolls. Then, the exorcist attempts to use his or her Will to force the ghost from its anchor; if the exorcist's Will roll succeeds, the ghost must make its own Will roll or be banished forever.

A ghost exorcised by persuasion passes on to the celestial realms peacefully; a ghost banished by direct confrontation does not go to Heaven or Hell, but disperses its Forces back into the Symphony.

Types of Ghosts

Following are a few different types of ghosts, with an example of each. For GMs creating new NPCs, pick one of the following templates, select Forces and attributes, then assign 4 Character Points (CP) per Force the ghost has. The ghost may or may not have one Rite (costs 5 CP). Ghosts have no bodies or vessels and may not buy any, but may buy up to two points of Charisma at two CP per point of Charisma.

Will O' Wisps

No Corporeal Forces, no Ethereal Forces, 2 or more Celestial Forces

Will o' Wisps are the most rudimentary form of ghost, spirits who have sacrificed every part of themselves except the very Will they needed to remain on Earth in the first place. Aside from manifesting as vague balls of light or cold pockets of air near their anchor, Will o' Wisps cannot affect the corporeal realm, and don't have the intelligence to make any major changes if they could.

Will o' Wisps are the most common type of ghost and can be found all over. Many are never even recognized for what they are by humans who encounter these lonely, wandering spirits who have forgotten why they remained on Earth and do not know how to let go.

Mr. Bragg

Corporeal Forces -- 0 (Strength 0, Agility 0)
Ethereal Forces -- 0 (Intelligence 0, Precision 0)
Celestial Forces -- 4 (Will 6, Perception 10)
Form: shining ball of light (+2 Charisma (holy))
Skills: Tracking/3, Seduction/2, Dodge/2
Rite: Float past a parked car on Bragg Road (+1)

Before oil came to the dense subtropical forests and swamps of Southeast Texas, the major industry of the region was logging. One of the sawmill towns born of this industry was named after Confederate general Braxton Bragg, and its little spur railroad ran north from the main line through a swampy five-mile stretch of woods near a cypress-choked stream named Bad Luck Creek. The line continued to serve the sparsely populated area until the rails were torn up in the 1930s, and the sawmill town gradually faded out of existence, leaving only the unpaved Bragg Road on the old railroad foundation . . . and the Bragg Road Light.

Some people say that there actually *was* a Mr. Bragg, and the light is his ghost. Others say that the light is the spirit of a Mexican brakeman on the old rail line who lost his head in a tragic accident, and that he carries his lamp through the swamp trying to find his head again.

The truth of the matter is more tragic than that. "Mr. Bragg" was a young lover and dreamer whose Northern-born lover died of malaria in the mosquito-ridden swamps of the Big Thicket. In a fit of despair, the young man threw himself under the train one day, seeking his lover in the next life. In the struggle to remain where he was, he lost the

very memory of his Earthly lover, and now he wanders within the wide range of his anchor, searching for something he doesn't remember.

Poltergeists

1 or more Corporeal Forces, no Ethereal Forces, two or more Celestial Forces

Poltergeists, or "house ghosts," can be playful, friendly or malevolent. What they can't be, sadly, is intelligent; in their struggle to avoid the afterlife, these spirits literally lost their minds. Now, with no more intelligence than an animal, these spirits guard their anchors and express their pleasure or displeasure by using their limited corporeal powers to influence objects around them.

Poltergeists usually do not display a corporeally visible manifestation, and their celestial form is hardly more complex than a will o' wisp's glowing globe. They are usually detected through the cool spots where they manifest . . . or by the objects flying across the room.

Jimmy

Corporeal Forces -- 2 (Strength 5, Agility 3)
Ethereal Forces -- 0 (Intelligence 0, Precision 0)
Celestial Forces -- 2 (Will 7, Perception 1)
Form: invisible ball of energy, cold areas
Skills: Detect Lies/2, Dodge/3, Emote/4, Fighting/2, Throwing/5

Jimmy has chased away no less then seven families from the Missouri farmhouse he haunts. This malevolent spirit, slain as a teenager during the neighbor-on-neighbor warfare which infested the region during the Civil War, takes pleasure in throwing large objects at anyone who tries to set up housekeeping in the home he haunts.

So far, none of the families or realtors who have held the property have considered exorcism; the strongly Protestant population does not believe in ghosts or the power of men to cast them out. Jimmy may be working towards his own destruction, however . . . the century-old house is in dire need of renovation, but Jimmy's pranks make any effort to shore up the rotting timbers and cracking foundations futile.

Apparitions

No Corporeal Forces, 1 or more Ethereal Forces, 2 or more Celestial Forces

Apparitions have lost their ability to affect the corporeal world directly, but still hold the intelligence and memories of their past existence. Depending on how much of their mind remains, the ghosts may simply replay bits of their old life over and over, trapped in a loop of fragmented memory, or seek out humans to convey messages to in an effort to complete the work they left incomplete.

Apparitions manifest as the form they remember themselves as, except without legs; their image fades out below the waist. Being intelligent, they can be as harmless as a will o' wisp or as hateful as a jealous house ghost, and despite not being able to move objects or speak aloud, they have their own ways of making an unwanted visitor very miserable indeed.

Charity Brown

Corporeal -- 0 (Strength 0, Agility 0)
Ethereal -- 1 (Intelligence 2, Precision 2)
Celestial -- 3 (Will 6, Perception 6)
Form: head and torso of young African woman (+1 Charisma (beautiful))

Skills: Fast-Talk/2, Knowledge (plantations)/2, Knowledge (slave lore)/2, Singing/3
Rite: Talk someone into helping Charity cross the river (+1)

Near one bend of the Kentucky bank of the Ohio River a ghost can sometimes be seen at night, looking sadly at the wide running water with an occasional fearful glance over her shoulder. This spirit in life had been Charity Brown, a runaway slave who in 1838 had been run down by bounty hunters just before she was to meet with a boat to take her up the river to Pittsburgh, and then to Canada and freedom. When she resisted their attempts to rape her, the bounty hunters shot her and buried her near the river, leaving her shade to wander around her final resting place in search of her freedom.

Occasionally Charity manifests on the deck of a riverboat or barge, at the extreme limit of her anchorage, trying to convince the captain to take her across to the other side. In recent times, she has approached cars on a nearby highway, begging for her freedom, looking for someone who can guide her to a place where she can live free at last.

Ghosts

1 or more Corporeal Forces, 1 or more Ethereal Forces, 2 or more Celestial Forces

The classic ghost represents the least fragmented of lost spirits, the shades of powerful mortals who had six or seven Forces when they died. These spirits usually possess most of their original intelligence, are fully aware of the circumstances of their existence, and are capable of communicating normally with living mortals or Celestials. Since this type of ghost is the most likely either to be exorcised or to finish their "unfinished work," they are also the rarest type of ghost.

In all but the brightest direct sunlight, ghosts appear as real and tangible as living humans. Only their limitation to the area of their haunting, and their selective tangibility, reveal their true nature. Ghosts usually have morbid senses of humor, and those ghosts who no longer have any hope of completing their unfinished business tend to laugh at mortal's worries as inconsequential and self-absorbed. "Life is wasted on the living," they might say, all the time wishing for another chance to truly live, or to end the hanging-on existence they go through, day after day.

Molly Malone Lost Souls

Corporeal -- 1 (Strength 2, Agility 2)
Ethereal -- 1 (Intelligence 3, Precision 1)
Celestial -- 4 (Will 6, Perception 10)
Form: "Black Irish" maiden (+2 Charisma (beauty, sex appeal))
Skills: Clamdigging/2, Detect Lies/1, Emote/4, Singing/4, Knowledge (Ireland)/4
Rite: Spend 8 hours walking the shoreline (+1)

In life and death, Molly Malone is a legend among Irishmen the world over. In life she was a poor, unlucky "black Irish" woman, and to this day she manifests as a raven-haired, pale-faced beauty, singing a song as she gathers shellfish on the Irish coast. She had many lovers in life, but none lived long enough to be her husband, and in anger at the world which had deprived her of all hopes of happiness, she threw herself off a cliff one day and plummeted to her death.

Her life of misery and Christian love, and her charity towards others despite her poverty, would have gained her a spot in Heaven, but her spirit rejected the call of the Blessed Land. In her sorrow and anger she anchored herself to Ireland

-- *all* of Ireland -- but particularly the southwestern coasts where she dug shellfish and aided the shipwrecked in her poor tenant hut.

Observing all of this was one of Saminga's more creative Servitors, a Habbalite named Crenathan. Cren had been working to create a terror of the dangerous Irish coastline, and he knew Molly's tragic story inside and out -- in fact, he'd caused the deaths of two of her lovers in his pursuit of the word of Shipwrecks. When he saw Molly's ghost for the first time, though, he abandoned this goal for a new one -- to make Molly Malone's ghost a terror as great as the banshee for Death.

From then on, Crenathan kept an evil eye on Molly's wanderings, as her shade searched the Emerald Isle for love. Whenever a mortal met Molly's shade, Cren would follow him, make sure that mortal told someone else, and then engineer an unlucky death for the unfortunate mortal. Within a century, Molly became an Irish proverb, and even to this day anyone unfortunate enough to cross Molly's path is marked for death by Cren (who earned a Knighthood for his dedicated work).

Molly is unaware of Crenathan's existence, and believes that God has made her an unwilling harbinger of death. She still longs to help others, and occasionally when nobody is looking, she will do little things to help the oppressed or poor. She spends most of her time wandering the empty moors and beaches of the land, searching for love and hoping she doesn't meet anybody, lest she cause yet another untimely death.

Celestials and Ghosts

A celestial's attitude towards ghosts usually varies according to their Superior's attitude towards them. Dominic and Asmodeus both regard ghosts as deserters and encourage their destruction by exorcism. Novalis and Kobal, each for totally different reasons, have their Servitors assist any ghosts they might find in achieving their goals. Beleth, Gabriel, Lilith and Saminga want ghosts left where they are, to live out their existence as they see fit; Yves and Kronos' Servitors are ordered to urge the ghosts on to their celestial reward, provided that that reward is in favor of the Word the Servitor serves. A Balseraph of Fate who inadvertently guides a soul on to the Upper Heavens will have a lot of questions to answer when he next speaks to Kronos.

Most of the rest of the Superiors on both sides don't care one way or the other about ghosts, so long as those ghosts don't interfere in their plans. In general, both sides regard ghosts as misguided. Angels think of each ghost as a great tragedy, while demons regard ghosts as damned souls who are only putting off the inevitable.

Adventure Seeds

Haunted House for Rent

A local Servitor of Kobal has bought a haunted house with a very nasty poltergeist inside (it might even be Jimmy's house) and is renting it out -- cheap. He's wired the house with cameras and microphones, all ready to record the antics of the terrified renters when the ghost makes itself known to them. A group of angelic PCs may be assigned by David or another Archangel to "clean house," or at least see to it that the demon's plan to amuse Shal-Mari at innocents' expense is somehow derailed.

Malone's Curse

Molly Malone has appeared to a large town In central Ireland. Thousands of people have seen the shade, and Crenathan can't kill them all by himself, so he comes to a group of demonic PCs for help in killing every man, woman and child in the town. Of course, the angels in town will have something to say about this, too, even if the recruited demon wouldn't rather sabotage one of Saminga's minor plots . . .

by Matt Riggsby

If churches and temples are the architectural manifestation of a society's hopes, fortifications are the manifestation of its fears. Temples are built in hopes of currying the favor of distant gods, but walls are built with the certain knowledge of attack by nearby enemies. Castles, city walls, and other fortified positions across the ages have shared a number of elements: thick walls, heavy doors, ditches, and lookout towers. However, the particular elements used and the shape they took depended on many factors, not all of which are strictly military. They are shaped as much by their social and economic climate as much as by purely martial concerns.

Early Fortifications: Basic Elements

Fortified walls are among the first large structures of nascent civilization. The earliest defensive walls, composed of piled earth, mud brick or stone rubble, enclosed large villages of the late Neolithic (mid-TL1 in ***GURPS*** terms) and, in time, early Bronze Age cities. The early walls were thin and (probably) low by later standards. Ten to 12 feet tall and four or five feet thick would have been ample protection for most settlements, although thicker walls of piled earth were easy to make. A "wall" ten or 15 feet thick would not be out of the question for a good-sized city. Low towers appeared not long after fortification walls. Neolithic Jericho had a narrow stone rubble tower of unknown height.

The basic principles for fortifications used up to the modern era were there from the very beginning: put a barrier between you and your enemy, the taller and thicker the better, to keep him at a distance while you pelt him with missiles. Keep openings to a minimum and build extra defenses around the gates, your weakest point. Increase the effective height of your walls by digging ditches immediately in front of them (the sudden dip in the ground will also blunt the force of offensive charges). The dirt dug out of the ditch can be used in your wall. Build towers to provide better visibility for defenders and strong points along the wall.

A Wall Sufficient to Defend

As unimpressive as those early defenses were, they were up to the task. Armies were small for the most part and lightly armed with spears, small bows, and bronze weapons. Earthen walls could be constructed relatively quickly and cheaply, and they were good enough to keep out small armies and casual raiders. They were also relatively resistant to battering rams, the only siege weapons available until the Iron Age.

Refinements in wall design came rapidly as architecture developed. While stone and, later, brick were clearly superior materials, building an entire wall from them was prohibitively expensive. Wall-builders used earth or rubble to form the bulk of the wall, but faced it with a layer of brick or laid stone. The thick wall still provided ample protection, but the hard outer layer was far better protected against attackers with digging tools. Plain earthen fortifications also can't sustain completely vertical faces; piled earth walls of any height will show at least a little slope, which makes them easier to scale. But a pair of brick or stone walls with packed earth sandwiched between

them can be completely vertical (Figure 1).

The Celts pioneered another kind of composite wall. They laid a grid of logs on the ground, covered it with a layer of rocks and earth, covered with another log grid, and so on until the wall reached the desired height. These wall provided superior protection against siege engines, since the log "fabric" was very resilient, but the logs were so tightly packed that no oxygen could get to them, so the wall could not be burned. Byzantine architects later used the same technique (called cribwork), laying wooden grids inside stone and brick walls.

Another basic development was crenelation, the familiar square-toothed pattern across the top of Medieval castle walls. A soldier would stand in a gap (crenel) between two teeth (merlons), fire a bow or hurl a spear, then duck behind a merlon to reload. The merlons provided protection from attacks from the sides as the soldier himself attacked, then almost complete protection while he was in no position to fight back. In European castles, crenels are typically square and about as wide as a man's shoulders, giving him a broad field of view, although Indian and other eastern strongholds have round or pointed crenels only a few inches wide to provide maximum protection.

Towers quickly developed to grow out from the wall as well as up. If a tower extends out from the face of the wall, defenders in the towers can fire down on the flanks of attackers, subjecting attackers at the wall between two towers to fire from three sides. Towers might be roofed to protect them missile fire.

As civilization moved beyond the plains of Mesopotamia, another important element in fortification design became important: elevation. In fact, some pre-civilization tribes built their villages on hilltops, both for defense and to conserve valuable flat farmland. Placing a fortification on a hill slows charging attackers and reduces the power of their missile weapons. A number of societies took to building citadels for the final defense of their cities on the highest point of land within the city walls. While almost all Classical Greek cities had them, Athens's Acropolis is the best-known example. In general, the best place to build a fortification is on the highest point of land available (for an independent castle) or the highest point nearest the area it is supposed to defend. For example, a tower meant to control access through a pass would most likely be placed on a hilltop immediately next to the pass where the occupants can fire arrows and stones down on attackers accurately, not a higher mountain top farther away. The mountain top might be a more defensible position, but if the defenders are out of range of the pass, what's the point? However, fortifications can be vulnerable to enemy fire if attackers can get some elevation of their own. Fort Ticonderoga in upstate New York controlled passage through Lake Champlain from a small hill by the lake itself, where its guns could easily cover the adjacent narrows, not from a much taller and steeper-sided hill farther away. Ironically, the "impregnable" fort fell during the American Revolution when a British force managed to wrestle some cannon up the nearly sheer slopes of the adjacent hill.

Imperial Fortifications: Controlling Access

As the early city-states grew into early empires, another function of fortifications came to the fore: controlling access. Instead of fighting off the occasional well-equipped army, strong points had to deal with threats from petty thieves to rebelling peasants and, on the borders, raids by barbarian neighbors or sorties from the empire next door. Strong points were also often centers of administration and civil order, so they saw constant non-military traffic.

A Wall Sufficient to Defend

Roman forts were paragons of orderly arrangement, but not for purely defensive reasons. Instead, they were built to balance defensive and administrative functions. The neat arrangement of perpendicular avenues made navigation and regular travel through the camp easier for visitors and regularly stationed troops. A number of permanent Roman military camps had double gates separated by a set of pillars or a thin wall (Figure 2). Although dual gates are harder to defend than single gates, they neatly divide traffic into "in" and "out" lanes, an extremely useful feature for a center of taxation where wagons and individual taxpayers are constantly coming in and out. In fact, a Roman fort might have several such gates if it stood on a crossroad, more gates than a purely defensive fortification should have.

A widely misunderstood fortification built by both of the greatest empires of antiquity is the long wall. The Great Wall

of China, consolidated across northern China in the 3rd century B.C., and Hadrian's Wall, built across northern England at the beginning of the 2nd century A.D., are, close up, unimpressive. Under 30 feet tall and stone-faced with earthen cores, they would be good protective walls for a city of moderate size. What makes them stand out, though, is their immense length. Hadrian's Wall stretches across the width of Britain, almost 74 miles, while the Great Wall goes thousands. At various times, the Roman maintained other, even less elaborate fortifications, most of the ditch-and-earth-wall type, along the Danube and the Rhine. How, one wonders, could those vast walls have been manned with enough troops to stop the barbarian armies that inevitably tried to overrun them?

In fact, they weren't, nor were they ever intended to. The purpose of a long wall is quite different from a city wall or a castle. First, long walls were built to defend against or at least limit the actions of small bodies of raiders, not armies. A handful of lightly armed men would be unable to attack even a lightly defended section of wall, forcing them to focus on streams, gates, and other gaps in the wall, which could be more heavily defended by garrisons. Second, the series of towers with which every long wall is reinforced gives the defenders a complete view of the frontier. Messengers can make their way between stations along the wall (the parapet provides a nicely paved surface) or to larger garrisons in rear areas to coordinate a defense against infiltrating forces, or watchmen could communicate with torches or semaphore flags. If the wall sentries decided to conserve their strength, a strong raiding party might meet no resistance on their way over the border, but find their escape cut off by a carefully planned defense. Third, they performed the non-military purpose of preventing casual border crossings. Travelers and merchants crossing the border could be taxed appropriately, and undesirables could be turned back.

Castles: Point Defense

With the collapse of the Roman Empire, there were no more borders to protect. The "nations" of the Middle Ages were collections of small territories, each with its own petty warlord, and each warlord had his own stronghold: the castle. The castle, a fortified residence usually independent of a defensible town, was not completely unprecedented, but it took the political fragmentation of the Middle Ages to cause their explosive growth. At their best, the castles of the Middle Ages were the height of the evolution of fortifications, forcing attackers to fight and, usually, pay dearly for every inch of gained ground. Of course, many fortified buildings were home as well as defensive position. Most European castles were simply towers or keeps, thick-walled stone buildings two to four stories tall, albeit very tall stories by modern standards; 12- to 15-foot stories weren't unusual. Each story was often a single large room, although sections might be enclosed by portable screens (privacy was not a major concern). Typically, a freestanding tower had one or perhaps two entrances. A particularly well-built tower might have an entrance on the second floor, with defensible steps leading up to it. Upper stories might have shuttered windows to let in natural light (the well-lit upper stories were the lord's residence), but lower floors had only loopholes. Loopholes (more prosaically, arrow slits) were vertical or cross-shaped slits, as little as an inch wide on the outside but two or three feet wide on the inside, which let defenders fire arrows from relative safety. Archers were protected by the wall itself and the relative dimness of the inside of the building. Floors were typically connected by removable ladders or staircases which spiraled up in a clockwise direction. The spiral gave a right-handed defender partial cover behind the staircase's central column. A right-handed attacker was at a corresponding disadvantage, since the central column blocked his right arm as much as it covered the defender's left (in ***GURPS,*** the GM might assess a -2 penalty for attacking up a spiral staircase with a weapon in the wrong hand, in addition to any height difference penalties).

However, when the architects were given sufficient funds, European castles were designed to resist massive assaults. Large castles had multiple layers of defenses, with concentric sets of curtain walls or inner and outer courtyards (called baileys in English castles) divided by sections of defensive wall, moats (usually just ditches, but occasionally filled with water), and a strong keep as a last line of defense. The enclosed space gave ample room for barracks, stables, storehouses, and sometimes siege engines to return fire at the attackers, although siege engines were more often offensive than defensive weapons.

Towers along the wall were important as watchtowers and fighting platforms. Several ancient authors on the subject advised strongly that towers along curtain walls be placed within bowshot of each other so that they can catch attackers in a crossfire, should the intervening section of wall be taken. They also suggested that passages through towers from one section of wall to another be made of wooden planks. The planks could be quickly removed, keeping attackers

from advancing further along the wall. If towers were provided with their own cisterns and food supplies, they could bar their doors and continue to fight even if enemies were able to take the walls. Of course, each tower and the main keep used the same defensive features as a freestanding tower: loopholes, narrow spiral staircases, and so on.

A Wall Sufficient to Defend

Gates, always the weakest part of a fortification, received lavish protection (Figure 3). A very well-protected castle might have one or perhaps two or three extra gatehouses, small fortifications guarding a drawbridge or a pathway cut up a steep hillside leading to the main gate of the castle proper. Gates were typically at the end of a passage formed by the gatehouse or a set of towers flanking the gate itself, with loopholes along the sides and machicolations (also called murder holes) in the ceiling, through which defenders could drop stones or fire arrows. The gates themselves were built of hard wood (some as much as six or eight inches thick) and might be covered with a thin sheet of metal, hides, or other fire-resistant coverings. In areas where attacks by elephants were a possibility, gates were often fitted with thick spikes to keep them from ramming the gate. As a last resort, a gate might have a portcullis, a heavy wooden grid with spikes at the bottom, dropped into place when attackers broke through the main gate. Since the portcullis was very difficult to lift once dropped, it could isolate advance parties of attackers inside a courtyard still controlled by the defenders or trap them in the gateway, where they would be finished off from the loopholes and machicolations.

For centuries, an inherent problem with crenelations had been apparent. They provided good protection if attackers were at a distance, but if they made it to the base of the wall, a defender would have to expose himself by leaning out over the wall if he wanted to shoot at them or drop something on them. The usual response was to construct hoards, temporary wooden galleries projecting a few feet out from the wall. Hoards had loopholes for firing at distant attackers and murder holes for firing at near ones. However, they were relatively vulnerable to siege weapons and fire, and they had to be built in advance; a castle caught by surprise would have no time to build hoards. The late Medieval response was to replace wooden hoards with permanent stone machicolations, long galleries with loopholes and murder holes replacing both hoards and crenelated parapets (Figure 4).

A Wall Sufficient to Defend

Feudalism in Japan also led to castles across the country, but of a very

different shape. Control of access was the governing principle. The fortifications of Medieval Japan were not built to stand up to as much direct punishment as European fortifications, partially a consequence of a low incidence of siege engines and artillery in Japanese warfare. Rather than placing massive walls between attackers and defenders and forcing the attackers to spread out across a broad front, they were built on a principle of constricted approaches, taking advantage of Japan's extremely hilly terrain. Approaches to such castles are broad ramps or winding steps up very sharp slopes. Essentially, rather than attacking directly from several approaches, an attacker must attack through a long, narrow passage (up hill, of course) which frequently twists to break the force of a charge and is open to intense fire from defenders above. The structures of the castle itself are placed very close together, which forces attackers through a maze of narrow passages exposed to vicious crossfires even if they can force entry (Figure 5).

However, constricted approaches are not unique to Japan. The Byzantines built passages through their walls with a slight bend that would slow charges. Despite the advantage, the bent-entrance plan makes attacks out the gate equally difficult. Bent-axis entries and long, easily defended entryways are incorporated into some Western European castles as well.

At times, the construction of defenses went beyond the castles itself. Military architects advised that the space around a castle should be cleared, so that attackers could not find cover. Sometimes, this proved impossible. When they were not prevented from doing so by law, residents of cities often built homes and shops directly against the city walls, despite the fact that attackers could use the rooftops as platforms from which to launch attacks over the walls. Feudal castles, however, were typically built on land over which the local lord had complete control, so the castle's environs could be cleared of trees, large stones, and other bits of shelter.

Castles also had the advantage of a broader choice of locations. A citadel had to be placed within an existing city, but a castle could usually take the best piece of terrain. Fortifications are most efficiently placed complementing natural features. For example, walls may be placed along river banks, leaving attackers little or no room to land, or just beyond a particularly steep slope. The most defensible castles, therefore, had irregular ground plans which took advantage of quirks of terrain. Easily drawn, perfectly square castles with towers at each corner and a detached keep in the center are extremely rare (Figure 6).

A Wall Sufficient to Defend

If constructed properly, it was exceedingly difficult for men armed with swords, bows, and pre-gunpowder artillery to enter a castle in the face of active resistance. Many castles had regular garrisons of as few as 15 or 20 men, including boys and old men who could be pressed into service (in most castles, the men were predominantly friends and

relatives of the lord, not mercenary troops or other paid employees). A poor rural lord might have even fewer. Nevertheless, if they had food, water, a little luck, and the good sense to keep their heads down as much as possible, these small garrisons were capable of holding off attacking forces that outnumbered them by huge margins. Garrisons of 40 or 50 men have been known to hold off (briefly) armies of hundreds long enough for help to arrive, particularly if the attackers are poorly equipped for a siege. As long as enough men remain inside the walls to push over ladders, cut grapnel ropes, and occasionally dump rocks on miners and battering rams, there is little an attacker can do but wait until the defenders' supplies are exhausted. Such a small force will be incapable of breaking a siege on its own accord, but it can hold out for a very long time until relief arrives. Barbarian hordes can sweep through an area burning everything in sight, but fast-moving raiders have a poor history against fortified positions. For example, Viking raids in northern France declined sharply when the French began to build more castles.

Given the defensibility of a good fortification, it has been observed that a castle is only as well-protected as its water supply. Indeed, food and water have often been the determining factors for how long a city or castle can hold out against attack. Different parts of a castle were often provisioned with their own food supplies so that they could fight independently even if some part of the castle's food supply was damaged or any one tower or building should be occupied. A good castle had its own well, and every castle had some kind of water reservoir, often supplied by rain.

Gunpowder: All Bets Are Off

When cannon were first introduced, they were just another siege engine, albeit noisy and impressive. But as the technology of guns developed, they forced fundamental changes in how fortifications were built. Powerful cannon packed more punch than huge trebuchets in a compact and, soon enough, relatively cheap weapon. Explosive shells and grapeshot made cannon an effective antipersonnel weapon as well as a weapon to use against fortifications. Muskets put effective long-range weapons in the hands of every soldier. High stone walls were no longer the perfect defense.

To protect against cannon, walls quickly became shorter and much thicker. High walls and tall towers were extremely vulnerable to cannon fire. However, six- to ten-foot parapets, which were perfectly adequate for defenders wielding nothing larger than a pot of boiling oil or, on rare occasions, oversized mounted crossbows, were completely unsuitable for mounting cannon. Not only did the gun carriages themselves need room, they needed additional space for recoil and loading. Requirements for parapets grew so great that they had to extend beyond the thickness of the wall itself. In some early modern castles, rooms were built against inside of the wall with roofs up to the height of the wall. The roofs were paved over to extend the width of the parapet. Walls also became thicker at the base than at the top. The extra thickness made it harder to collapse a section of wall by firing cannon shells at its base.

Lower walls and sloped bases made it easier for infantry to storm gunpowder-era fortifications. Unlike the sheer walls of the Middle Ages, which might need siege towers or immense ladders to scale, early modern fortifications could be partially scaled on foot and then with short ladders. On the other hand, direct rushes against the walls were no longer the main threat to the defenders. Instead, both sides of a siege were well supplied with long-range weapons and battles were fought at a distance. It was now more important for the walls to protect defenders from enemy fire than it was for them to physically keep attackers out.

While parapets became wider, loopholes (when they were still used) became smaller. A bowman needed an opening a few feet tall to fire his bow through to make sure he didn't hit the inside of the slit. A musketeer, however, could stick the end of his weapon through the loophole and be sure of an unobstructed line of fire, as long as there was still room to see out the loophole once he had stuck his gun through it. Loopholes shrunk from a long slit to an opening no taller than it was wide, three or four inches across. Loopholes were predominantly round, but might be cross-shaped, square, or even triangular.

Materials changed from predominantly stone and brick to some stone but mostly earth. Brick and stone structures are easily shattered by explosive shells, while piled earth is relatively resistant to bullets and explosives and can be repaired quickly. In fact, improvised fortifications were made almost entirely of earth. The old ditch-and-earthen-wall was as common in the American Revolution and the Napoleonic wars as it was on the battlefields of the Greeks and Romans. Another common technique used from the late Middle Ages through the 19th century was to make gabion, a

loosely woven tube of wicker-like reeds and grasses, three or four feet tall by a foot in diameter, with sharp stakes protruding from one end. The spiked end was thrust into the ground and the tube filled with earth, providing excellent cover against bullets (in ***GURPS*** terms, a foot-thick tube of packed earth provides a DR of 36, complete protection against TL3-5 firearms that do, at best, 5 dice of damage). A line of them provided excellent, rapidly built shelter for a besieging force.

A Wall Sufficient to Defend

But the most profound change was the replacement of tall, narrow towers with low, broad bastions. Like high walls, tall towers were vulnerable to cannon, which most towers in Medieval castles were too narrow to mount anyway. The defensive emplacements on gunpowder-era castles were triangle or diamond-shaped bastions. They were typically no taller than the adjacent sections of wall, and their shape made it easier to set up a volley of fire supporting adjacent bastions and sections of wall, although they gave castles a peculiar spiky ground plan (Figure 7).

The First World War, with its extensive trench networks on both sides, was in some ways the last hurrah of fortifications. Though shorter than the Great Wall of China, the trenches of WWI were probably the longest actively defended fortifications in history. In World War Two, aircraft and improved tanks showed the inadequacy of static fortifications against fast-moving modern war machines; France's Maginot Line, a string of pillboxes and trenches that would have been impregnable in WWI, collapsed instantly under the German blitzkrieg. Fortifications have not been rendered completely irrelevant by modern weapons; well-entrenched positions are a tough nut to crack for conventional forces and foxholes, in many ways the simplest fortification, will continue to be used for some time to come.

Nevertheless, these small fortifications provide little protection from nuclear weapons, poison gas, and biological agents. Even the best-protected fortifications of the Cold War, such as ICBM silos and NORAD's facility at Cheyenne Mountain, may not be able to survive a direct hit from a modern nuclear weapon. As nukes give way to orbital mass-drivers, nanotech matter disassemblers, and even more powerful ultra-tech weapons, tunnels will provide even less protection.

Instead, most modern military installations are built according to the same philosophy as ancient long walls. Their fences and patrolled zones are meant not to protect against direct assault, only to limit access to monitored gates and prevent casual intrusions. Particularly well-protected facilities have multiple layers of such "defenses," growing more complex as technology increases. Motion sensors, land mines, cameras, trip wires, electrified fences, infrared sensors, and barbed wire may not stop determined intruders, but they will slow them down and make them easy for active defenders to neutralize.

Fantasy Fortifications: Sheer Speculation

Just as fortifications are sensitive to changes in technology, they will be sensitive to the presence of magic. But just how their design is affected depends on the kind of magical threats a strong point is likely to face. Some magical effects will have no visible impact on fortification design. For example, many magical attacks will be countered by resident magicians with counterspells rather than by a change in design. In other cases magic will supplement mundane resources, not replace them. The presence of spells that create food and water may reduce dependence on wells and stored food, but no architect would be so foolish as to build a castle that depended on the presence of a magician who knew the appropriate spells (unless, of course, *everybody* knows the appropriate spells). But other spells will have an impact on how buildings look. The use of magic on high fantasy battlefields often falls into one of these categories:

Direct Assault

Fireballs, lightning, and great purple bolts of mystic power are fixtures of magical combat. Generic damage-dealing spells are often roughly similar in range and the damage they do to bows and early firearms (for example, ***GURPS*** combat spells) or siege engines and early cannon (say, mid-level ***AD&D*** fireballs). The architectural response will most likely be the same as the historical reaction to the growth of firearms. If low-power fireball-hurling mages are very common (that is, if more than a quarter of troops are able to cast damage-dealing spells or use magical items to the same effect), fortification walls are likely to be low and thick. Extremely powerful damage-dealing spells (high-level ***AD&D*** spells or high-power vulgar magick in ***Mage: The Ascension***) may push fortification design to the same point as modern fortifications; strong points will be underground, and defenses will be designed to monitor movement and control access, perhaps through a series of magical viewing stations, rather than to absorb raw damage. Wood has been rare in fortifications, but fireballs and other spells that have a specifically incendiary effect will rule out wooden fortifications altogether.

Structural Assault

Spells in many magic systems can be used to attack a fortification rather than its defenders. For example, earthquake spells might be used to knock down vulnerable castles. A world where earthquakes can be induced at will may see more seismically sound buildings than were produced historically: building with more flexible frames, which means more wood and less brick and stone, deeper foundations, and perhaps short walls and towers. Then again, perhaps not. Historical buildings around the tectonically active Mediterranean were never particularly resistant to earthquakes, even though the architects knew that earthquakes were a fact of life.

Spells that turn stone to earth or earth to mud will cause significant problems for the basic materials of fortifications. That may lead to composite walls, much like Celtic earth-and-wood walls, which cannot be destroyed with a single spell, as well as the incorporation of less commonly used materials such as metal (probably in the form of thick chains) and bone. An evil wizard's stronghold covered with grinning skulls may have been built that way for pragmatic reasons.

Death From Above

Dragons, pegasi, and flying carpets can pose a threat to fantasy fortifications that historical castles never had to face: airborne assault. To counter that threat, castles may have staging areas for their own air forces. However, given the relatively short range of low-tech missile weapons and many spells, it might be worth a castle-builder's while to make a castle more difficult to approach from the air. For example, a Japanese-style castle, with its relatively small ground plan, might be easily defended from fantasy campaign air attacks. There is less ground area to strafe and the closely-set towers are more difficult to maneuver between.

A tactic used in ancient naval warfare was to run heavy chains across the entrances to bays and narrow straits to prevent enemy ships from entering. A fortification could have a similar defense, with a web of chains strung between towers. This won't make it impossible to fly into the castle, but it will make it much harder for flying infiltrators to maneuver, particularly in poor visibility. Alternatively, if the defenders can fly and attackers generally can't, strong points may have no ground-floor entrances.

Finally, the GM may want to consider geomancy. Asia has a long tradition of designing buildings and placing them in the landscape to take advantage of mystic forces; feng shui are still employed to make sure that new buildings are placed in harmony with an invisible magical landscape. Geomantic concerns can effect fortifications in any setting, but may be a particularly important factor in worlds where magic clearly works. This can cause physical defensibility problems. For example, a geomancer may decide that a low hill is a more auspicious place to put a castle than a taller, steeper one overlooking it, potentially putting the castle in a place where attackers can rain arrows down into the walls. Particular shapes may also be imposed on fortifications regardless of the terrain. An evil wizard might build a perfectly pentagonal castle despite the local terrain, providing attackers with hiding places or easier approaches.

On the other hand, if fantasy architects build awkward fortifications, they may gain mystical advantages. For example, attackers might suffer small penalties or defenders might get small bonuses on their attacks because the fortification is in a "lucky" spot. Magic use might be particularly affected; in ***GURPS,*** building an appropriately shaped fortification might be the first step towards creating an area of aspected mana, with different shapes for particular kinds of magic.

Further Reading

Military Architecture, Eugene Emmanuel Viollet-Le-Duc
Trade Castles and Forts of West Africa, A. W. Lawrence
The Strongholds of India, Sidney Toy
History of Fortifications, Sidney Toy
Byzantine Fortifications, Clive Foss and David Winfield
Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire, Edward N. Luttwak
Castles in Japan, Morton S. Schmorleitz
Life in a Medieval Castle, Joseph and Francis Gies

Picture Credits

Figures 1, 3, 4, 6: *Military Architecture,* Eugene-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, James Parker and Co. (Oxford) 1879.

Figure 2: Original diagram by the author.

Figure 5: *Castles In Japan,* Morton S. Schmorleitz, Charles E. Tuttle Co. (Rutland, VT) 1974. Used with permission.

Figure 7: *Trade Castles & Forts of West Africa,* A. W. Lawrence, J. Cape (London) 1963. Used with permission.

An Adventure for GURPS Black Ops

by Rik Kershaw-Moore

Art by andi jones

What follows is a short ***GURPS Black Ops*** scenario designed for a mixed departmental party. It is written to be a one off scenario, but it is open ended enough to either be added as a little side scenario to an existing campaign against the Greys, or as the starting point for a new campaign.

The Lima Incident

Stop me if you have heard it . . .

A man walks into the Universal Underwriters Office in Lima, Peru. He introduces himself to the receptionist as John Drake and explains that he has an appointment with the business manager, Fernando Chavez. The receptionist directs him to a chair and pages Senor Chavez. Three minutes later everyone within the Universal Underwriters Offices is dead, killed by an unknown and highly lethal Prion.

Twelve hours before, the Agents are assigned to a brief stint in the Company Offices in Peru for a mountain survival refresher-training course. They arrive on site about 30 minutes after the last person has died and are the first people on the scene.

GM Eyes Only: What's Going On

John Drake was an ex-agent, with the emphasis on ex. He and the rest of his squad were listed KIA after a seek and destroy mission went sour in Madagascar nine months ago. Since the company could find no trace of the squad, and no signals were being received from their Omicron implants, it was assumed that the entire team had been killed.

What actually happened was the Greys they were hunting somehow captured the squad alive. These sinister aliens spirited the Agents away to an underground base where the Omicron signals could not reach. Once secure, the aliens went to work. Using their advanced mind control and surgical techniques, they not only managed to disable the Agent's Omicron devices but also learned the location of the company's front office in Peru. During these interrogations, all but one the agents were reduced to mindless vegetables. The last agent, John Drake, was

successfully brainwashed by the Greys and became a carrier for a new bio-weapon designed to kill only Company members.

This weapon is a wonderful example of Grey biotechnology. Using their advanced molecular manipulation technology they have crafted a Prion that attacks the protein coating of the Omicron poison sacs, causing them to break down and release the Omicron poison. Because of the Prion's small size, it can easily pass through the HEPA III air filtration system as used by the Company. Once released the Prion has a life span of only one hour before it is rendered harmless by UV light, thereby making it nearly untraceable.

[Note: Prions are small protein particles with no nucleic acid genome, which makes them unlike other pathogens such as viruses and bacteria, which contain nucleic acids. Naturally occurring Prions cause neuro degenerative diseases such as BSE in cattle and CJD in humans.]

The Grey plan is to use John Drake to sanitize the Lima Operation, thus allowing them access to the Lima BlackNet Node so that they can discover the locations of the other Company bases. If this plan works, the Greys intend to use the Prion to eliminate the Company. What the Greys did not factor into their equation was a squad arriving in the brief window between the neutralization of the Prion and their own arrival.

Character Introduction

This scenario starts with the usual Omicron call to action. Calling in, the agents are ordered to Peru to take part in an Academy Mountain Survival refresher course. The Agents are to travel by commercial transport, under an assumed name to Lima where they are to report to the Universal Underwriters Offices in Lima. Once there, they are to ask for Mr. Fernando Chavez who will brief them further.

The Lima Facility

The trip to Lima can either be mundane or exciting, depending on your own ideas. In the mundane version, the Agents fly coach, have a nice meal and arrive at the airport refreshed and perfectly relaxed.

In the semi-mundane version, the plane is hijacked in mid-air by your favorite NPC and the Agents can either decide to wait things out or to take things into their own hands. Bear in mind, as the Agents are flying coach they should not be carrying any weapons of any kind, so it could be an interesting challenge.

Finally, there is the white-knuckle version, where just as the plane carrying the Agents crosses into Peruvian airspace it has a close encounter with a Grey Spider craft. The resulting electromagnetic and gravitronic disruption will cause the plane to almost, but not quite, plummet out of the sky. Time to run your favorite airplane disaster movie cliches complete with airsickness, hysteria and panic.

Whatever happens, the agents will eventually get into a taxi driving along a wide modern highway that snakes along next to the ocean towards the Lima Operation.

The Universal Underwriters offices are located on a cliff overlooking the Pacific Ocean in a little district known as Miraflores. The office is a small two-story red brick building located in a tiny business park, next to a small carpet manufacturer.

Standing there, in the Universal Underwriters carpark, the world seems to be normal. Birds sing in the early evening air, cars drive slowly along the cliff top roads and a refreshing sea breeze blows off the ocean while the sun sinks slowly towards the horizon.

Reception Area

Alas, this impression does not last for long. Opening the door to the office, the agents are confronted by death. There

in the reception area are two bodies. The first is a woman slumped back in her chair behind the reception desk. The second is the corpse of a man in his early 30s. This man is wearing a visitors badge and has slid forward off the small sofa in reception and sprawled on the floor. A quick examination of the bodies reveals them warm to the touch, with no obvious signs of external trauma such as bullet wounds or the like. (This will be true of all the bodies found in the building.)

The receptionist is wearing a badge that identifies her as Gloria Ordonez, while the man on the floor carries no identification whatsoever. The visitor's book in reception identifies the man as John Drake. Checking through the reception desk drawers will turn up a key to the front door. Agents who open the man's briefcase will be surprised to discover that it is totally empty.

The Ground Floor

Pushing open the door that leads into the back of the building, the agents will find themselves in a short corridor. On their right are three doors, the first of which has a sign that says Damas (Ladies). The next door carries a sign that proclaims it to be Hombres (Gents) and the third door has a sign on it marked La Cocina (Kitchen). To the left is a single doorway that leads into the typing pool.

Inside the typing pool are the bodies of two women in their late 20s. One woman is lying on the floor behind her desk and her identity card says her name is Leticia Cavazos. The second woman, identified as Monica Quintana, has collapsed onto the platen of the office photocopier, which is mindlessly making copies of her face.

Both toilets are empty, but behind the third door lies the body of a man, a smashed cup of coffee by his out stretched fingers. He is lying in a small kitchen area that contains a sink, a fridge and a large double walk in cupboard. Anyone walking in to this cupboard will find themselves in an elevator. This elevator has three buttons marked 0, 1 and 2. The man's identity card identifies him as Fernando Chavez, their contact. Anyone searching his body will find in his wallet a smart card with the company logo printed on it. This card opens the door to the armory on sublevel 2.

The Upper Floor

The upper floor is accessed via an antique looking spiral staircase in the reception area. The front half of the upper floor is used up with two large meeting rooms, while the back half is divided into three offices and a small file storage area.

Each office door has a small plastic nameplate attached. One office belongs to Fernando Chavez, while the other two belong to an Ignacio Suarez and a Teresa Cortes respectively. The last two contain the bodies of their deceased owners. The file storage room contains row upon row of box files containing records of the firm's transactions, and a small locked safe. The safe contains $2000 US and a Beretta 92F Automatic Pistol.

Sub Level 1

Sub Level 1 is reached by taking the lift in the Kitchen. When the doors open, the Agents find themselves inside a standard Company concrete bunker that is the Operation's living quarters. In front of them there is a latrine facility that has wash basins, toilets and shower stalls, a sleeping area with two sets of three tier bunk beds, and a small canteen complete with kitchen and food store. On this sublevel, there are the bodies of three men and one woman. The woman lies curled up on the floor in the canteen, while the men are found lying the bunk beds.

Sub Level 2

This level contains the real heart of the Lima Operation. Here is the small but powerful computer center and workstations that are used to gather information on the situation in Peru. There is also a compact yet well equipped medical bay designed to provide front line medical aid to agents wounded in the course of their duties.

Next to the medical center is the armored bunker that contains the facilities armory. Swiping the correct smart card will open the door. Chavez has this card in his wallet. Inside the 4' x 6' space are the following weapons:

1 x Castor '97 MG
2 x Castor '94 Assault Carbines
4 x Beretta 92F Automatic Pistols
1 x M79 40mm Grenade Launcher
100 rnds 9mm Hollow Points
100 rnds 10.1mm APS for Castor '97 MG
400 rnds APS for Castor '94 Assault Carbine.
2 x Blackout Grenades
2 x Prism Grenades
6 x 40mm Concussion Grenades
1 x Experimental Cistron Fingerprint Interface Unit

Opposite the armory is the small nuclear reactor that powers the facility. The door to the reactor space is marked with Danger of Death and Radiation Hazard signs. In the reactor space is one of the two bodies on this level. The man is slumped on the floor next to the computer control console that monitors the reactor functions. A successful Engineering (Mechanical) or Mechanical (Fuel Cell) roll is needed to detect that the control rods have been partially withdrawn from the reactor core and the reactor is slowly going critical. It will take another successful roll to correct this situation. If left alone, the reactor will eventually go critical and explode in 1d days.

The final room on this sublevel is the communications center. This center is linked to all the major telecoms networks in South America as well as having a direct link to the Company. The second body on this level is here, collapsed over the main communications console, her fingers millimeters away from the facility's panic button.

What Happens Next

After checking the building over, it should be apparent to even the thickest Combat agent that something serious has happened here. It therefore follows that they ought to be doing something about it, and probably the smartest thing they can do is to report the situation to the Company. If they do they will be told to secure the building, leave everything intact and await reinforcements. If they don't report what they've found then a full assault squad will arrive the next day to secure the facility, and boy will the SecOps have some very pointed questions for the Agents.

Waiting Around

While they wait for reinforcements, the agents can perform any of the following departmental specific actions:

Science Ops can try to find out what killed the agents inside the facility. Probably the fastest way to do this is to perform an autopsy on the bodies. Each body will take 1d hours to fully autopsy, and the finding will be identical in each case. The victim died of heart failure caused by the Omicron toxin. No matter how hard the Science Op looks, they will not be able to detect what caused the toxin to be released.

If an autopsy is done on the man called John Drake, they will find that he, too, died of heart failure. Another interesting discovery is the presence of two chips in the man's neck. The first is a standard Omicron device, while the other is slightly larger and of a design not of this earth.

Intelligence & SecOps can fill in the time by examining the recordings made by the facility's surveillance cameras, or by trying to work out the identity of John Drake. Examining the security tapes does not really shine any light on what happened except to give an accurate time of death.

At 15:39 hours Zulu, John Drake walks in through the main door and marches quickly over to the reception desk. Here he puts down his briefcase before spending a few moments talking to the receptionist. She reaches over and says

something into an intercom before handing him a visitors badge and pointing at the sofa. The man nods to her, picks up his briefcase and walks over to the sofa, where he puts it down beside him. At 15:43 hours Zulu, he suddenly keels forward off the sofa and sprawls on the floor. From that point until the time the characters arrive, about an hour or so later, no one either enters or leaves the building.

The best method of discovering the identity of John Drake is to use the new Cistron Fingerprint Interface Unit. A successful result will identify the man as one Preston Mentzer, a Black Op who was listed KIA in Madagascar nine months ago.

Tech Ops can spend their time working on gadgets to help secure the facility such as motion sensors and the like, while **Combat Ops** will probably just start patrolling the perimeter or sit there being bored and listless. Don't worry guys, your time is sure to come.

Cistron Fingerprint Interface Unit

This small wedge-shaped black plastic unit, with a clear glass top, is designed to fit onto a standard issue Cistron. Once connected, it directly interfaces the Cistron to the BlackNet fingerprint archive. It is simple to use -- take the finger of the person you want to identify, and press it lightly against the glass panel (Note: the finger does not need to be attached to the rest of the person). A small LED laser then scans across the finger and the Cistron searches through the fingerprint archive until it finds a match. Well, that is the theory, it is after all totally experimental.

Every time it is used, the GM should roll a die. If the roll is a 5 or 6, then the device has malfunctioned. In case of this happening, the GM ought to roll another 1d and consult the table below:

1. The device picks up a latent fingerprint from the last person who used it. Normally this is the agent who fitted the Interface Unit to the Cistron. This can lead to some very interesting results.

2. The LED laser goes at little awry and does 1d-3 burn damage to the finger of the test subject.

3. The interface unit drops off the Cistron and breaks into three small components. It will take a successful Electronic Engineering roll to put the thing back together.

4. The interface unit causes the Cistron to crash. The Cistron will take 1d minutes to reboot.

5. Due to a programming error the Interface picks up the closest TV station and the LED displays a red light version of whatever happens to be on TV at the time.

6. The glass cover over the LED breaks, causing 1d-3 cut damage to the person who is being tested.

In the Middle of the Night

At around 2 am, a Grey flyer gently flits down from the skies and lands in the darkened carpark outside the facility. The flier disgorges three Greys, two Gammas and a Beta, before it quietly slips into the air once more. In all the flier is on the ground for less than 30 seconds. The Greys are not expecting any trouble since everyone inside should be dead, so they are only lightly armed, with only the Beta carrying a ranged weapon.

Their agenda is simple, to locate and hack into the facility's BlackNet link using the knowledge they have gained from their interrogation of the captured Black Ops.

Assuming no one is there to greet them, the Greys will quickly penetrate the facility, using an Electrolaser to melt the front door. Once inside the building they will begin to search slowly and methodically through the upper levels, looking for a way down to the sublevels.

At some point, the Greys will encounter the agents, and then all hell will break loose. It is possible that the Greys could

sneak in without being noticed or by tripping any alarms that the agents have set, in which case the Greys automatically have the initiative in the first combat round.

If things get too hot for the Greys, they will summon their flier to come and pick them up and then start to work their way back towards the exit. If all three aliens make it back to their flier successfully, then the saucer will just simply leave. If the agents have killed one or more Greys, then the saucer will turn its Scorcher ray on the building before it swoops off into the sky. The Agents do not have anything that is even remotely capable of putting even a dent in the saucer so there is not much they can do about it.

Grey Beta (Squad Leader)

ST: 25
DX: 15
IQ: 17
HT: 12
Move/Dodge: 7/7
PD/DR: 4/50
Reach: C,1
Size: 1
Weight: 129 lbs.
Weapon(s): Electrolaser, Forcerod

Grey Gamma (Squad Member)

ST: 25
DX: 14
IQ: 14
HT: 12
Move/Dodge: 7/7
PD/DR: 4/50
Reach: C,1
Size: 1
Weight: 132 lbs.
Weapon(s): Forcerod

Note: The terms Beta and Gamma denote intellectual ranking. These are simple names designed to allow GMs to assign status with a group of identical looking Greys.

Cleaning Up

With the cold light of morning comes help in the form of three large Company helicopters stuffed to the gills with Combat, SecOps and Science Ops just itching to find out what happened here. These guys will quickly relieve the Agents and secure the building. The dead bodies will be efficiently loaded onto one of the Choppers, while any alien bodies and artifacts will be loaded onto another chopper destined for the Lab. Finally the agents will be piled into the last chopper and there they will be debriefed on route to the Academy where they are to join another refresher course in the more demanding Sangre de Cristo Mountains.

After this training course, who knows? Perhaps the Company desperately wants to know what happened to the Lima Personnel and makes it a top priority to locate the source of the infection, and since the Agents have first-hand experience they get the job. I leave it up to you to decide.

New Bodychanging Spells for AD&D

by Lloyd Brown III

Art by andi jones

Cornell is a popular wizard who leads a small school of hand-picked apprentices. The group numbers from four to ten, and spends much time actively casting spells and gaining practical experience under the tutelage of their sagacious leader. They meet in a large building once used for building ships; it straddles a canal that leads to a nearby river. The spacious building and available source of protected water allow the students to practice their shape-changing skills without fear of interference from curious spectators or nervous rivals.

Cornell's students follow their leader's philosophies about spellcasting. His primary rule is that spells are far more effective when cast upon yourself than upon enemies. Enemies take great precautions to protect themselves from spells. Magic items, protective spells, and natural resistance (saving throws, in game terms) make enemies poor targets for spells. Any spell cast on yourself is guaranteed to succeed.

Furthermore, by changing your shape to assume a form better suited for a task, you often gain other benefits as well. If you need help in combat, you can turn your fist into stone. You can also use the stone fist to smash through windows or other fragile objects. You can also hammer nails or use the fist to secure a grip on something if you grab it before you cast the spell.

Cornell and his students are all transmuters, although they customarily restrict their chosen spells further than most transmuters. Their primary choices for spells are those that cause a transformation in the caster's body, with the goal of increasing the caster's abilities.

Existing spells that fit these requirements (from the ***Tome of Magic, Complete Wizard's Handbook,*** and ***Players Handbook***) are fist of stone, alter self, Murdock's feathery flyer, stoneskin, claws of the umber hulk, polymorph self, shape change, dragon scales, tentacles, wraithform, statue, duo-dimension, heart of stone, shadowform, and statue.

When these spells are not available, or to further round out their abilities, Cornell and his students choose spells that bestow abilities without changing shape. The students consider these spells helpful, but prefer to test their ingenuity with the spells named above. These secondary spells are spider climb, feather fall, strength, jump, strength, infravision, rusting grasp,

Mordenkainen's celerity, cat's grace, invulnerability to normal weapons, and Malec-Keth's flame fist.

As Cornell's students develop their skills, he grants them select spells from his years of searching and experimenting. The students know about Cornell's generosity and show him great loyalty during their apprenticeship, often staying on until they grow quite formidable themselves (students range from 4th to 14th level). As for Cornell, he considers his learning days over, and he is content to pass his knowledge on to others.

Newcomers are warned, however: Cornell is quite selective about his students, taking only human transmuters of good alignment who demonstrate their perseverance by petitioning him for apprenticeship through at least two rejections. Even successful applicants might have to wait for two years before seeing any of Cornell's unique spells. Advanced students learn 1 to 2 spells per year from the master.

Cornell's tomes, described by some of his oldest students, are a series of traveling spellbooks. His spells all fill the maximum space allowed to write (5 plus level in pages). Cornell's students claim this frustrating idiosyncrasy is meant to deter surreptitious copying of his spells. The books are a uniform 9" tall by 7" wide, ranging from 2" to 4" in thickness. The books are covered with a flat gray metal that looks and feels like lead but resists all alteration or invocation spells. The covers seem to be unfinished; the edges can cut careless hands. They contain all of the spells above, plus the new spells listed below.

Level One

Flippers (Alteration)

Range: 10 yards
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 turn/level
Casting Time: 1
Area of Effect: One target
Saving Throw: None

Cornell's first invention, and somewhat limited in application, flippers causes a target's feet to lengthen and widen, allowing increased movement through the water. The target's movement rate is improved by 3 in the water, and reduced by half on land. Wearing shoes prevents the spell from taking effect.

The material component is a bone or scale from any swimming creature.

Horn (Alteration)

Range: 5 yards/level
Components: V, S
Duration: 2 turns/level
Casting Time: 2
Area of Effect: One creature
Saving Throw: None

Horn causes the target creature to grow a sharp horn on the top of its head. The horn can be used to attack opponents for 1d4 damage, although it cannot be used in the same round as a weapon. It may be used with other natural attacks. The creature with the horn may charge (provided it is mobile enough to do so -- snails will *never* charge), doing double damage if the horn strikes. A helmet or hood usually cannot be worn if the creature has a horn.

Luminescence (Alteration)

Range: 30 yards
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 hour/level
Casting Time: 4
Area of Effect: One creature
Saving Throw: None

Seemingly a useful adaptation of the dreaded faerie fire, luminescence causes the target creature's body and surrounding area to glow in the dark, allowing him to see without further aid. The light is softer than a faerie fire, incurring only a +1 bonus on enemy attacks against the glowing character in darkness and no bonus in twilight or better, but it allows clear sight within 10'. The glowing character can read and perform most detail work.

The material component is a still-glowing antenna from a fire beetle.

Tail (Alteration)

Range: Touch
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 turn/level
Casting Time: 1
Area of Effect: One target
Saving Throw: None

Like wings, tail offers the advantage of being able to select an extra appendage to suit the situation. Tail allows for either a medium-length fluffy tail or a long, wiry tail. The fluffy tail gives the target improved balance, giving a +2 to AC when parrying, performing tasks like tightrope walking, or avoiding obstacles while moving over hazardous terrain. The wiry tail allows the character to pick up and carry small objects (10 pounds or less), although they cannot be used in combat or with a high degree of skill.

The material component is a length of leather cord with a small gem (10 gp) knotted onto the end.

Level Two

Become Familiar (Alteration)

Range: 0
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 3 turns
Casting Time: 2
Area of Effect: The caster only
Saving Throw: None

Become familiar functions only for a caster with a familiar. The caster transforms into an animal exactly like his familiar, gaining any abilities based on form, intellect, or senses. The familiar does not change shape, and the link between wizard and familiar is maintained perfectly.

The material component is saliva or blood from the caster's familiar.

Carapace (Alteration)

Range: 0
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 turn/level
Casting Time: 2
Area of Effect: The caster only
Saving Throw: None

When a wizard casts carapace, the caster's normally soft and pliable skin is replaced by a hard, chitinous shell. Armor class improves by 4 points, although Dexterity is reduced by the same amount. Carapace may be combined with any abjuration magic, shield, armor, or most other spells but cannot be combined with physical armor. When adorned with a carapace, the caster also receives a +2 modifier vs. all cold attacks.

The material component is a shell from a crab, lobster, or other sea creature. Turtle shells and other bony types do not work.

Claw (Alteration)

Range: Touch
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 2 rounds/level
Casting Time: 3
Area of Effect: One target
Saving Throw: None

Claw causes the target to grow long, hair nails capable of rending flesh and scoring hard wood. The target may attack with these sharp claws for 1d6 points of damage, even making an attack with each claw every round with no penalties. Any weapons, however, are at -1 on attack rolls, and spellcasting with a somatic component is 25% likely to fail. The target also suffers -10% (or -2 to proficiency rating) on any skills that require delicate manual dexterity, such as gemcutting, picking locks, or weaving.

The material component is the claw of a dragon or (more likely) a feline.

Fangs (Alteration)

Range: 0
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 turn/level
Casting Time: 2

Area of Effect: The caster only
Saving Throw: None

The first application of fangs allows a caster to effectively bite in combat for 1d4 damage. The spell also helps the caster effectively impersonate certain creatures, vampires being the most notable. The bite attack can be used in addition to pummeling or grappling attacks, but not in conjunction with a weapon of any kind.

A second, less common version of fangs allows the caster to grow strong biting teeth, capable of chewing through leather, wood, or even soft metal. Biting damage is only 1d2 points, but the caster might be able to escape bonds, destroy armors, or sabotage lines on board a ship with his teeth. The variation desired is chosen when the spell is memorized.

The material component is a tooth from any creature with an effective bite attack.

Spines (Alteration)

Range: 0
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 turn + 1 turn/level
Casting Time: 2
Area of Effect: The caster only
Saving Throw: None

When a caster casts spines, he begins to grow hard, bony spikes all over his body. The spines take 1d6 rounds to appear, allowing the caster to remove clothing that might be damaged. Any attackers attempting to grapple or overbear, including animals such as snakes using their natural attacks, take 1d4 damage each round. Biting or clawing attackers also take damage, but only 1d3.

The material component is a porcupine or hedgehog quill.

Level Three

Animal Form (Alteration)

Range: 0
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 turn/level
Casting Time: 3
Area of Effect: The caster only
Saving Throw: None

Animal form is an attempt by wizards to mimic the druidic ability to shape change. The target may assume the form of any animal, as long as its hit dice are less than the caster's level. The target must have seen the animal and cannot change form once the shape is selected. Thus, if a person turns into a deer to deliver an important message to a distant tribe of centaurs, he cannot change into a bear when spotted by hunters.

The material component is a bit of mistletoe.

Natural Form (Alteration)

Range: 0
Components: V
Duration: Permanent

Casting Time: 1
Area of Effect: The caster only
Saving Throw: None

Natural form is used by wizards who have been polymorphed into other shapes unwillingly and find that the new shape is not as useful as their original. The spell transforms the wizard back into his normal shape. It can be used to counter an enemy's spell or to cancel the wizard's own spell.

The verbal component is a simple grunt that can be uttered by nearly any mammal form and possibly others. The DM may decide if the spell can be cast on an individual basis, or allow 90% of all mammal shapes, 60% of all reptilian/amphibian forms, and 20% of all avian forms to be able to duplicate the verbal component. Monsters use the animal form they most closely resemble, although some can clearly speak (efreet, gynosphinxes, dragons, and others). Wizards who are temporarily plants, fish, insects, and slimes may not use this spell.

Six-Limbs (Alteration)

Range: 0
Components: V, S
Duration: 3d4 rounds + 2 rounds/level
Casting Time: 3
Area of Effect: The caster only
Saving Throw: None

Six-limbs is an improved version of alter self that allows the caster to assume the forms of creatures with six appendages, like centaurs, urds, pegasi, and others. Only forms with six appendages may be assumed by this spell. In other respects, it conforms to the 2nd level spell, alter self.

Totem Animal (Alteration)

Range: 0
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 hour
Casting Time: 3
Area of Effect: The caster only
Saving Throw: None

Totem animal is attuned to one particular animal when the wizard researches or copies the spell, although each caster may know more than one version of totem animal. This spell allows the caster to assume the animal's form and gains all abilities based on dexterity, senses, or physical form. Thus, a caster whose totem animal is a shark casts this spell and turns into a shark, gaining an incredible sense of smell, high swimming speed, and a fearsome bite attack.

The material component is an ivory carving of the caster's totem animal. The ivory costs about 20 gp, and the caster must carve the figurine himself, taking about a week. The carving may be reused indefinitely.

Trog Stink (Alteration/Evocation)

Range: 30 yards
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 5 rounds/level
Casting Time: 3
Area of Effect: One creature
Saving Throw: None

Trog stink makes the target creature smell like an angry troglodyte, inflicting the normally-associated penalties on attackers within 10' (saving throw vs. poison or lose 1d6 Strength points for 1 turn). Since the target creature does not smell the odor, he is not affected. The spell can be used defensively on a lone character or used to embarrass and annoy an enemy. A bard who has been unknowingly targeted by this spell might chase his audience away faster than a burning building!

The material component is a troglodyte javelin, preferably one with a strong odor attached.

Wings (Alteration)

Range: Touch
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1d4 rounds/level
Casting Time: 3
Area of Effect: One man-sized human/humanoid target
Saving Throw: None

Wings can only be cast on a human or humanoid target, allowing the target to grow wings for the duration of the spell. The caster can choose which type of wings to bestow. Each type offers different performance and appearance.

If wings is cast on a target in leather armor of any kind, the wings tear apart the armor (but not magical armor), growing in 1d4 rounds and damaging themselves for 2d4 points of damage. Growing wings in any metal armor inflicts 4d4 points of damage on the wings. If the wings survive, the armor is destroyed.

The caster can choose from 1) reptilian, bite-like wings, 2) transparent insectoid wings, or 3) feathery avian wings. The bat wings allow movement at Fl 24, and MC C. They are destroyed after taking 18 points of damage from direct attacks (called shots or randomly-determined damage by the DM). The insectoid wings allow Fl 14, but MC A, including the ability to hover and move backward. The insect wings are the weakest, taking only 12 points of damage before being destroyed. Feathery wings allow a versatile movement of Fl 18, at MC B, and allow for silent flight (+1 to surprise rolls). They are also the strongest, having 24 hp.

The material component are a feather, a piece of leather, and a piece of silk.

Level Four

Crystal Form (Alteration)

Range: 0
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 turn/level
Casting Time: 4
Area of Effect: The caster only
Saving Throw: None

The spellcaster's body becomes hard and crystalline. His AC is reduced by 2 points, he can attack with bare hands or fists for 1d6 points of damage, and he becomes resistant to many attacks (bleeding, acids, itching, drowning, sleep, etc.). Armor cannot be worn during the change. Crystal form also triples the caster's weight, which might prevent or hinder certain actions (swimming, for example).

The material component is a small block of rock crystal, worth 25 gp.

Dragon Breath (Alteration)

Range: 0
Components: V, S
Duration: 1 round/level
Casting Time: 5
Area of Effect: The caster only
Saving Throw: None

When dragon breath is cast, the caster's head grows into a draconian horror, with small horns, scales, and fierce teeth. Regardless of the color of dragon the caster partially becomes, the caster can bite for 1d8 damage. Damage from the breath weapon is 3d4, and the breath can be used once every 3 rounds during the spell's effect. The area of effect of the breath weapon and damage inflicted vary with the type of dragon head.

Head Color	Attack Form	Shape
White	Cold	20' long x 5' wide cone
Black	Acid	30' long x 3' wide line
Blue	Lightning	30' long x 3' wide line
Green	Gas	20' x 20' x 20' cloud
Red	Fire	20' long x 5' wide cone

Living Hands (Alteration/Necromancy)

Range: 0
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 2 rounds/level
Casting Time: 4
Area of Effect: The caster only
Saving Throw: None

Living hands allows the caster the gruesome but sometimes useful ability to detach his own hands. They become crawling claws under the caster's command, at any range they can reach before the spell ends. When the spell ends, the hands, magically disappear from wherever they are and reappear on the end of the caster's arms, fully restored to health, unless they were completely destroyed. If one of the crawling claws is destroyed completely, it does not reappear, leaving the caster minus a hand (or both!). The hand can be restored with a regenerate, a heal, or a wish spell.

The material component is a snakeskin glove.

Totem Hybrid (Alteration)

Range: 0
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 hour+1d6 turns
Casting Time: 4
Area of Effect: The caster only
Saving Throw: None

Totem hybrid allows the caster to assume a bipedal form offering most of the benefits of both his human (or elven, or other) shape and the natural benefits of his totem animal form. If the caster's totem animal has a similar lycanthrope, the movement rates, attack forms, and AC of the similar lycanthrope may be used. The caster is not immune to normal weapons, however. If no such lycanthrope exists, the DM and player must establish which movements and natural attacks are possible based on the totem animal in question.

Generally, the wizard may use the senses of the totem animal, retains the use of his hands, and gains an AC bonus (an average of his natural AC of 10 and the totem animal's AC).

The material component is a jade carving of the caster's totem animal. The jade costs 100 gp and the carving must be made by the caster, taking him about 10 days. As with totem animal, this component may be reused.

Zombie Form (Alteration)

Range: 0
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 turn/level
Casting Time: 4
Area of Effect: The caster only
Saving Throw: None

The caster's flesh becomes rotted and foul when he casts zombie form, making him appear as a zombie, mummy, or possibly a lich. He gains standard undead immunities while the spell is in effect (immune to cold, charm, sleep, poison, paralyzation). He also moves slowly (Mv 3) and attacks last in melee combat, although he uses standard weapon damage (not the 1d8 regardless of weapon, as a normal zombie). The wizard can still cast spells in zombie form.

The material component is a piece of flesh from a zombie destroyed by a priest's granted power.

Level Five

Beast Form (Alteration)

Range: 0
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 2 rounds/level
Casting Time: 5
Area of Effect: The caster only
Saving Throw: None

Beast form turns the caster into a hairy monster that looks like it might be the hybrid form of some lycanthrope. This spell combines claw and fang, and gives the caster a thick skin and body hair, improving AC by one point. The caster gains an acute sense of smell (effective to a tracking proficiency rating of 12) and hearing (surprised only on a 1). Running movement is improved by 3 points.

The material component is a hair from a lycanthrope of any kind.

Elemental Form (Alteration)

Range: 0
Components: V, S
Duration: 1 round/level
Casting Time: 5
Area of Effect: The caster only
Saving Throw: None

Elemental form allows the caster to become a small creature of one of the four elements, chosen when the spell is memorized. The caster becomes an elemental with HD equal to the caster. Elementals of less than 8 HD are size M, 9-12 HD are size L, and 13+ HD elementals are size H. The character gains the abilities and restrictions of elementals, except that they are not under the control of any other characters. Spells especially designed to control elementals,

however, can affect the caster. The character is not affected by protection from evil. The caster can otherwise, move, attack, and harm creatures as if he were an elemental of the appropriate form.

[*Editor's Note: You can check out Lloyd's latest freelance work -- a real and online game store at www.SgtSniff.com.*]

Skull Valley

by Greg DeAngelo

Art by andi jones

[*Editor's Note:* The author has a complete set of pregenerated characters, additional historical background, maps, and pictures at his website.]

At first, the Army tried to hide it! But now, two primeval forces have been unleashed by the power of the Atom Bomb -- *and nothing can stand in their way!!*

Introduction

Skull Valley

Spring, 1953. Dean Martin and Perry Como are on the radio while Bill Haley is poised to comet over the airwaves. Burt Lancaster and Deborah Kerr are on the silver screen. Eisenhower's in the White House, and something's on the loose in Utah! At the Dugway Proving Ground, an experiment has gone horribly wrong, and the Army's attempts to cover up the failure have proved disastrous. It's giant, mutated scorpions versus the blob from the stratosphere in a no-holds-barred fight to the finish, with the PCs and the 300,000 innocent civilians of Salt Lake City caught in the middle! And if you're lucky, some rock and roll on the side!

This is original material developed for ***GURPS Atomic Horror.*** The events and people involved are fictitious, and any resemblance to actual persons or events is purely coincidental (well, maybe not purely coincidental . . . they *did* kill the sheep).

Setting

In and around Skull Valley, Utah, an area 30 some-odd miles southwest of Salt Lake City, the city of Clover peacefully resides. It's a dry, rustic place of majestic beauty, home to sheep and cattle herders, along with some farmers who continually battle the elements to keep their dusty crops alive. Mountain ranges line the horizons, and in the long, flat valleys some wooded areas thrive. Most of the arid land supports clumps of tall desert grasses and groundcover, pygmy evergreens, and sparse vegetation with surprisingly abundant wildlife, including mule deer and pronghorn antelope.

The Skull Valley Indian Reservation is home to a portion of the Goshute tribe of Native Americans, who make their living raising livestock, burying toxic waste, and leasing Federal land to the Hercules Industries corporation, a manufacturer of advanced and experimental jet engines.

The toxic waste comes from the Dugway Proving Ground, an Army base established in 1942 by President Roosevelt that (along with the nearby Deseret Test Center, Hillover Air Force Range, and the Wendover Range installations) occupies most of the Great Salt Lake Desert, a wasteland of salty sand surrounded by ridges of granite mountains. At Dugway, Roosevelt and the U.S. Army commenced research into biological and chemical weaponry. In 1946, plans and samples of experimental biological agents were retrieved from secret Nazi research facilities outside of Nuremberg; these samples were transported to Dugway, and in the isolated deserts of Utah, the damnable research continued.

Characters

The Feds

Gordon Douglas and James "Jimmy" Senra are special agents working out of the FBI's Los Angeles Bureau Office. Their successful and highly publicized involvement in cracking open a ring of corrupt cops struck at the highest levels of the LAPD and lead to swift promotions from "research and records" to "special field agents." They are now partners, currently unassigned, but eager to take on the next big case. And if that case generates some additional publicity because of their reputation, well, so much the better for advancement in the crazy, status-driven worlds of LA crime and politics.

The Scientist

Dr. Edmund Gwenn served his country in the Great War, and witnessed first-hand the horrible effects of chemical weaponry on the boys in the trenches. Following the War, Dr. Gwenn became obsessed with the subject, studying chemistry, biology, zoology, and the application of these sciences to both preserve and destroy human life. He answered the call again when his country returned to war in Europe, and the military recognized the potential of his talents and shipped him, not to some island hopping PT boat or rough and ready combat squad, but to Dugway. There, Gwenn continued his research while learning about nuclear physics, rocketry, and other technical advances brought about by WWII. If not for the size and magnitude of his blunder (and the skill of the U.S. Army's cover-up specialists) Dr. Edmund Gwenn's name would now be as familiar as that of Einstein or Oppenheimer.

The Colonel

Veteran of two world wars, Colonel Charles Russel commands Dugway Proving Ground with authority and respect, always aware of the magnitude of the responsibility apportioned to him. The deadly microbes and lethal chemicals that are in constant development must be heavily guarded, and Col. Russel is the man for the job -- lean, tough, salt and pepper short cropped hair, fiercely intelligent bright blue eyes. The Colonel is also the impetus for the Hercules contract. Dugway supports the Air Force's high-altitude test flights based from the Hill Air Force Range, and Col. Russel sealed the deal to make Hercules Industries (stationed inside the Skull Valley Reservation) the prime contractor for the Air Force's experimental jet engines. Hercules Industries is owned indirectly by Antonio Starke, a wealthy industrialist and former Lieutenant who served under then Captain Russel in the European theater.

The Press

Fess Parker hates LA and hates writing about LA and hates writing about the people in LA, but she's one of the best there is. Writing in a man's world, she succeeds by being better than the boys, beating them at their own game but doing it with style, grace, and tenacity. She's brought down football players on the take and cops on the lam, and her expose of the City of Los Angeles' utter disrespect of earthquake codes netted her a Pulitzer Prize in 1951. Fess wrote several pieces during the last year concerning corruption in the LAPD, and as a result has been following the careers

of Special Agents Douglas and Senra, half out of respect for their work, half out of hope for good scoops. She notices that they're suddenly missing from their offices, and when she gets wind of the troubles in Utah, she's on the next plane for Provo . . .

The Academic

The beautiful prodigy Dr. Irene Yeaworth blossomed into her intellect at a young age, but her drop-dead good looks developed much later. Somewhat awkward and standoffish around the opposite sex, she is the youngest post-doctorate research student at UCLA, specializing in chemistry, forensics, botany, and zoology as they relate to the native species of the southwest United States -- particularly the venomous sorts. Raised by her father after her mother was killed by a poisonous king snake while camping, Irene is as at home in the lab as she is roughing it in the desert Southwest. Physically, she represents the 50's ideal, platinum blonde hair with a full figure and a winning smile. Mentally, she's one of the sharpest minds in the business and provides support to law enforcement throughout Southern California in suspected poisoning cases and other crimes where her unique blend of talents comes to bear. Not surprisingly, her path has crossed with Dr. Gwenn's several times during their respective careers, and they have a mutual respect for each other.

The Heat

Sheriff Steve Whitmore does what he can to keep his 12 deputies busy in Tooele County, Utah, mostly by sponsoring dinners and other fund-raisers. Not much happens in Tooele, and if it did, it would probably involve the military anyhow. Steve left his home of Salt Lake City when the Communists invaded Korea, and he fought along the 38th parallel with the best of 'em. Upon his return, life at his father's appliance sales and repair store didn't seem very important. He replaced the retiring sheriff and vowed to be vigilant in his duty to protect the American way of life from the Communists, but lately he despairs that the fight may be a war of attrition, one bake sale at a time.

Plot

A summary of events leading up to the adventure follows:

(1) 1951: The Air Force's test of an experimental, atomic powered jet engine aircraft fails (miserably).

The jet's original high-altitude flight path was from Edwards AFB in California to Hill AFB in Utah. It suffered intense cosmic radiation, possibly originating from a single point source, such as a ray gun. (GM's should use discretion on involving aliens or Illuminated plots, there's already a whole lot going on in Skull Valley.) The failure of the engine, combined with the deadly, unknown radiation mutates the pilot (Col. Steve Dallas). The jet crash lands, not at the target site, but in the desert three miles from the Skull Valley reservation.

(2) The Army discovers the blob.

A 50 man platoon descends on the crash site, with Gwenn and Russel in attendance. They discover the unmoving, purplish goo that was Col. Dallas. Gwenn convinces Russel that the blob is dangerous, although inert, and suggests biological detoxification. The platoon hits it with a 'microbe bomb', which has the unintended affect of animating the blob. One soldier, who volunteered to try to get a sample of the blob, is sucked in and consumed. The blob begins growing, and Russel orders an atomic strike.

(3) The Army drops an unplanned bomb.

The soldiers barricade the area, securing it, and Russel announces an unplanned atomic explosion. To the media, the story is that a new readiness response factor is being tested. Indians from the reservation severely protest, but the bomb goes off at dusk, six hours after the crash. The Goshute are outraged at the danger of radiation and stage protests. Army intelligence leaks stories to the press about Communist sympathizers in the Goshute camp. The Hercules Industries contract suddenly becomes open for re-compete. Goshute protests are stilled, the contract is won, and the

McCarthy witch hunts don't reach into the Utah desert; but John BigTree and Nathan SitsAtDusk do not forget what happened in Skull Valley . . .

(4) 1952: The fallout.

Although the blast appeared to have destroyed the blob, it did not. Born in the atomic fires of high-altitude cosmic rays and a malfunctioning atomic reactor, the blob absorbed the impact and the energy from the blast, but was driven deep underground. As it returns slowly to the surface, the radiation is having strange effects on the native population of Skull Valley. One of the first affects of radiation exposure is on the ability to reproduce, causing sterility in almost all cases. A generation of insects, birds, and reptiles have vanished, died off without offspring. Except for one lucky(?) female whip-tail scorpion (species *Mastigoproctus*, commonly known as the Vinegaroon) who was in the process of bearing her young when exposed to intense radiation. Her seven offspring grew at an alarming rate, eating most of the remaining animals and insects in the area while reaching a length of 10 to 12 feet in just over a year . . . wow!

Meanwhile, by December 1952 every eye witness to the bombing save Dr. Gwenn and Col. Russel has either been killed in a tragic two-helicopter collision or been transferred to Ice Station Zebra on the warm northern coast of Antarctica.

(5) 1953: The adventure. With the native fauna drastically reduced, the blob and the scorpions are gonna get hungry.

And they like to eat meat . . .

Now, the cattle and the sheep were gonna get eaten anyhow, and it just might be poetic justice if the sad remains of Col. Dallas absorb a couple dozen soldiers, but there's a sleepy little town of 8,000 called Clover, Utah, and a lot of innocent people are going to find themselves served up for lunch unless somebody stops these things. And the greater Salt Lake City area (population 300,000) is just 30 short miles away . . .

Encounters

The encounters are, of necessity, a little vague, as they depend on which characters your players want to run. Players will probably find a diverse assortment of characters advantageous, but if numbers are short, the adventure works fine with just one or two. Any of the archetypes from ***GURPS Atomic Horror*** work great, even "the kid." (Unfortunately, the kid is invariably living with stepparents, and the life span of stepparents can be depressingly short in ***GURPS Atomic Horror.***)

One possible series of events is outlined below, but feel free to use these as guidelines. Be flexible. Keep things moving and encourage alternative solutions to saving the populace of Clover, Utah.

Briefing at FBI Headquarters, Los Angeles, California.

Whitaker Jesup, Division Chief, is a hard-ass, and no one much likes him, but he gets the job done and is "in" with J. Edgar Hoover so there's never any shortage of funds funneled into LA. Whitaker will pull the young, hotshot Feds into his office, chew then out about being publicity hogs and lecture them about diligence and the routine of life in the Agency. Then, as if to prove his point, he assigns them the unenviable task of investigating some cattle mutilations in Utah. "See how ya' fair in the desert heat, Hollywood!"

Alternatively, the press can get word of the mutilations, or the academics can get called in to investigate the strange manner of death.

The Mutilated Cattle at Jefferson's Ranch.

Old Man Jefferson married a Goshute woman and together they have a marginally prosperous cattle ranch outside of Clover, Utah. Their ranch backs up on the Skull Valley reservation.

Their cattle have recently been the victim of a most gruesome violation. Upon arrival, the PC's will discover pieces of cattle, with edges melted, missing, oozing. (Squeamishness checks aplenty! Maybe even a Fright Check or two.) Even to the untrained, it should be apparent that this is no coyote attack. There are no predator footprints, and the wounds are not consistent with teeth or claw marks.

Old Man Jefferson and wife will not be able to provide any insight. The incident occurred at night, no one heard a thing (except, perhaps, for a snoopy player character "kid" . . . but no one's gonna believe the kid until it's too late). There are two patches of upturned soil, roughly circular in shape, about 20 feet in diameter. Upon very close examination (lab equipment and some appropriate science skill rolls) the upturned soil in these crop circles is actually dead. No microbes, no grass, nothing organic remains in the patches.

A Talk With the Elders

While investigating at Old Man Jefferson's ranch, sharp-eyed PCs will notice two figures on horseback watching them from a distance. If they are noticed and approached, the figures will come to the party.

The two men are John BigTree and Nathan SitsAtDusk, tribal elders of the Goshute. The men will react coldly towards the party (-2 on reaction rolls) but wish to relay their thoughts on the situation. They will report that the Spirits are displeased with the white man. It turns out that the site of the Dugway atomic blast was nearly on-top of a tribal burial mound, and the resultant damage and radiation is a desecration of the highest imaginable magnitude. The elders will claim that because of the insult, the Spirits have acted, and that is why there are no creatures living on the desert (Area Knowledge will confirm that there has been a significant drop off in wildlife over the past year and a half). The elders will claim that the Spirits will continue to plague the white man's cattle and sheep, and maybe the white man himself.

The elders will not volunteer any information on how to stop the attacks of the Spirits, and they have no knowledge of the crop circles. If asked about the crop circles, they will seem confused and then note that the Spirits work in strange ways.

Dugway

The PCs credentials, especially if they've joined forces with the local sheriff, will gain them access to Dugway itself. On the first visit to the base, they will be received by Russel and Gwenn. They will get nothing but the official story out of them, but they can gain access to a laboratory if desired.

A Night on the Town!

This is very useful if the PCs haven't met up with someone important yet (like another player character such as the kid, the sheriff, or the press). The Soda Shoppe-and-Go-Go is where all the kids hang out, but it’s got the best food in town and a really polite wait staff and it's air conditioned (ice-cold, of course). It wouldn't be a 50's adventure without a little rock-and-roll, maybe a fist-fight, have the sheriff come break it up, go crazy. Other hot spots include the bowling alley and (obviously) the drive-in theater.

Missing Persons

The next morning, the PCs will be summoned by the local sheriff to Merriweather's Service Station. Just west of town, the Merriweather family ran a combination auto service station and grocery. The Merriweathers lived upstairs of the grocery, and the gas pumps and a small garage are located in front and to the side (respectively) of the main building.

A passing motorist notified the police after finding no one in the store and shotgun shell casings littered about. From the evidence, it appears that some one fired a weapon repeatedly, but no blood stains or other indications of violence will be apparent. The sheriff can confirm that John Merriweather owned a shotgun, but can offer no other information.

No crop circles will be found, but observant PC's can discover the shotgun slugs themselves. The bullets will all be

found (if someone takes the time to count the shell casings and the recovered bullets) in the same area. Roughly circular, but the PCs can't tell for sure. They can tell that if it is a circle, it is larger than the ones at Jefferson's ranch (the bullet circle is roughly 30 feet in diameter).

Some of the bullets will have a sticky, gooey residue on them, slightly purplish and almost pulsing. This is blob ectoplasm either left behind as the blob traveled through the earth or blown clear of the blob by a close range shotgun blast to a pseudopod. If examined in a lab, the ectoplasm will be revealed to be highly alkaline (basic). It will actually move under its own power (albeit slowly); it moves away from light and water. Nothing else of importance will be learned, but feel free to make up important, science-sounding stuff.

And Then There Are the Sheep . . .

It just keeps getting worse. On the heels of the disappearance of the Merriweathers, another report of mutilation comes across the sheriff's radio. Johnny and Kenny Bravo, brothers, tend sheep on a ranch between Jefferson's place and Clover. A third of their sheep were slaughtered in the early morning hours.

Upon examining, it quickly becomes apparent that something strange (?!?) is afoot. No crop circles, no melted flesh, no purple ooze. These sheep have been hacked asunder, split, torn, raked, and battered. Forensics or zoology (or other appropriate skill) can be used to determine that the bite marks and other wounds were definitely not coyote or wolf; a critical success will indicate that the wounds are consistent with crushing and cutting attacks of scorpions or spiders.

A small lake sits peacefully behind the Bravo's, and one of the city's main street water runoff lines empties into it. From this end, it looks like a tunnel, dark and inviting. A trail of dismembered sheep and parts of sheep leads straight to it. Of course it's a trap!

As the PC's get close to the tunnel, a whiptail scorpion attacks!

After dispatching the scorpion, investigation will yield the following info: The attacker was a female scorpion, recently devoid of young; there were probably 6 or 7 scorpions in her "litter"; they almost assuredly destroyed the sheep and traveled up the sewer to escape the daylight.

The sewer runs right into downtown. For kicks, have a broad opening in the sewer lines right behind the Soda Shoppe-and-Go-Go.

The Preparation

The characters may attempt to plot the blob attacks. From a map of the town, it should become obvious that the blob is heading towards the food supply, aka downtown Clover. Ditto the scorpions. Neither entity likes daylight much, so the characters will have several hours to come up with some kind of plan.

This part of the adventure depends on several factors: how favorably Gwenn and Russel have reacted towards the group, how involvement with the local law has progressed, and how much scientific evidence the characters have managed to uncover. There is much that could happen this fateful afternoon. Troops from Dugway could be called in (40 riflemen and 10 bazooka). Local populace could be warned. Experimental chemicals could be fabricated.

Outside help will not be available. Salt Lake City is indeed only 30 miles away, but (of course) a major route through the mountains has been closed by a rock slide and is impassable.

The Showdown

This should be fun to roleplay. Two giants of the genre tackling each other on Main Street, confused populace running around, Army types trying to gather their forces and courage, scientists waiting in the wings with the miracle cure, Feds trying to make sense of it all and protect the women-folk (remember, this is the 50's).

One possible solution involves getting the blob to attack the scorpions. If it consumes them, within 3d turns the scorpions exoskeletons will be dissolved. The ensuing acid-base reaction will proceed at a rapid pace, releasing great quantities of heat and gasses. The blob will begin to visibly swell, and anyone witnessing the expansion can make an IQ roll to realize what is going on and take cover.

The ensuing explosion, with purple goo falling everywhere within a 500-yard radius of the blob, will effectively eliminate both threats. But the town's gonna need some serious cleaning. And the PCs would be advised to make sure that no pieces of the blob are big enough to continue animation on their own.

Epilogue

Be sure to play up the "things man was not meant to know" aspect if some characters died or if the PCs resorted to calling in an air strike to level the beasts (and the town along with it). But excessive remorse for dead "extras" should not be shown.

Bonus points for originality in coming up with a plan. Most plans should work -- they almost always did in the movies. Also, bonus points for getting any romantic interest kindled between the lead characters -- they almost always did in the movies. And, in wrapping up the adventure, be sure to leave a hint about a possible sequel . . .

Critter Stats

Whiptail Scorpions

aka Vinegaroons
aka *Mastigoproctus Gigantus* (bitingly ironic, don't ya' think?)

Whiptail scorpions differ from traditional scorpion. For starters, they have no poison glands and no chelated pinchers. They hunt prey by grabbing the victim between their legs and crushing the poor fellow. They thus get one attack, not two attacks, with their powerful legs.

But their real front legs are long and thin. They're called antennaeform, and they use them to feel around for vibrations and objects and such. They have four pair of weak eyes, and they are nocturnal meat eaters; they prefer to kill and then drag their prey back to their nests or holes.

They get their name from their unusual tail. They do not have a stinger like a "normal" scorpion, but instead have a caudal appendage, or thin whiplike tail. From this tail, the scorpions can spray a misty cloud of powerful acetic acid! The following stats are for the giant, mutated scorpions, which are about twice the size of a human, about 6-7 hexes long.

ST 45
DX 12
IQ 2
HT 15/25
Move 12
Dodge 9
PD 3
DR 5

Attacks: Crush with front legs, 2d+1 crushing damage; successful crush means the victim is stuck between the front legs. Quick contest of ST on the next turn to get free...if the critter wins than it gets an automatic hit!

Acid Spray has a range of 10 hexes, does 1d-3 damage each turn for 1d turns if hit.

Pierce with pinchers (jaws) does 1D impaling.

The Blob

aka the mutated remains of doomed Colonel Steve Dallas

Like the scorpions, the blob is a nocturnal meat eater. It is nigh-immune to fire, radiation, heat, and gunfire. Shells bounce off of it. (It is randomly dangerous to fire bazookas at it.) It will react by moving away from concussive explosions, electricity, or water. It can travel through solid earth by dissolving and excreting the rock. In doing so, it dissolves any organic material. This leaves circular patches in grass or crops where it enters and exits the underearth. It can kinda creepily bubble-up all around you if you're not careful.

The blob dissolves meat by engulfing it and allowing its extremely caustic (i.e., alkaline) interior juices to break down the food. The blob is the size of a small apartment building by the time it attacks Clover. Note that a small slice of the blob, if obtained, will behave like the larger blob but will become inert after 2d hours unless it is allowed to feed (and therefore grow). The blob doesn't lose any organic matter it processes; it simply keeps getting bigger.

ST 70
DX 7 (12)
IQ 3
HT 15/90
Move 3
Dodge 0
PD n/a (~0)
DR n/a (~0)

Attacks: Pseudopod punch; the blob can instantly form up to four pseudopod "arms" to swing at anything within 20 yards. This attack (at DX 12) does 2d crushing damage, and if it hits, then the victim is stuck and will be pulled into the blob. The pseudopod arms have a ST of 12 and victims get one contest of ST to pull free before being sucked in (anyone nearby can help pull). Once inside the blob, victims get one last chance to win a contest of ST before becoming one with the blob . . .

Historical References

History of Dugway proving ground (archived information on the Skull Valley Support page):
http://gregdan.com/grotto/sprt_skv.html

The Official homepage for Dugway Proving Ground (be sure to check out the Visitor's Guide and read about the cosmic ray experiment facility operated in conjunction with the University of Utah -- I'm not making this up!):
http://www.dugway.army.mil/

Information about the Skull Valley reservation:
http://www.alphacdc.com/necona/skull-vy.html

Read about the 6,000 sheep (allegedly) killed by Dugway nerve gas:
http://www.alphacdc.com/necona/skulnews.html

Some pictures and information about whiptail scorpions:
http://www.kingsnake.com/trans_pecos/insects/vinegar.htm

Some good scientific background to give to a character who makes an Entomology or Science! roll:
http://www.Insect-World.com/main/whipscop.html

by Mark Slattery

Luke's landspeeder slid to a halt along the hot Tatooine desert. He stood in the driver's seat and peered across the seemingly endless dunes. He did not need the electrobinoculars to see the giant sandwhirl he was fleeing, but he was not looking in that direction. As he adjusted the range finder, and scanned the desert in front of him, he spotted the dark silhouettes of riders and their mammothian mounts -- Tusken Raiders. The Sand People were waiting for him just over the next dune, letting the storm force him into their trap.

Forced to choose between the approaching sandwhirl and the Tusken hunting party, Luke dropped back into his seat and sped towards the waiting ambush. As he readied his blaster, he thought to himself "These Sand People might be smarter than they look!"

This article contains a Tusken Raider theme deck for the ***Star Wars CCG.*** Its main strategy is to recreate the predicament Luke faced above. The exact details of how this strategy works is explained below, as well as several side strategies. First, take a look at the cards in the deck below (the cards are separated by type. Their uniqueness is designated by asterisks, and multiple copies of the same cards are denoted by x#):

Characters (17)

Riders on the Storm

Chall Bekan * x1
RR'uruurrr * x1
Skrilling * x2
Taym Dren-garen * x1
Tusken Raider * x10
UroRRoR'R'R * x1
Ur'Ru'r * x1

Creatures (1)

Rancor x1

Effects (9)

Bantha Herd ** x2
Den of Thieves * x1
Expand the Empire * x1
Sandwhirl * x3
Scum and Villainy * x1
Well Guarded * x1

Interrupts (16)

Abyssin Ornament * x1
Bantha Fodder x2
Control x2
Ghhhk x2
Gravel Storm x2
Trap Door * x2
Tusken Scavengers x2
Twi'lek Advisor * x3

Locations (9)

Jabba's Palace: Audience Chamber * x1
Jabba's Palace: Rancor Pit * x1
Tatooine: Desert *** x2
Tatooine: Jabba's Palace * x1
Tatooine: Jundland Wastes * x1
Tatooine: Krayt Dragon Pass * x1
Tatooine: Lars' Moisture Farm * x1
Tatooine: Tusken Canyon * x1

Starships (1)

Bosk In Hound's Tooth * x1

Vehicles (4)

Bantha x3
URoRRuR'R'R's Bantha * x1

Weapons (3)

Gaderffii Stick x3

Starting Location & Starting Effect

Riders on the Storm

There are two main choices for starting location and effect, depending on whether you want to start offensively or defensively. The offensive choice is more risky, but it does set you up with a greater potential Force drain very early on. Deploy Tatooine: Tusken Canyon as your starting location and use a Twi'lek Advisor to deploy Expand the Empire on to it. Expand the Empire will add the Tusken Canyon's "Force drain bonus" game text to each of the adjacent locations. If you deploy Lars' Moisture Farm and Jundland Wastes to either side, it gives you a Force drain of eight. Plus, if you have a Gaderffii Stick present at each site, Tusken Canyon's game text adds another +1 to the Force drains; increasing the total Force drain to 11 over only three sites!

Alternatively, the defensive option provides you with a greater initial Force generation and some protection. Choose Tatooine: Jabba's Palace as your starting location and deploy either Well Guarded or Den of Thieves with a Twi'lek Advisor. Jabba's Palace has a Force generation of two, the joint highest of all the locations. Also, Tatooine: Jabba's

Palace allows you to deploy another Jabba's Palace location from your Reserve Deck once per turn. This means that by the beginning of your third turn you can have deployed the Audience Chamber and the Rancor Pit, giving you a total Force generation of 5, irrespective of any locations you deploy from your hand. You can choose either Well Guarded, which prevents the multiple cards in your hand being discarded by an opponent's Grimtaash interrupts, or Den of Thieves, which allows you to cancel one Force drain each turn by placing a non-unique alien on to it, as your staring effect.

Teeth of the Wind

"Teeth of the Wind" is the Sand People's name for sandwhirls, giant twisters that plague Tatooine and desert regions of other planets. The main strategy of this deck revolves around using these storms to railroad your opponent in to either an ambush or the jaws of the Rancor. First, you must deploy a desert location, as this is the only place a Sandwhirl can be deployed. Deploy it at the Mos Eisley end of the Tatooine location structure, the opposite end to your Jabba's Palace locations. This has two advantages, providing a buffer between your exterior locations and any Mos Eisley locations your opponent might play, and when your opponent's characters flee from the approaching Sandwhirl they will be forced into your interior Audience Chamber, the only safe area, and into your trap.

Now you have to set up the trap. You can either build up a force of characters in the Audience Chamber to battle those Rebels seeking shelter, or feed them to the Rancor. You should deploy all of your non-Tusken Raider characters to the Audience Chamber, as they are not protected from the Sandwhirl like the Sand People. This will save you having to move them out of the storm's path. If these characters are not powerful enough to defeat the opponent's characters being forced into the Chamber, move a few Raiders in to bolster their numbers. Alternatively, if you have deployed the Rancor and his Pit, you can use the Trap Door card to drop a sheltering character into the Pit and retrieve the Force when the Rancor eats them. Once you are ready to deploy a Sandwhirl, you can use a Twi'lek Advisor to take one into your hand, and wait for your enemy to come to you. Your opponent must either move his characters out of the path of the storm and into your trap, or lose them as they go "missing" in the storm. Even if you are unable to defeat any sheltering characters, your opponent will have been forced to use up valuable Force to move them around, thus delaying any plans he might have.

Riders on the Storm

Deploying the Hunting Parties

The Bantha Fodder interrupt allows you to deploy a Tusken Raiders or Bantha from your Reserve Deck, allowing you to amass your forces very quickly. If you have the choice between playing Bantha Fodder or a Tusken Raider, play Bantha Fodder. Not only does it remove a one-destiny card from and return a four-destiny card to your Life Force, but allows you to use the other Raider to block a Force drain with Den of Thieves. Bantha Fodder also allows you to deploy Taym Dren-garen from your Reserve Deck; this aliens bonus to Tusken Raiders is very useful and should be the first card you deploy with Bantha Fodder or the Audience Chambers rules text. The ideal deployment for your characters is 3-4 Tusken Raiders, one of the unique Tusken Raiders, a Gaderffii Stick and a Bantha at Lars' Moisture Farm, Tusken Canyon and Jundland Wastes. Once you have 5-6 non-unique Tusken Raiders deployed, use Abyssin Ornament to retrieve some force, providing you have at least six cards in your Lost Pile.

Tusken Scavengers & Skrillings

Tusken Scavengers represents the Sand People raiding travelers and stealing equipment. The card allows you to search your opponent's Used Pile and place any devices, weapons and/or vehicles out of play. If used after your opponent has just spent a lot of Force, at the end of their turn or after a battle, is can cost him enough Force to swing the game. The scavenging Skrillings enhance this interrupt by placing the scavenged cards into your Used Pile, creating a form of Force transfer between you and your opponent.

Gravel Storm

Use Gravel Storm to remove any dangerous opponent's characters, particularly the armed ones before they can fire, during battles at the Jundland Wastes or Lars' Moisture Farm.

Bosk in Hound's Tooth

This deck is very weak in space, with only one starship. You can use Bosk and his ship to block a few drains and prevent your opponent from using the Tatooine system's "battle bonus" game text. If your opponent is playing a mainly space deck the best thing you can do is to sit tight, not deploying Bosk and his ship, and try to outdrain him. The loss of Force from the resulting battle will probably outweigh any advantages gained.

I hope you enjoy playing with this deck. Good luck and may the Force be with you!

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by Steve Hatherley

Art by andi jones

[*Editor's Note:* This scenario was originally published in *The Unspeakable Oath,* Issue #5, in 1992.]

Sometimes it's easy. Sometimes the clock has already been stopped. The Lambton Worm is one such case.

The Lambton Worm is suitable as a quiet introduction to the Cthulhu Mythos for inexperienced ***Call of Cthulhu*** players. Alternatively, experienced investigators might welcome a gentler episode during a campaign all too full of malevolent horror.

There are no cries of help or other definite hooks to draw investigators to The Lambton Worm. This situation isn't going anywhere -- they can tackle it at their leisure. Ways in which investigators might be drawn in are included in the scenario.

Historical Note: This scenario is set in Fictive Burton Green, in County Durham in the north of England. The Legend of the Lambton Worm is genuine, but has been modified and an alternate ending added.

The handouts are dated with a 1920s setting in mind, but there is nothing to prevent The Lambton Worm from entering play during a ***Cthulhu by Gaslight*** campaign. The only change is that Worm Hill will not be owned by the National Trust; it will still be owned by the Stantons.

While the National Trust has many fascinating buildings under its protection, it does not (as far as I am aware) have any which lead directly into the brain of a major alien race.

Worm Papers #1: The Legend of the Worm

The Legend of the Lambton Worm is unusual as it has two separate endings, both tied to the common myth.

A long time ago there was a young man named John Lambton, who liked to fish in the River Wear. One particularly unsuccessful Sunday morning, when he should have been at church, all he caught was a strange, two-headed worm. He dropped it into a well on his way home for lunch.

Time passed and Lambton forgot about the odd worm. He became a brave crusader and left to fight in the Middle East. While he was away, his tiny two-headed worm grew into an enormous serpent that terrorized the local neighborhood. It fed off the udders of cows, devoured sheep and swallowed little children alive. Then, sated, it would wrap its tail around Penshaw Hill and sleep.

Brave heroes tried to defeat the worm, but each time it was chopped in two the pieces grew back together again. Eventually news reached Lambton and, guiltily remembering the creature he had caught that Sunday morning long ago, he returned to defeat the thing.

Before he set out, he visited an old witch for her advice. She explained that the only way to kill the worm was to stand in the middle of the River Wear, wearing a suit of armor covered in razor-sharp blades. However, once the worm was dead he would have to kill the first living thing he set eyes on or suffer a curse that would last for nine generations.

With the advice in his mind, Lambton put on the armor and strode out to the River Wear. Mindful of the curse, he had instructed his father to send one of the family hounds for him to kill once the worm was dead.

Out in the river, he waited for the worm. It sensed its old adversary and attacked, coiling itself around Lambton and his suit of armor. As it tightened its coils, the blades on the armor sliced the worm apart, and as each fell away they were swept downstream by the river. Bit by bit the worm was carried away by the current -- and at last the worm was dead.

Victorious, he returned home, only to find his father waiting on the river bank. He had forgotten about the hound. And as Lambton couldn't brink himself to kill his own father, the family was cursed -- none of the next nine generations would die in bed.

The second version of the legend picks up after Lambton returns from the Crusades having heard about the worm.

Seeking advice from an old witch, she tells him that the worm is heading for Burton Green. The only way to kill the worm is to put an arrow through its brain. Once the worm was, dead he must kill the first living thing he sees to avoid the curse.

Lambton set off for Burton Green, to arrive only shortly before the worm. It coiled itself around the village and waited, heads facing each other. The villagers were afraid, and tried to pacify it with sheep and other meat.

"I want more," it said. Some of the men armed themselves with picks and scythes and tried to hack through the monster's middle, but to no avail. It simply grew back together. Lambton tried firing an arrow but it just bounced off. Besides, he was not sure which end had the brain.

"I know," one man said, "If we all run together between the worm's heads it will be so confused it won't know which way to turn."

It seemed to be a good plan, and all the villagers agreed to try it. In unison they charged for the gap and freedom, but the worm turned its massive head and opened its massive jaws. The villagers ran straight into its mouth and down into its stomach.

But the two-headed worm was still hungry. In the village all was silent except for Lambton, who had stayed behind. He had noticed that only one end of the worm did the talking -- the brain end. Taking his bow he walked steadily towards the worm. Greedily it opened its talking mouth wide to accept the tasty snack. Lambton let fly. The arrow entered the worm's mouth and plunged straight through the soft roof and into its brain.

The worm heaved high into the air in agony, and died.

A cheering shook Lambton as a young girl ran out, glad that the monster had finally been laid to rest. Despite the threat of the curse, he could not kill the little girl. She was the only survivor of the village. And so the Curse of the Lambtons began.

-- Taken from: *Historic County Durham,* 1912, Holly.

Historic County Durham can be found in any of the libraries in the area, and is typical of several books published locally concerning the county's history. Most of them include the Lambton Worm legend, which changes little.

The Lambton Worm is, in fact, a dhole. It has been lying inactive across the countryside for so long that it has become buried under earth and vegetation and is mistaken for a long, sinuous, hill. Covered with heather and gorse, the dhole can be found at the center of Worm Hill.

The dhole has been imprisoned by an extremely powerful Elder Sign. Who (or what) trapped it is unknown, but a serpent people tunnel leads from the surface to the monster's brain. Mention of this construction might be found in some serpent people texts, perhaps found during the ***Shadows of Yog-Sothoth*** or ***Masks of Nyarlathotep*** campaigns. In the 16th century, Hobson discovered the Worm and built his folly, a stone tower, over the serpent people tunnel. This has sometimes attracted undue attention.

Cuttings

Worm Papers #2: Missing Journalist Found in Devil Marsh

The body of missing freelance journalist Jerry Tanner, 34, was found in Devil Marsh Friday night. Mr. Tanner was in Burton Green to write an article for the National Trust concerning Hobson's Folly and Worm Hill and had been reported missing since Tuesday.

Mr. Tanner's body was discovered only partially clothed, the acidic waters of Devil Marsh having eaten through his jacket and trousers. The body was found by George Forrestal of Carr Gate Farm while driving his cattle for milking.

John Thorne, publican of the Black Bull, had alerted Police Sergeant Markham to Mr. Tanner's disappearance on Monday. At that time Mr. Tanner had not returned to his room for three days.

Sgt. Markham is conducting an investigation, but preliminary reports indicate that Tanner drowned in the marsh.

Devil Marsh has now claimed three victims in the last ten years, despite notices being posted. The waters of the marsh are poisonous, caused by the many toadstools growing in the marsh.

-- *Burton Green Observer*, 4 April 1923

The story about the National Trust was a cover that Tanner used to gain access to documents and records. Like the investigators, he had been looking into the legend to see if there was more to it than met the eye. He examined the folly, but did not climb it. Instead, he decided to explore the base of Worm Hill around the marsh. There he found a small cave into which he crawled, eventually coming to the mouthparts of the dhole. The realization affected his mind and he died trying to escaping the marsh.

Tanner might have been an acquaintance, perhaps foolish enough to begin an investigation on his own. He might also have been a friend of Elias Jackson and perhaps this story is one of those in ***Masks of Nyarlathotep.***

Private investigators might be asked to look into Tanner's disappearance, particularly if the body has not yet been found.

Worm Papers #3: Satan Cult Captured at Folly

Police investigators last night surrounded and captured an entire coven of twenty Devil Worshipers on Worm Hill. They had been using Hobson's Folly in their primitive black magic ceremonies.

Police had been alerted to the cult by Randolph Miller, an amateur archaeologist. Mr. Miller, interested in the Folly, had noticed signs of disturbance following cult meetings. Upon witnessing the coven in action through a telescope in his cottage, he contacted the police.

A police spokesman confirmed that none of those arrested lived locally, all traveling some distance to come to Burton Green.

Police believe the coven to be part of a bigger organization, or cabal, with a nationwide network of covens. They are proceeding with their investigations.

The Stanton Estate has not released a statement regarding the use of its property for such practices. It is understood to be deeply concerned.

Police have not yet released details of those placed in custody.

-- *Burton Green Observer,* 28 March 1912

Little more can be discovered about this story. One of the prominent members of the coven turned out to be a son of a prominent high court judge, also a Freemason. All charges were subsequently dropped, and the investigation into further covens buried. Only a Freemason investigator will be able to discover this, others run into a wall of impenetrable silence. Trying to probe too deeply will only make the investigators a number of powerful enemies.

The coven themselves have no idea of the true horror at Hobson's Folly. None of them have any awareness of the Cthulhu Mythos, nor do they practice real magic. Currently they operate elsewhere.

The villagers remember the incident quite well, as it was the topic of conversation for some weeks. However, nobody recalls the eventual sentencing of the devil worshipers, only that it no-doubt included a lengthy stay at His Majesty's Pleasure.

Investigators dabbling in the occult may be drawn by this story. Alternatively, an investigation into the coven or other secret societies may result with Burton Green being placed under the magnifying glass.

Worm Papers #4: Scientists Search for Lambton Worm

Eminent scientists from London College are searching for the legendary Lambton Worm. They have been exploring the countryside and asking questions throughout the town.

Doctor Charles Winters, a historian, explained his theory that stone circles across Britain are set out to a grand design. Although Burton Green did not have such a circle, he was sufficiently interested in the legend of the worm to come looking closer.

To date, Dr. Winters has not found anything in Burton Green to vindicate his theory. He believes the worm was once an elemental force, and if it existed, faint traces or echoes would be picked up by his instruments.

Dr. Winters and his colleagues are due to stay in Burton Green for another three days.

-- *Burton Green Observer,* 22 July 1920

This story might strike a chord with survivors of The Mystery of Loch Feinn.

Winters' theories are several years ahead of Alfred Watkins' (the discoverer of ley lines), but Winters is thinking of some form of power matrix. His instruments are sensitive to the increased magnetic fields along the leys, although he has no term for them.

Winters and his colleagues are tracking lloigor, believing them to be some form of elemental force that ancient Britons worshiped. Suspecting that the origins of the Lambton Worm also lie in ancient lloigor worship, they vainly searched for signs of the magnetic disturbances so common elsewhere: there are few leys in the area and none cross on Worm Hill. They gave the folly a quick examination but ignored it.

Shortly after his visit to Burton Green and frustrated by the lack of success, Winters abandoned his theories. It is only in 1925, after reading Watkins' *The Old Straight Track,* that his interest in lloigor is rekindled.

Everyone in the village remembers the scientists as they generated much gossip in the two weeks they were present. This is a problem any investigation will face in rural villages.

Burton Green

Ten miles southeast of Durham lies Burton Green, a small village struggling to become a town. It boasts all the amenities that a town ought to have -- post office, doctor, police station, a cricket team, even its own paper -- but the population is slowly dwindling, lured away to the factories in the cities. As a result, Burton Green has shrunk in size and the average age of residents has risen. Its main industry is gossip, and strangers generate plenty of that.

The *Burton Green Observer* is the local paper, published on Tuesdays. It is totally dedicated to local news. Colorful investigators can quickly make a name for themselves here, attention they may find unwelcome. Browsing through past issues, it is obvious that apart from the stories presented above life in Burton Green is quiet.

The Black Bull is the best of the three pubs in town. It is quiet, with two well attended bars. The landlord, John Thorne, is friendly and pragmatic, rarely surprised at his guests' odd activities. His wife, Jane, is a solid Christian lady with strong morals; any flirting with their daughter Emily is forbidden. The Black Bull is a good base to operate from, providing private rooms, hot meals and contact with the locals.

Sergeant Markham is a shrewd policeman with a sharp eye for the unusual. He could have made a good career in one of the metropolitan forces, but prefers the rural peace of his native Burton Green. Once presented with proper credentials, Markham will prove a source of useful information about the surrounding area and its inhabitants.

Stanton Hall used to be home to the local nobility. In 1917 Albert Stanton sold Worm Hill and Hobson's Folly to the National Trust to pay for repairs to the Hall. He died in 1918, leaving the Hall empty. It has remained empty since.

Burton Green has a ghost. More accurately, Worm Hill has a ghost. Back in the mid-1700s, Michael Fortmason used to take his spaniel, Monty, onto Worm Hill for his evening constitutional. This was a routine they kept up for more than ten years until one night Monty vanished. Michael, heartbroken, searched Worm Hill in vain. Every evening, until his death a month later, Michael hunted high and low for his lost dog. Their ghosts now haunt the hill. On quiet evenings a faint yapping has been reported and, once or twice, Michael has been seen as he searches for Monty.

Michael and Monty's story has never been written down, but most of Burton Green's inhabitants know of it. In particular, George Forrestal of Carr Gate Farm (nearest to Worm Hill), believes he has heard Monty on several occasions.

On the whole, the people of Burton Green are friendly and welcoming. They like to hear of other places and the players will find their tales of distant lands a useful resource. However, the people of Burton Green really have no idea of the awesome horror that sleeps beneath Worm Hill and can offer little more than a relaxing cup of tea and idle gossip.

The Watcher of the Hill

Randolph Miller has lived in Burton Green all his life, dedicating himself to his studies and writing. Miller, however, is more than just another enthusiastic amateur. He knows that at the center of Worm Hill lies an ancient and terrible creature. If allowed to return to life it would be a threat to the nation's safety. It is Miller's self-imposed duty to watch over Worm Hill.

It is a task Miller inherited from his father. When Miller dies he will pass the burden to another. However, Miller has no family and at the sprightly age of 61 is now looking earnestly for someone he can trust.

Any obvious interest in Hobson's Folly will arouse Miller's concern. His study faces the hill, and he has a telescope trained on the Folly. When he hears of the investigators asking questions and spies their interest in Worm Hill, he will endeavor to meet them. It will not be hard; they will be staying in the Black Bull. There, Miller will chat amiably to the investigators, in his favorite role: amateur archaeologist, historian and astronomer. He will not reveal his secret, but will try to gauge the investigators feelings. Perhaps one of them might be the next Watcher?

If Miller spies them scaling the folly, he will rush to the hill and wait for them beside the base. He has been inside once, and has no intention of doing so again.

Miller may also send some newspaper cuttings to the investigators. He corresponds irregularly with other mythos scholars and may hear of the investigators through them. The cuttings will be sent anonymously, as Miller wants to judge the investigators himself.

Randolph Miller, Watcher of the Hill, Age 61

STR 10
CON 9
SIZ 13
INT 18
POW 15
DEX 12
APP 10
EDU 16
SAN 68
HP 11

Damage Bonus: none
Weapons: none
Skills: Anthropology 30%, Archaeology 60%, Astronomy 55%, Botany 35%, Chuckle Wisely 66%, Cthulhu Mythos 5%, Debate 70%, First Aid 43%, Geology 30%, History (local) 75%, Library Use 40%, Occult 40%, Psychology 60%, French 30%, Ride 50%, Zoology 30%.

Worm Papers #5: Hobson's Folly and Worm Hill

Hobson's Folly: Hobson's Folly was built in 1765 by George Hobson, an aristocrat living in London. It is a simple cylindrical tower built of roughly hewn stone from nearby quarries. It has no openings or doors of any kind and is entirely featureless. Perched at the southern end of Worm Hill, it dominates the skyline.

Worm Hill: This is a long treeless hill fine views of the surrounding area. Gorse and heather grow predominantly on the hill, giving it a very different feel to the lush woods nearby. The hill is known to be unsafe and is best avoided.

Devil Marsh: According to legend, the Devil is trapped in the marsh causing it to become shunned. The marsh is dangerous for the unwary -- several people have been trapped in recent years. The marsh is located at the end of Worm Hill, near Hobson's Folly.

Taken from: *Superstitious Britain,* 1908, Lee.

A sketch of Hobson's Folly exists showing its construction and the serpent people tunnel it stands above. Currently this is tucked away in a stately home's massive library, some distance away. If an investigation does not result in the scaling of the folly, it may be worth bringing this sketch into play at a later date to encourage a return to Burton Green.

The dhole lies under 30 feet of soil. It has been there for millions of years, lying motionless on the seabed as sediment built up. Then, as the land rose, it became a hill.

Worm hill is long and sinuous -- tracing the body of the dhole. If quarried extensively, the body of the creature will be found. Fortunately, now that it is owned by the National Trust, this will never happen. At one end is Hobson's Folly, and below that there are natural springs. Because of the proximity of the beast's cavernous jaws (and noxious saliva) the water is undrinkable. A marsh has grown there and the place is dismal indeed.

The poisonous waters of Devil Marsh defy analysis. Dhole-tainted waters behave strangely under laboratory scrutiny.

Worm Hill is known to be treacherous. The ground is uneven and riddled with potholes and burrows that can sprain or break an ankle. Putrid oils exuding from the dhole's skin twist and warp the gorse and heather -- the only plants hardy enough to grow on the hill. Contrary to local belief, there are no burrows on the hill -- no animal will live there. The holes are caused by the ground shifting, caused by slight movements of the dhole's body.

The folly is a simple stone tower standing 50 feet tall on the top of Worm Hill. The National Trust have not conducted an extensive study of the folly. For now, all they have done is point up the blocks to make it safe. The tower is hollow and can be entered from the top. Just getting to the top requires three Climb rolls, 1D6 damage if the first is failed, 2D6 for the second, 3D6 for the third. Same again, in reverse, to get back to the ground. Smart investigators bring ropes.

At the bottom is a heavy (STR 20) stone slab. Prying this away reveals a dark, irregular tunnel. The stench is appalling. The first 30 feet or so, through the soil, is coarsely lined with soft stone. An Archaeology roll indicates that this is far older than anything previously discovered in Britain. A Cthulhu Mythos roll reveals that this is of serpent people construction. This stops where the dhole's skin starts. Two Climb rolls are required to avoid falling for 1D6 damage.

The Lambton Worm

The tunnel leads directly into one of the dhole's brain cavities. Seeing this vast cavernous mass requires a 1D4/1D20 SAN roll. There, seared into the quivering brain cells is a huge Elder Sign. The potency of the spell is such that the dhole cannot move -- it is imprisoned within its own mind. The investigators each receive 1D8 SAN when realizing this fact, such is their relief. (It would be more had they contributed to the dhole's downfall.)

The folly was constructed by Hobson after he found the Elder Sign that trapped the dhole. Should the Elder Sign be destroyed, the dhole will slowly return to life, an event to be avoided at all costs. The Elder Sign is actually fairly difficult to remove -- the familiar five-pointed star would have to be cut from the dhole's flesh before its effects wear off.

Investigators might want to forcibly deal with the dhole. Its brain cavities connect with other internal chambers and it is technically feasible to explore the remarkable insides of this ancient beast. There they could, in theory, plant enough dynamite to blow the entire hill sky-high.

There are several reasons why this plan is fraught with peril. Firstly, just staying in the creature's body is a sanity draining experience. Every ten minutes, each investigator must make a Sanity Roll or lose 0/1D4 SAN. At the same time they must succeed a CONx5% roll to avoid taking 1 hit from the dhole's acidic internal juices. Investigators reaching its mouthparts or the digestive system encounter the slimy goo detailed in the rulebook. Then there is the dhole's immune system, detailed below.

Alternatively, foolish investigators might try lobbing dynamite down the folly into the cavity. The explosions will destroy that particular brain cluster, but no more. And to what end? The cluster grows back, after all. Worse, the dynamite might disturb the Elder Sign.

Perhaps the most logical reason why the investigators shouldn't try to destroy the dhole is that they needn't do so. It is helpless -- trying to kill it is much more trouble than it's worth.

The Lambton Worm

Unlikely though it is that the Lambton Worm will return to life, it is nonetheless possible. For details of its attacks see the ***Call of Cthulhu*** rulebook.

STR 720
CON 140
SIZ 801
INT 7
POW 38
DEX 4

Move: 18/10 burrowing (immobile at present)
Damage Bonus: +94D6
Weapons: Engulf, 80% swallow; Spit Goo, 50%, special
Armor/HP: 38/470
Spells: none
SAN: 1D4/1D20

Dholes are blessed with an effective immune system. In addition to attacking foreign matter, it cleans and helps repair the damage caused by blundering investigators. Unfortunately for the dhole, it cannot repair the damage caused by the Elder Sign.

A myriad of multi-limbed, multi-colored, multi-everythings writhe and crawl and wriggle throughout the dhole's vast body. SAN loss for these is covered above (0/1D4 every ten minutes). Then there are the antibodies . . .

If they stay too long the investigators find themselves under attack. Every ten minutes, there is a cumulative 30% chance that the investigators encounter horrid, writhing antibodies. This rises to 50% if the investigators are causing damage. Once the first antibody has arrived, an additional 1D3 arrive each minute until the threat has been dealt with. There is effectively no limit to the number of antibodies that appear -- the investigators cannot carry that much ammunition.

Antibodies will also attack dynamite wired to a remote detonator along with any other form of foreign matter.

Dhole Antibodies

A chaotic nightmare cross of crab and octopus, antibodies have too many tentacles and too many legs. Encased in a thick leathery hide, they respond quickly to intruders.

Dhole antibodies attack with two claws. After two rounds, the antibody attempts a grapple. If successful it wraps itself around its target and exudes slimy caustic goo, doing 1 hit per round. The antibody stays attached to its target until the foreign matter has completely dissolved away.

If the investigators flee the antibodies follow them as far as the tunnel. They cannot exist outside the dhole's body and will not leave.

STR 2D6+6
CON 3D6+6
SIZ 2D6
INT 1D3
POW 1D6
DEX 3D6+6

Hit Points: 12

Move: 10
Weapons: 2 claws, 40% 1D6 damage; Grapple, 80% exude goo
Armor: 4
Spells: none
Sanity Loss: 0/1D6

Keeper's Notes

The Lambton Worm lacks the traditional conclusion in which, against overwhelming odds, the investigators go head-to-head with the minions of the Outer Gods. Unable to do anything more serious to the dhole than has already been done, players may find situation discomforting. Perhaps unsettling. Good.

Things may change. If investigators can discover the worm's final resting place, so can others -- and perhaps they will be lacking hearts so pure. If Miller takes a shine to the investigators, perhaps a telegram arrives, urging their return to Burton Green.

And of course, there's always the dhole. You never know when it might come in handy.

by David Morgan-Mar

Art by andi jones

"So, we leave the airport and drive into the city . . . Anything interesting?"

Visiting foreign countries or alien worlds is a staple pastime for characters in roleplaying games. Often the differences in location and culture are skipped over unless a particular local object or practice has some importance to the adventure. This can be a shame, since credible physical and cultural differences between gaming scenes can impart a good deal of fun to the roleplaying experience, reinforce the suspension of disbelief, and really allow the players to know they are somewhere *different.*

The hard part is thinking up the new ideas that will make a place seem different yet realistic. For inspiration, there is always the old maxim that truth can often be stranger than fiction . . .

(Note: There are a handful of ***GURPS*** terms sprinkled through this text, but the information should be easily adaptable to any other RPG.)

The Little Details

If you have ever traveled to a foreign country, you may have noticed that the place simply "felt" foreign in some subliminal way which was hard to quantify, even before you interact with anyone. This effect is the sum of miniscule differences, many too small to notice consciously.

If there are organized road systems, people can drive on the opposite side of the road. A seemingly trivial difference, the effect of this can be quite disconcerting, especially to pedestrians. Expecting onrushing traffic from the right or left as you step into a street is an unconscious reaction. Absent-Minded or Impulsive individuals or those with Short Attention Spans are in particular danger. Driving rolls made under stressful situations from an unfamiliar side of the vehicle should attract a penalty.

Architectural styles often differ between countries, and either subtle or marked differences can give a game location interest. The houses are all made of wood, instead of the brick they use back home. Stone is used more than steel. The churches have a foreboding, gothic look, rather than being homely and inviting. Architecture can be a good mood-setter, particularly for campaigns with a horror element. Or all the homes may be freshly painted for the current trade festival, where sly adventurers may try their luck in the auction rings. Alien worlds may have massive, dominating structures, all gleaming metal and glass as far as the eye can see. Or they may be colonies with most of the buildings still cobbled together from old cargo containers.

General tidiness of a location is picked up subconsciously by an observer. This includes the obvious trash lying about, or not lying about, as the case may be. Buildings can also be grimy with smoke or other pollution, or kept clean. Graffiti, or lack of it, speaks volumes for the care taken by whoever looks after a place. The appearance of modern cities changes dramatically depending on whether power and phone lines are buried underground or strung from poles in the air. Local vegetation can be green and healthy, or sickly and dying. Alien vegetation may not even be green.

The weather can also set a location apart. A fantasy city where it rains nearly every day presents novel drainage and

sanitation problems. While driving across a desert in a jeep, any characters who forget their moisturizer and lip balm will develop cracked skin and painfully chapped lips. Weather can also change rapidly in some places. Harry from London always carries an umbrella "in case it rains", while Carrie from Los Angeles is surprised to see a sudden snow flurry on what looked like a nice day.

Even simple every day occurrences like sunset and sunrise can make a place feel foreign. At high latitudes, the sun approaches the horizon at an oblique angle and twilight can last hours. Characters used to this can be caught by surprise in the tropics, where full daylight can descend into pitch black night in a matter of minutes.

Sounds and Smells

As any ***GURPS Discworld*** adventurer can tell you, the first thing you notice about the city of Ankh-Morpork is the smell. And as any native of Ankh-Morpork can tell you: "What smell?"

In many fantasy and real world cities there will be street vendors preparing and selling all manner of local delicacies. This is the ideal time to introduce the characters to the delights of the cuisine. From delicious aromas of cooking meats to repulsive stenches of the much-loved (by the locals, anyway) native fruits, the smell of a location can be described to help set the scene, or even to offer adventure clues. Modern cities may smell polluted with smog, while third-world or fantasy cities will have various animal odors permeating the air. Usually characters will find country air more appealing, so describe the freshness of the breeze, or the smell of newly cut hay. Remember farms are prime manure locations too. Emphasize anything different from what the characters are used to.

Moving on to the sense of hearing, the sounds heard by characters can be serious mood-setters. The hustle and bustle of modern cities is a constant background sound -- traffic, sirens, conversations within earshot at every turn. Buildings can hum with air conditioning, or power generation. Planes or spaceships taking off nearby and flying overhead add intermittent engine roars to the cacophony. A good city noise description can really set the scene for unsophisticated characters.

In the countryside, or lower technology towns, more natural sounds will rule. Animals can be heard. Livestock moo and bleat, while birds fly by and fill the air with song. Cowbells and church bells ring out. Perhaps the ringing of hammer on anvil bespeaks the presence of a smithy. Unruly children will shout and squeal as they run at play. Splashes of water or the gurgling of a stream will be heard. Most gamers live in relatively urban areas, so describing these sounds helps evoke the feeling of other-worldliness that makes a good gaming session.

More eerily, lack of sound can impress a sense of oppression if described carefully. Usually when Something Horrible happens, normal sounds cease. Animals sit still and quiet, sensing Something Evil. Conversations die and the piano player stops when the bad guy walks into the saloon. The city with no sound is a ghost town, with characters' footsteps echoing spookily off the towering edifices of abandoned buildings. And once the mood is set and the characters are proceeding carefully, glancing over their shoulders in fearful expectation, the lone wolf howl, or the gunning of a single engine, or the ring of a shot can cause near panic.

Native Practices

What makes a place feel really foreign, however, is when the characters start interacting with the locals.

If the local language is one that none or only a few of the characters speak, that presents a whole slew of problems and possibilities. The Gesture skill will come in handy for attempting communication. Signs become illegible, so it will be harder for characters to locate the places they need, or to understand warnings and dangers. Amusing incidents can be had with

phrase-books, which may or may not be accurately compiled. And there is always someone who thinks he can communicate simply by shouting loudly enough.

Even if the locals speak the same language as the characters, they could have distinctive accents, or expressions which seem confusing. A GM who puts on even a half-decent accent when speaking as an NPC will make the players aware they are dealing with a foreigner. If you can't fake an accent, at least describe the thick brogue or "Martian accent" being used by the hotel check-in clerk.

Crowd behavior is something which can vary markedly between cultures. If a bag is snatched or a fight breaks out on a modern city street, there is a tendency for onlookers to "not get involved". What if a merchant picks a fight with a character over a particularly hard-fought bargain and everyone within listening radius joins in the ensuing brawl? Characters sometimes get into fire-fights in the streets, assuming any passersby will basically ignore them. Maybe instead they will pull out their own weapons and pick sides.

On a more personal level, people can interact differently. In Japan, the giving of small gifts is a time-honored and ritualized custom. It must be done for the right reasons, and the value of the gift is of crucial importance. Too little and the receiver is insulted, too much and it is a rude display of the giver's arrogance. An incorrect display of custom can easily lead to a poor Reputation.

Perhaps the characters will try something safer, maybe go shopping or dine in a restaurant. How do the shops work? Most people are used to seeing displays, picking up products, trying on clothes, before buying. What about a place where all you see is a catalog, and the products are brought out for you once you buy, to avoid other people's germs getting on them. Or the swordsmith might encourage you to test the quality of his steel by running through a passing beggar before you decide to part with your gold. (Is that normal? How will the characters know?)

Restaurants naturally bring up eating habits and table manners. Maybe the natives all cut their food daintily before lifting morsels to their mouths with a selection of appropriate forks. Or they might hack into the roast with their daggers and smear fat over their faces and tunics with their hands. What do they think of how the characters are eating? In some human cultures food must only be eaten with a specific hand (usually the right), the other being reserved for "unclean duties." Elsewhere, putting a fork in your mouth is considered as crude as licking a knife is in modern Western culture. And at the end of the meal there are limitless ways of showing proper gratitude to the hosts: Leave a little food on your plate, lick your plate clean, belch loudly, throw your plate into the fireplace, or proclaim loudly that the hosts are invited to dine with you so that you can show them how a real meal is served.

If in a restaurant, the subject of leaving a tip now arises. The practice of tipping cash for people who perform small services is seen in some societies (notably the USA) as normal and even expected. In other places, it is unheard of -- a visiting American can be taken aback by the Australian taxi driver who rounds the fare down and waves away any tip. Perhaps worse is the character who does not leave a tip when one is expected. The slighted person may merely become rude, or might turn actively hostile, or even plot a convoluted revenge. A more alien culture may see tipping as an unpleasant reminder of indentured servitude and an unsuspecting Traveller attempting to tip a local waiter may find

himself being challenged to a duel of honor! Which brings up the next topic . . .

Law and Order

Formally declared dueling may actually be legal in some places (as it was in parts of Renaissance Europe). Getting characters involved in a duel should be almost trivial for a GM playing up differences in culture -- an unintended insult is bound to happen at some point. Characters challenged to a duel may have several options, from backing down with attendant public humiliation (and loss of Reputation), to choosing a champion to fight for them. Or there may be no way out without a fight.

Legalized dueling may require some form of official presence, from the King himself if duels are rare and highly ritualized, to a police representative, who may be empowered to shoot any participant breaking the rules. On the other hand, anything may go as long as the antagonists have reasonable excuses for fighting. The law may not get involved at all in personal grievances, leaving characters to fend for themselves if someone takes offense to them.

When laws do get broken (as they often seem to around adventurers), the way the legal system works becomes important. Consider a judicial system in which the accused is not only "innocent until proven guilty", but free until proven guilty. A character falsely accused of murder is not held in custody until his trial, but released and expected to turn up for the trial. A no-show is taken as an admission of guilt and turns him into a "kill-on-sight" fugitive. In the meantime, the character can act to track down the true murderers and prove his innocence, with a strict deadline looming.

On the other hand, imagine a place where a person accused of a crime is punished for it automatically. Now imagine a party of adventurers visiting and trying to stay out of trouble.

Legal differences can also be important for people carrying goods across borders. What is legal in one place may not be elsewhere. A classic roleplaying scenario is to strip characters of their weapons when they enter a new jurisdiction, to be picked up when they leave. Of course, the inevitable fight breaks out before they do so. But this mechanism can be used in other, subtler ways.

There are real life cases of travelers carrying over-the-counter medications through a foreign customs inspection and being arrested for attempting to import "illegal drugs". In a science fiction setting, even bodily implants may be illegal -- "You have an artificial liver? I'm sorry sir, but we'll have to remove that if you want to leave the spaceport customs area."

Once inside a new country, characters unaware of peculiarities in the local law could be in danger. The impudence of a foreigner not dropping to his knees as an official passes in the street could be punished by anything from a fine to a flogging. For a modern game, subtle differences in road rules can confound drivers. Turning on a red light may be legal or illegal, for example. Some places have stranger local laws, like Melbourne, Australia, where sometimes right hand turns are only permitted from the leftmost lane.

That Old Time Religion

In real life, many cultural practices stem from observance of the local religion. Buddhists are strict vegetarians, Jews must not perform any work on the Sabbath, and Muslims stop everything to pray five times daily.

Religious observances can seem odd or even illogical to outsiders. This is a good excuse for almost any sort of unusual behavior in a strange location. Perhaps the adventurers have arrived in town on a holy day when no alcohol can be drunk, thus the hostile reception when they ordered food and wine at the inn. Maybe laser weapons are considered unholy, so are confiscated, leaving the characters defenseless while everyone else walks around armed with sonic disruptors.

Buddhists are always careful to pass to left side of "chortens," funerary shrines of lamas, when walking past them. To

pass to the right is to invite bad luck. Any similarly arbitrary restriction or proscription of behavior can be explained as a similar sort of religious belief.

Religion is also the standard excuse for public holidays or festivals. Characters needing a starport clearance in a hurry to skip the system and get away from pursuing pirates will be dismayed to see the issuing office closed for three days because of a local festival. Fantasy characters can always find things to do on a religious holy day, from appeasing the local gods to getting into trouble with the church. And a parade always provides a good background for a fight or chase sequence.

If gods are active in the campaign, they may require proper appeasement from visitors to their realm of influence. A visit to a local shrine may be in order, or else poor luck could dog the footsteps of a heathen foreign visitor. Clerics in foreign lands may even find that their own gods' power is weakened or unavailable.

Dealing with Cultural Differences

Educated characters may have some idea what they are dealing with when they travel to a foreign destination. In ***GURPS,*** this is represented by the Area Knowledge skill. Rolls against this skill will be required whenever the character is in a situation where correct behavior is important and that behavior is different from what he is used to. A failed roll means the character simply doesn't know the local custom and must muddle through.

Other skills which will come in handy when traveling are Savoir-Faire and Diplomacy. Savoir-Faire can be used to adopt a politely deferential attitude in most cases, although some cultures may look poorly on one who is too apologetic! Diplomacy can be resorted to once a social gaffe has been made and amends are needed. In the worst cases, the old standby combat skills might need a workout.

Getting Ideas Together

Suggested reading for cultural ideas can be found in virtually any book store. The travel guide section is brimming with details of foreign lands. These books usually have introductory sections explaining any peculiarities of local custom, from tipping expectations to religious mores.

For physical differences, check travel picture books. These often show details of unusual architecture, clothing styles and landscapes. Free travel brochures have similar pictures. The best resource is possibly *National Geographic* magazine. Each issue is crammed with exotic location descriptions and photographs. If you pick up a few old issues cheap at a garage sale or second hand store, you can even cut out the photos and flash them at your players when setting the scene for the night's adventuring.

With these resources and a few minutes setting the scene before play begins, you will be able to describe your gaming locations as the characters see them, breathing life into each new place and making it seem more real and dynamic to your players. Different places make for varied roleplaying experiences and can even suggest encounter and adventure scenarios.

"Well, you're not used to driving on this side of the road, so you're having to concentrate a bit. But you notice the air blowing in the window seems hot and stale, like inside an overcrowded room. Probably pollution from all the cars -- the traffic is a lot heavier than back home. There aren't many trees, and those you do see are scraggly and half dead looking. You figure this must be a bad neighborhood, because the buildings are grimy and covered in graffiti. You stop at a red light and can hear kids playing basketball in the park next to a church, which looks like the only well kept building in town. The guy behind you starts honking but the light is still red. He looks mean and is wearing some sort of uniform you don't recognize . . ."

by Alex van der Kleut and Marc Renouf

Art by andi jones

Bodyguards in Shadowrun

Whether he's a Secret Service agent protecting President Haeffner, or a made man standing watch over his don, the Sixth World is full of bodyguards. They are expected to watch out for their client, scanning for possible threats, keeping clients out of danger, and if necessary push a client out of the way of an attack or intercept a bullet meant for another. In some situations, they are directly opposed to shadowrunners, preventing them from carrying out their wetwork assignment.

Bodyguards have been a part of the ***Shadowrun*** game since the *1st Edition* was published in 1989. However, while FASA is now publishing the third edition of the game, there has never been any description of how a character could work as a bodyguard. This article attempts to rectify this situation by giving some guidelines for players wishing to create bodyguard characters. As one of the most common adventures in ***Shadowrun*** involves kidnapping someone (usually a researcher), the following guidelines can be used to improve the caliber of opponents as well.

Unfortunately, the way a bodyguard actually does all of these things is very vague. While the ***Corporate Security Handbook*** describes what kind of services that personal security companies provide to protect their customers, very little is actually written about the methods that a bodyguard can use to protect his client. The inclusion of a few extra skills and optional rules will provide some guidelines to GMs and players who want to add depth to bodyguard characters. While simple and straightforward, they allow careful, quick, or observant characters to undertake bodyguard missions in a more realistic and entertaining way. They can also provide the opposition more options to protect those oh-so-important research scientists who are always either getting kidnapped or kacked.

Bodyguard Skill

Default: Intelligence
Specializations: Interception, Perception

Bodyguard is an Active Skill Based on Intelligence, used to protect a client by pushing him out of harms way or interposing himself between an attack and his client. When allocating Combat Pool Dice to a client, he may not use

more than his skill level. It may also be used as a complementary skill for Perception Tests when the bodyguard is searching for potential threats to his client.

Professional Bodyguard Background

Default: Intelligence
Specializations: Identify Threats, Reduce Vulnerability, Team Coordination

When doing any sort of investigative work dealing with his duties, the bodyguard can use the bodyguard background skill. It is mainly used when planning the protection of a client, and the different methods of minimizing his risk. Identifying threats includes analyzing the client's workplace, residence and private life for potential security holes. It is also used for identifying potential enemies and attackers and analyzing various forms of attacks that the client may be vulnerable to. Reducing vulnerability involves planning different egress routes for personal appearances, determining the best positions for security team placement and other security precautions that the client can take. Team coordination covers the tactics and maneuvers of a personal security team. This is especially useful when one bodyguard is protecting a client while other team members run interference.

Adept Powers

In the world of ***Shadowrun,*** magically active adept characters are in considerable demand as bodyguards and can command very high fees for their services. Most of the benefits that an adept can gain through magic are subtler than the equivalent cybernetic enhancement, an important edge for a bodyguard to have. Combat Sense, Improved Reflexes and Sixth Sense can all increase the adept's Reaction for Surprise Tests. Empathic Sense can be invaluable for determining the intentions of potential hostiles. The benefits of Quick Draw and various Improved combat skills are also easy to see, as are any type of sensory improvement.

Cyberware

Mundane characters tend to look towards several types of body augmentation to enhance their effectiveness as bodyguards. Reflex enhancement of some sort, usually at least Wired Reflexes I, is almost a given. A smartlink is also a wise investment. Sense enhancing bodyware is extremely important, such as Low Light, Vision Magnification or Flare-Comp. Don't overlook the subtler cyberware, such as Hearing Amplifiers and Spatial Augmentation. A cyberarm with a built-in firearm provides a weapon that cannot be lost, as do razors and spurs.

Edges

Of course there are also several Edges available from the ***SRComp*** that are appropriate to bodyguard characters. For characters that don't have the adept power of Combat Sense, Lightning Reflexes can provide a good way to improve the odds in Surprise Tests. Bodyguards can always use the bonus that comes from having the Perceptive Edge. Depending on whether the character wants to blend in or stand out, he may wish to purchase either Blandness or Friendly Face.

Allocating Combat Pool

A character with the bodyguard skill may allocate some of his Combat Pool dice to protect his client from attackers. In essence, it allows him to use his Combat Pool to protect other characters from physical attacks the same way a mage can use Spell Defense dice out of his Magic Pool to protect other characters from magical attacks (see Spell Defense rules in ***SR3,*** p. 183). Typically, the most appropriate use of this skill happens during surprise situations (see ***SR3,*** p. 108-109). In order to allocate any combat pool dice, the bodyguard needs to be within arms reach of the client. In the case of surprise tests, he also must be able to act on the client. Outside of a surprise situation, the bodyguard can allocate Combat pool dice to the client just like a mage can with Spell Defense.

The maximum number of Combat Pool dice that a bodyguard can allocate to a client is equal to his bodyguard skill. They must be allocated at the beginning of the Combat Turn, and cannot be used until the beginning of the next Combat Turn when all the pools refresh. Since the allocation of Combat Pool dice to the client is done in precisely the same fashion as allocating Spell Defense dice, a character still has time to perform other actions, such as drawing a gun, aiming for the next combat round or making further Perception Tests. However, Combat Pool allocated in this way cannot be used for any other purpose; they are effectively used until the next Combat Round.

Example: DeadEye is walking up to Louie the Suit with the intent of doing him great bodily harm with a rather large semi-automatic pistol, the result of differences in policy in the local organized crime family. Fortunately, Louie has hired Mr. Bennet as a bodyguard, who spots DeadEye getting out of a parked car with a successful Perception Test. Since Mr. Bennet realizes that something is about to go down, the GM does not call for a Surprise Test. Mr. Bennet has a Reaction of 8, Combat Pool of 9 and a Bodyguard skill of 5. After Initiative is rolled, he allocates 5 of his 9 Combat Pool dice to protect Louie, and holds his first action. When it looks like DeadEye is going for his gun, Mr. Bennet uses his held action to quick draw his own weapon and perforate DeadEye. If DeadEye is still alive on his action, Louie has an extra 5 Combat Pool dice from Mr. Bennet to use in Dodge Tests.

Surprise Situations

The most appropriate time for a bodyguard to act is in Surprise situations, when the client has no idea that there is any danger around him. Under normal Surprise Situations, a character with fewer successes cannot act against a character with more successes, and cannot even dodge. However, when a bodyguard is allocating Combat Pool dice to a client, the bodyguard only has to be able to act against the client. In this case he warns his client of the danger, pushes him out of the way, or takes some other action that allows the client to dodge out of danger. If the bodyguard gets fewer successes than the client does, he cannot allocate any Combat Pool dice to him. If the would-be assassin gets more successes than the bodyguard does, he gets to stand there and watch while his client goes down and his insurance goes up.

Example: DeadEye wants to geek Louie the Suit, and instead of just stepping out of a car he decides to lay in ambush. He leaps out of a shadowed doorway, his gun at the ready. This time the GM decides that a Surprise Test is in order, and everyone rolls a Reaction test with a base target number of 4. DeadEye, lying in wait with held action gets a -2 modifier, for a final target number of 2. He rolls a number of dice equal to his Reaction (5), and gets 4 successes. Louie, thinking about his latest quarterly balance sheet, gets a +2 modifier for being distracted. He rolls his Reaction (a mere 3), and gets no successes. Mr. Bennet, paying attention, rolls his Reaction (an 8) against the base target number and also gets 4 successes.

With the same number of successes, Mr. Bennet cannot act directly against DeadEye, but he can allocate up to 5 of his own Combat Pool dice to Louie. Mr. Bennet chooses to allocate all 5. His actions also happen simultaneously to DeadEye's as they scored the same number of successes on the surprise test. Dead-Eye rolls for his shot as normal, taking a single simple action to aim, and the other to fire. Counting all of the appropriate modifiers, he comes up with two successes. Louie gets the chance to roll the 5 Combat Pool dice that Mr. Bennet has given him in an attempt to dodge. Louie gets three successes, and thus DeadEye's shot is a miss.

Taking the Bullet

There will be a few instances where it may be necessary to "take the bullet." In order to do so, the bodyguard merely declares his intent to interpose his own body between the shooter and the target. When the shooter fires, the bodyguard can roll his own Combat Pool dice to dodge into the shooter's line of fire. He can also use any dice that he had allocated to the client to take the bullet instead of lending it to him to use in his own Dodge test. If the bodyguard gets more successes than the shooter, he has successfully taken the bullet. The bodyguard must then resist the weapon's base damage and check for knockdown as normal.

Since this does not require the bodyguard to be able to act on the client directly, it comes in handy on those occasions where the client gets more successes on the Surprise Test than the bodyguard (though if the shooter goes first, the bodyguard still can't act in time). "Taking the bullet" however, requires an available simple action (which may have

been held for just such occasions).

Example: While finishing off DeadEye, his partner Dick takes the opportunity to catch up with Louie and take a shot at him with his Predator. Unfortunately for Mr. Bennet, Dick is firing from the corner of the building and out of the line of fire. Since he only took one shot at Dead-Eye, he has a simple action left that he uses to dive in front of Louie's body to shield him with his own. So far in this Combat Turn Mr. Bennet has allocated 5 Combat Pool dice to Louie for protection and used 3 to shoot Dead-Eye, leaving him with an extra unspent, unallocated Combat Pool die. He now rolls the 5 dice he had allocated to protect Louie, plus his extra-unspent die, versus a Target Number 4 and gets 4 successes. At this point Dick is getting nervous and only manages 3 successes. Mr. Bennet has successfully intercepted the bullet and now must resist a 9M wound. His armored vest reduces the power of the attack to 4, and he makes a body test to reduce the damage.

by David P. Summers

Art by andi jones

"The Sword Worlds . . .

You've never liked the Sword Worlds ever since you fought against their forces in the last war. The one time you were there, you found Hrunting itself to be a tiresome, self-important, place where you always got hassled, maybe because you are an "Impie" (Imperial citizen). Well, money is money and nobody says you have to live there. At least it gets you out of the Margesi system before the allergens there make you feel like garbage."

In Trouble Again

Setup

The party is on the Margesi Orbital Starport, in the Vilis subsector of the Spinward Marches. The "upport" isn't much, but it is the place to be since the taint in the Margesi atmosphere leaves you feeling like you have the flu. There the party is approached by a man who calls himself Archibald Inamann. He is a likable, but balding, man who insists that the party call him "Archie." Archie is a businessman who is in the need of some discreet shipping to his associates on Hrunting in the Sword Worlds. The size of the cargo is about what the group is looking for, and Archie is willing to pay double normal shipping rates, more if the party bargains well, if the adventurers meet his requirements. The cargo is needed ASAP, so the PCs are to go to the jump point, wait for the ship bringing the cargo in, pick up the cargo, and jump right for Hrunting. When they arrive in the Hrunting system they will go to the downport, make sure they get a specific customs official by the name of Tomas Kjold, and then deliver the cargo to a specific spot a few hundred miles northeast of the port. Nobody is to look at the cargo before delivery. Payment is half up front and half when the cargo is delivered. The location of the delivery on Hrunting will be provided when they arrive. Zero-G transfer of cargo will be handled by the arriving ship (the party will just need to evacuate the hold and open the cargo doors).

What Is Really Going On

Shocking as this may be, there are a number of crucial details that "Archie" hasn't told the party. He is really a Zhodani agent. His "real" name is "Vienzhprie," though he hasn't been called that in a long time. (His cover is made to stand up to professional scrutiny and research by the PCs will just find him to be a slightly shady merchant). The ship bringing the cargo is, in fact, just coming in from the the Sword Worlds (a Zhodani ally). The ship belongs, through a series of false holding companies, to the Zhodani secret service (see ***GURPS Traveller: Alien Races 1,*** pp.31-32), and the cargo

contains triggers for nuclear weapons. Why does Archie want to hire the party to send nuclear triggers right back from whence they came? So officials on the Sword Worlds can "uncover" a dastardly Imperial plot to smuggle nuclear weapons to terrorists by "catching" them in the act!

The Zhodani Consulate and the Sword Worlds want to create an apparent incident of Imperial subversion for propaganda purposes. The plan is for "Imperial agents" (the party) to get caught, in a very public way, supplying "terrorists" in the Sword Worlds with crucial components for nuclear weapons. At the least, this should rally anti-Imperial feeling in the Border worlds.

However, Archie is being watched by *real* Imperial agents, from Imperial Naval Intelligence (INI). They don't know who he works for or what he is planning. They do know it has something to do with Hrunting and will, when they see Archie contact the adventurers, arrange to have a ship jump to Hrunting just ahead of the party to warn agents there.

On The Way

The ship arrives 6 hours after the party gets to the meeting point. The ship is a typical 400 hull class (200,000 cf) merchant (see the Subsidized Merchant in ***GURPS Traveller***). It will establish both that the party knows Archibald Inamann's name and that he likes to be called Archie. The ship will contact Archibald by radio to double check and then pull along side. Some of the crew will put on vaccsuits and move the cargo over. It will then pull away so the PCs' ship can jump.

The cargo has a manifest which appears to be genuine. It represents the cargo as "milling equipment". As Archie mentioned, the size of the cargo is about 90% of the available cargo capacity of the ship (an exact match might be too suspicious). However, the triggers, and their packaging, only take up 1,500 cf. The extra cargo is used to hide the triggers by burying them among legitimate cargo. If the triggers are buried among 5,000 cf, or less, of other cargo, roll 1d6, divide by two (round down) and subtract one to determine how many boxes the party would need to open before they come across one with triggers in it. If it is buried among 5,000-12,500 cf of other cargo, roll 1d6-1. If it is buried among more than 12,500 cf of other cargo, roll 2d6-1.

When the PCs have had a chance to look over the cargo, they will notice that it has seals designed to show if it has been tampered with. If the adventurers wish to open them without regard to the seals, a character needs to make a roll against the lesser of Lockpicking +2 and Electronics, Security Systems +2. It will take 1 hour to open the box without damaging the contents and it will be obvious they were opened. A failure means the locks will jam and the boxes will need to be broken open to get inside. If the character wishes to open the cargo, and then close it with the seals intact, he will need to make the same roll at a -5 instead of a +2. If he fails, but makes base skill, he opens the box but mars the seals. If he fails base skill, the locks jam. This attempt will take 1d6 hours for each box. If the characters open a box with a nuclear trigger, they need to roll against a Mechanic skill to spot that it is not milling equipment. A roll against Armory, Nuclear Weapons, at a +2, will allow him/her to realize what they really are.

Arrival

When they party arrives in the Hrunting system, they will encounter INI agents in an armed scout ship. Posing as pirates (the crew is all Vargr to use human prejudice to support their cover) they will will demand that the party allows their ship to be boarded. They will attack if the PCs refuse, but will not go so far as to destroy the ship. Instead, they will restrict themselves to attempting to disable the party's ship and board it. (See below for the stats of the agents). If the boarding action fails, they will retreat and let agents on Hrunting handle things.

If the party escapes the "pirates," things will start going according to the plan given them by Archie. After all, the local authorities are in on the scheme to set the group up. Hrunting orbits a dim red star and has a standard atmosphere, a gravity of 0.5 G, fairly normal temperatures, and oceans that cover 30% of the planet. There is a Class B starport and a Sword Worlds military base there, and it is home to about 30 million people (mostly human). The system is named after the sword (said to be the best of all swords) that was used by Beowulf to fight Grendel's mother. (See ***GURPS Traveller: Behind the Claw*** for more info on Hrunting, Margesi, and the Spinward Marches.)

The party needs to go to the downport to go through customs. Tomas Kjold usually works 9 to 5. Normally the PCs would have come up with a plausible way to get Tomas as their inspector without being suspicious about it. The players should be presented with the problem that there is more than one custom inspector. However, any plan they come up with will succeed. In fact, if they just go up to customs, they will "just happen" to get Tomas. If he is not on duty, the office will be closed until the next morning.

Tomas will clear the party through customs. They will find a map to the delivery location mixed in with the papers he hands them. All landings must be made at the port. The party will need to rent a surface vehicle, or use one from the ship if it has one, to get to their destination. During this time they will be shadowed by both Imperial and Sword World agents. Characters need to win a quick contest of shadowing rolls, against a skill of 18, to spot them. If they do, they will lose sight of whoever is shadowing them and, shortly afterward, gun fire will be heard. If they go back they will notice that the former shadower is now trading gunfire with a target that can't be seen. He will exchange a few shots, break off, and slip away. If the characters don't win a shadowing roll, they will simply notice that a firefight breaks out nearby for unexplained reasons.

If the PCs realize what is going on, or try to leave Hrunting for any reason, anytime after they arrive in system, the backup plan is to "expose their crime" right away and arrest them where they are. In that case the situation is similar to the one that occurs after the Sword World and local agents spring the planned trap. The party needs to find a way to get off system. The local Imperial agents will help if they can. They will approach the group if they have not been captured. If the party is captured, the Imperial agents will do what they can to free them (probably sometime when they are being moved). However, this will be difficult.

Delivery

In Trouble Again

The delivery point is a clearing just off a dirt road in an unsettled mountainous area about 2-3 days travel from the starport. On they way there, the PCs may, or may not, notice they are being shadowed (the NPCs have a skill of 18, roll once per day). The party finds the clearing where the map said it was. It is about 100 yds by 200 yds across. If the adventurers spy on the clearing before entering, they will notice two or three people waiting with a truck. As they enter the clearing, however, 50 Hruntingian soldiers with weapons and two armored personnel carriers will emerge from the cover of the woods (see below for stats). A bullhorn will announce that they are under arrest for "crimes against the people of the Sword Words Confederation" and demand their surrender. The party is heavily outgunned and this might be a good idea.

The party is arrested as film crews cover the apprehension of "Imperial agents trying to destroy the security and way of life of the Sword Worlds". They are about to be loaded into one of the APCs, with their stuff, when two air rafts carrying the film crew start to leave. As the air rafts fly out, ground to air missiles from behind a hill destroy them. The troops then begin taking fire from the woods. The Imperial agents have been busy.

It is probable that the PCs will want to use this opportunity to escape. There will be two people covering them with weapons, but they are paying more attention to the fact that they are being shot at. The party should be able to get the drop on them. When the PCs try to overpower the guards, the fact that they are distracted is handled as the party having won partial surprise (p. 123 of ***GURPS Basic Set***). If they act promptly, they can also sneak in on the gunner of the APC who is concentrating on returning fire to the woods. This requires a Stealth+4 roll. The gunner cannot fire at people on the APC's ramp, but he does have a sidearm. If the party takes one APC and uses it to attack the other one (which has already taken a few light hits from the woods), the Sword Worlders will pull out, abandoning the PCs, vehicle and the nuclear triggers. If the PCs decide to just leave, the woods are just on the other side of the APC, so

once they have taken it, or snuck around it, they should be able to slip away. If the party captures the APC but just uses it to escape, the Sword Worlders will manage to fight off the ambushers (there are 12 of them at this point) and they will keep the triggers.

Escape

Free of the ambush, the party now "just" has to find a way to get off Hrunting and out of the Sword Worlds. After the fight they will be approached by the Imperial agents (real ones) who attacked the Hruntingian troops (see below for stats). Their help will be useful and it will be good for the group to convince the agents they are dupes and aren't smuggling components for nuclear weapons. Of course, smugglers who don't ask what their cargo is aren't really any less guilty than ones who do, so the agents will still be keen to get them back to the Imperium, if only so they can be arrested. Extenuating circumstances (such as helping the Imperial agents in the clearing, helping recover the triggers if the Hruntingians still have them, and otherwise cooperating with them fully) may be of help here.

Whether the agents tell the PCs who they are, or give some cover story, depends what they know and how they react to the group. If the party has the triggers, the Imperial agents will insist on taking possession of them and they will not be seen again. Possession of the triggers will also help to verify the PCs' story. If the triggers have not been recovered, the agents will express, in no uncertain terms, the need to recover them. However, there are still 30 men left and there are only 12 Imperial agents so this may be difficult. They do have 2 missiles left (see below) and, if they act promptly, can get ahead to set up an ambush. At that point recovery of the triggers will depend on a good plan by the PCs.

Getting Off Hrunting

Fortunately for the adventurers, the agents have previously placed charges in the spaceport's dispatch and defense systems. They can set them off using a remote control in their possession. When the party's ship takes off, the sabotage of the port systems will allow the ship to depart without incident. They will not give the remote control to the PCs, and 2-6 agents will insist on going along to get back to Imperial Space and report in (though they are primarily interested in making sure the PCs get into Imperial hands). Getting an APC to the port is unlikely. It will be spotted and attacked if it tries to get near the port and surrounding town.

The agent's sabotage can be used as a distraction and will prevent the player's ship from being shot down or pursued. The ship has been left locked and has not been moved (the authorities are counting on port security and the fact that the ship would be shot down by the port defense system if it tried to take off). The players need to get by the starport guards and set off the charges to take off. See below for a typical starport guard. The map shows the location of the area around the ship. Outside the perimeter fence near the ship two guards are on patrol. They are not making much effort to vary the regularity of their patrols. There are also two guards walking around the warehouses near the ship. There are two other guards patrolling the hangers nearby who can assist if called for by the other guards. They are all in radio communications. They can call for up to 12 guards to respond in 10-20 minutes.

The perimeter is monitored by visual and infrared cameras and pressure plates. It is not possible to sneak all the way up to a camera, but there are more cameras than the port has personnel to monitor them. On a stealth roll a character can get almost all the way without being seen. A roll of 6 or less means that camera was being monitored when the character was in sight. (Otherwise, the event was recorded but will not be watched until the next day. The cameras aren't motion triggered because of legitimate non-port related activity occurring outside the fence) Once a character is at a camera, there is a small blind spot to crouch in. It takes an Electronics, Security Systems roll to make the camera appear to malfunction. If they have a recorder and some cabling, they can record some camera output and make a loop to make the camera appear to be functioning (security will notice this on a 5 or less). Shooting the cameras, or giving them a good whack, will destroy them. The pressure plates are arrayed along the base of the fence. It takes a Traps roll, or an Electronics, Security Systems -4 roll, to spot a pressure plate. An Electronics, Security Systems roll at +2 will disable it without setting it off and a DX -2 roll will allow a character to step over it. A disabled camera will attract two guards to investigate in 10-20 min. A destroyed camera will attract a guard in five minutes and three other guards to check out the area. Being spotted on a monitor or activating a pressure plate will attract a dozen or so guards in three minutes.

The agents will agree to any reasonable plan on when to set off the explosives. This will cause confusion for about an hour, and then security will finally get organized enough to respond. For the first hour, the odds of a camera being monitored drop to a 5 or less. A broken/disabled camera, or a tripped pressure pad, is only responded to on a 10 or less (and then only with one guard). After an hour the security forces will get their act together. This will have the effect of increasing the guards at any location by 50%. Cameras will be monitored on a 8 or less, and response times drop by 25%. The port defense system will be back up in seven hours (though there's no way for the party to know that), and the ship will be blasted out of the sky if it attempts to leave after that time.

Alternatively, instead of sneaking in, the players may wish to come up with a plan to disguise their identities and and walk in. Descriptions, finger prints, etc. of the "terrorists" have been passed around. A decent plan to get by security screening at the port entrance will be needed to get them inside. People are being screened by visual identification and an X-ray machine. Characters that are close to the description the guards have been given have their fingerprints and DNA checked. Once in the port, the PCs will be likely to get near their ship without trouble (roll a 5 or less to get checked by a guard as the walk through the port) if they don't do anything dumb. Once they get near the ship they will have to evade the patrolling guards, who do know that nobody is suppose to be messing with that ship.

If they have not secured the cooperation of the INI agents, the players will have to come up with some other plan. Generally, getting away with their ship will not be possible. They may be able to disguise themselves and buy

commercial passage or stow away on a ship. Once they get into the port, as outlined above, make an IQ roll for anyone they are dealing with to realize they are the wanted "terrorists" (if they are disguised, make it a quick contest between IQ and Disguise). If any NPC realizes he is dealing with wanted people, he will alert the authorities rather than deal with the terrorists on a reaction roll of neutral or worse. On a very good reaction roll or better, they will deal with them for a "price". On a good reaction roll it is up the players to convince the NPC to let them skate.

Aftermath

If the PCs get back to Imperial space, they will be debriefed to within an inch of their lives. However, in the end they will be cleared of any wrongdoing. "Archie" will be nowhere to be found. If the triggers were recovered, the Sword Worlds and the Zhodani don't have much evidence of an "Imperial plot". Some of their forces were attacked, and a ship left port illegally, but they have no real evidence of Imperial involvement or of any vile plot. If the triggers are not recovered, they will have enough to make the Imperium unhappy, but not enough to make the kind of splash they hopped for. Neither side cares about the milling equipment that the triggers were buried in (the cargo beyond the 1,500 cf for the triggers) and it is forgotten about. If the PCs still have it, they can sell it for $1-5/cf . If, for some reason, the party left their ship on Hrunting, neither side will really care about that either, and it is up to the GM to see if the party can get it repatriated.

NPCs And Equipment

Imperial Agents Posing As Vargr Pirates

These are Vargr that have been raised and trained in the Imperium. They have been indoctrinated in human standards of loyalty (more due to human prejudices than any real need), which means the main effect of their Vargr heritage is a tendency to always want transfers to more prestigious assignments. They are well disciplined and task orientated, though they have a tendency to take initiative more than some operatives. The group is well equipped, but not with anything that a pirate wouldn't have.

ST 11
IQ 13
DX 14
HT 12

Advantages: Combat Reflexes.
Skills: Beam Weapons (Lasers) - 15; Guns (Gauss weapons) - 13; Knife - 15; Judo - 15; Karate - 15.
Equipment: Heavy Monocrys and Reflec armor, Laser Rifle-10, Gauss Pistol, 4mm, Large Knife.
The leader has 3 levels of Charisma and the second in command has 1.

Typical Hruntingian Trooper

These are not top-of-the-line troops. The authorities planed for a simple apprehension of a half-dozen or so lightly armed civilians with the element of surprise. Fifty men (of any quality) supported by APCs seemed to be, if anything, overkill. All the men know is that the mission is to arrest some smugglers, though why 50 men, 2 APCs and a film crew have been assigned is the subject of some speculation. Their attitude varies from "this beats more training" to "Darn! I was suppose to be on leave this week."

ST 11
IQ 11
DX 12
HT 11

Advantages: Combat Reflexes.

Skills: Guns (Rifle) - 12; Guns (Pistol) - 11; Knife - 11; Brawling 11.
Equipment: Heavy Monocrys, ACR, 9mm (however, they have not bothered to bring any grenades for the grenade launcher unless the PCs are known to have an armored vehicle), Auto Pistol, 9mm, Large Knife.

Imperial Agents Who Rescue the PCs

These are top of the line agents, but they are equipped more for mobility and infiltration than heavy firepower. They are a tight, well disciplined group that prefers to go by the book. Their mission is to find out what the PCs are doing, stop anything that runs counter to Imperial interests, and then see if they can't get the party back to Imperial space for questioning. The plan was to watch until they found out what was going on, but once the group reaches the clearing and is publicly arrested, it becomes clear the time to act is now or never (and the appearance is that, whatever is going on, it isn't good for the Imperium).

ST 12
IQ 13
DX 13
HT 13

Advantages: Combat Reflexes.
Skills: Knife - 15; Judo - 15; Karate - 15; Beam Weapons (Lasers) - 15; Guns (Gauss weapons) - 15; Laser Rifle-10.
Equipment: Heavy Monocrys, Gauss Pistol, 4mm, Large Knife. Half of them also have a Gauss Rifle, 4mm, and 6 RAM Grenades. The group is also carrying 4 SAMs.

Typical Starport Guard

An ordinary guard, adequately trained. He is normally not very motivated, though this has been give a modest boost by the news that national security issues are on the line.

ST 11
IQ 11
DX 11
HT 11

Skills: Gun (Rifle) - 12.
Equipment: Medium Monocrys, Assault Rifle, 7.5 mm.

Armored Personnel Carriers

The Beowulf C-7b is a TL 9 vehicle. It has PD 6, DR 350 on the front and PD 5, DR 195 on the back and sides and PD 4, DR 195 on the top and bottom. It has a minigun and an autocannon in the turret. It has four tubes for missiles, but they did not bring missiles for this mission. Each APC has only 300 rounds for the autocannon and 3,000 for the minigun. They both have radio (broadband and tight beam, 1,000 mile), inertial navigation, sensors facing all direction with a 10 mile range and 10x magnification (radar, ladar, targeting, IR, low light TV, etc.), a HUD display and pupil scanner (giving the gunner a +2 to hit), a complexity 5 computer (each crew station and the passenger area each have a terminal), and radical emission cloaking and stealth. It has room for an airlock and life support but they are not installed on this model (it is currently cargo space). It has room for three crew (one in the turret), 12 men, and 460 cf of cargo (all seats have crash webs). The body has 3,602 hit points, the turret has 288, and the open mounts have 19 each. Its empty Weight is 34,657 lbs (loaded weight 46,915 lbs), its volume is 2,612 cf, and it has a size modifier of +5. It has a top speed of 159 mph. It can accelerate at 2 mph/s and decelerate at 12 mph/s. Access is by a cargo ramp in the back.

30 mm heavy automatic canon using caseless APDS ammunition:

Malf.	Type.	Dam.	SS	Acc	1/2 dam.	Max	RoF

Ver.(Crit)	Cr	5dx9(2)	13	15	1500	6200	10

7 mm minigun using caseless APS ammunition:

Malf.	Type.	Dam.	SS	Acc	1/2 dam.	Max	RoF
Ver.(Crit)	Cr	8d(2)	10	13	740	4000	100

SAMs: These are light surface to air missiles designed for flexiblilty and reasonable weight. These ones are designed to take down light air craft and will not lock onto surface vehicles. They can be aimed manually at such targets, but they don't have much in the way of sights (Acc 6). 63 mm missile with a large warhead (HEPF) and Active Radar Homing, Weight with disposable launch tube = 20.5 Lbs, Speed = 1600 yds/sec, Endurance = 4 seconds, Guidance (ARH) Skill = 20, Min Range = 50 yds, Max = 6400 yds, Damage (direct hit) = 6Dx28, Damage (proximity fuse, explosive only) = 6Dx23.

Notes

I have chosen to make the cargo "nuclear triggers". It really doesn't matter what they are, as long as they meet the conditions of the Zhodani agents; a) the cargo is a hard-to-obtain part that is needed to make nuclear weapons, b) the patsies themselves won't be able to make a nuke with just what was given to them, c) no actual radioactive components are present.

It was assumed that the party has a ship that is unarmed, or is an armed Scout ship. If the party doesn't have a ship, then Archie can approach Rilvall Keoutop (a Vilani independent trader) who has a ship, but whose crew has just quit. He will then offer attractive salaries to the PCs. The Vilani will also turn out to be only marginally competent, the reason the old crew quit, and will not be much use beyond piloting the ship.

If the GM feels the need, the ship bringing in the cargo to the players may be armed enough to discourage the party from trying to change the deal or force new terms at the point of a gun (if his players are inclined to this sort of action). The "pirates" in the Hrunting system should be armed enough to make the fight interesting, but the odds of the players losing both the space battle with the "pirates" and the subsequent boarding action should be low. If the Imperial agents succeed in boarding the ship and in discovering the triggers, they will seize the triggers and PCs. This could go any number of directions. The PCs can try and escape with the triggers and complete the delivery. They can spend the rest of the adventure trying to convince Imperial interrogators that they aren't in league with Archibald and the Zhodani. Or maybe they can convince the INI agents that they are dupes, and not Zhodani agents, and can cooperate in going forward with the delivery to uncover the perfidious Zhodani plan.

When they get to Hrunting, it might seem impossible for the party to screw up before they get to their destination. This is not so. One group of players managed to get themselves arrested. This presented the local officials with a dilemma. Simply dropping the charges might tip the players off to the fact that there is more going on than meets the eye. However, if the PCs are left in jail, they can't make delivery. The local officials arranged for the charges to be dropped on some pretext and hoped for the best. If similar problems arise, local officials will try and not obviously help the group, but if necessary will do what they have to and hope for the best.

25-point GURPS Characters

by Brandon Cope

Art by andi jones

Although an average person is considered to be 25 points, few PCs meet such low-point characters in the course of their adventures. Instead, it would seem that many worlds' "normal" people are at least 50- or 75-point characters.

Part of the problem is that many GMs don't feel that useful characters can be built on such a low point total, or that the amount of point tweaking required isn't worth it. In fact, this article came about after a GM challenged the author to create low-point characters that weren't one-dimensional.

Of course, for everyday use, the merchant or city guardsman the party is dealing with doesn't need much more that the basic attributes (or just IQ for the merchant) plus three or four skills and basic equipment/merchandise (see the ***GURPS Basic Set,*** p.85). However, recurring characters, or characters important to the current adventure, need to be described in more detail, and that is the niche the NPCs below are designed to fill.

The characters are presented in a format similar to that of Supporting Cast characters, but with less detailed information. Few specific adventure ideas for the characters are given, as most of the characters are designed to support adventures, not be the focus of them.

Creating More Average Characters

The only two major design philosophy changes from higher point (100+) character design are that attributes will be lower (normally 20-40 fewer character points) and the NPC will have fewer skills (10-20 fewer character points). Remember that attributes of 8 or 9 do not count against the 40-point Disadvantage limit, and the NPC can have a single Disadvantage of any point value (such as Jinxed or Terminally Ill, though a 25-point character who is Cursed probably won't live very long). On the other hand, several characters below have not reached the full 40-point Disadvantage limit.

Expanding on the Characters

The 25-point characters below can easily be upgraded to 50 points (for Ally Groups) or 75 points (for Allies). The easiest way is to spend 20-40 more points on attributes, or eliminate Disadvantages. Characters can also increase their skill levels.

Also, since 25-point characters are less detailed than higher-point NPCs, they are easier to recycle; just change the name, one or two advantages and/or disadvantages, most or all of the quirks and a few skills.

Finally, there is no reason why the characters can't be used as PCs for a one-shot adventure or a mini-campaign (for a modern example, see "Mock Horror Adventures" in *Pyramid #9*).

Lahar

Blacksmith

ST: 12 [20] **Basic Damage** Thrust: 1d-1 Swing: 1d+2
DX: 10 [0] **Dodge:** 3 **Block:** n/a **Parry:** 4 (hammer)
IQ: 11 [10] **Basic Speed:** 5.25 **Move:** 3
HT: 11 [10] **Encumbrance:** None

Advantages: Empathy [15].
Disadvantages: Compulsive carousing [-5]; Crippled leg [-15]; Gigantism [-10]; Sense of Duty (Friends) [-5]; Truthfulness [-5].
Quirks: Hates puns; Uncomfortable around goblins; Never admits errors; Wants to return to home village someday; Sings loudly while working.
Skills: Area Knowledge-11 [1]; Armoury-11 [2]; Axe/Mace-9 [1]; Blacksmith-13 [6]; Carousing-10 [1]; Gambling-11 [2]; Knife-10 [1]; Riding-9 [1].
Gear: Small knife (1d-1 cut/1d-2 imp); Smith's hammer (1d+4 cr); leather apron (PD 1, DR 1 over front torso).
Appearance: age 22, light golden skin, short brown hair, dark blue eyes, 7' 7", 300 lbs.

Shortly after turning 13, Lahar's village was raided by goblins who took him (as well as several others) captive. He was sold off to a slaver, then to a blacksmith in a large city to the north. Fortunately, the laws of the region allowed slaves to save money in order to buy their freedom, which Lahar managed to do by age 17. He then took his scant possessions and began traveling south, working as a blacksmith's assistant in various towns in an effort to return home.

Eventually, he wandered into a mountain range controlled by dwarves. Lahar refuses to discuss the years he spent there, but he doesn't hide his familiarity with dwarvish armoury techniques.

Despite his somewhat fearsome appearance, Lahar is very personable and easy to get along with (as long as one avoids puns or pointing out Lahar's mistakes).

Campaign Uses: Lahar could be from the same village as the party, or or the employee of a wealthy and/or high status PC. PCs might seek him out to forge a weapon for them.

Almira

Apprentice wizard

ST: 9 [-10] **Basic Damage** Thrust: 1d-3 Swing: 1d-1
DX: 10 [0] **Dodge:** 5 **Block:** n/a **Parry:** n/a
IQ: 13 [30] **Basic Speed:** 4.75 **Move:** 4
HT: 9 [-10] **Encumbrance:** None

Advantages: Literacy [10]; Magery [15].
Disadvantages: Addiction (Pipe Smoker) [-5]; Jealousy [-10]; Skinny [-5]; Unattractive [-5].
Quirks: Pantheist; Sensitive about weight; Doesn't drink alcohol; Attracted to dangerous men; Likes children.
Skills: Area Knowledge-13 [1]; Alchemy-12 [2]; Diplomacy-11 [1];

Heraldry-12 [1]; History-12 [2]; Occultism-13 [2]; Pottery-12 [1].
Grimoire: Bravery-13 [2]; Fear-13 [2]; Sense Foes-13 [2]; Sense Emotion-13 [2]; Truthsayer-13 [2].
Gear: no weapons; no armor; three 1-point powerstones; writing materials.
Appearance: 19 years old, pale white skin, shoulder-length blonde hair, blue eyes, 5' 6" tall, 90 lbs.

Born into a wealthy family, Almira's family's fortunes took a sudden downturn due to the intrigues of an old family enemy. Almost overnight, she went from living in an extravagant mansion to a drab cottage. A few months later, as she wandered too far from her new home, a small group of kobold bandits surprised Almira. Before they could do anything except frighten her, an old man appeared and drove them off.

After escorting her home, he introduced himself to her parents as Peadir, a local hedge wizard, and that he wished to take her as an apprentice. Realizing that Almira would have trouble in normal life due to her frail constitution and disgraced family, her parents agreed.

Almira's apprenticeship is nearly over, and she has picked up several of her mentor's habits (including his pipe smoking and religious beliefs). Also, her resentment of others of a higher social rank has grown.

Campaign Uses: The party could run into Almira while she is on a mission for Peadir, or perhaps the wizard hires the party for a job and sends her along. If one of the PCs is a wizard, perhaps she is his apprentice.

Bryce Red-Face

Infantry militia and farmer

ST: 11 [10] **Basic Damage** Thrust: 1d+1 Swing: 1d-1
DX: 12 [20] **Dodge:** 6 **Block:** 7 **Parry:** 7 (spear), 6 (knife)
IQ: 9 [-10] **Basic Speed:** 5.75 **Move:** 5
HT: 11 [10] **Encumbrance:** none

Advantages: Combat Reflexes [15].
Disadvantages: Duty to Lord (9 or less) [-5]; No Sense of Humor [-10]; Theophobia (priests/gods) [-10]; Truthfulness [-5].
Quirks: Hates his nickname; Respects mages; Dislikes bards; Always wears green pants; Won't talk to his father.
Skills: Agronomy-10 [4]; Animal Handling-8 [2]; First Aid-9 [1]; Gambling-8 [1]; Knife-12 [1]; Knife Throwing-12 [1]; Scrounging-8 [1]; Shield-12 [1]; Spear-12 [2]; Swimming-12 [1].

Gear: Spear (Dam 1d+1 imp); large knife (1d-1 imp/cut); light leather vest (PD/DR 1/1); leather cap (PD/DR 1/1); small shield (PD 2).
Appearance: 24 years old, light brown skin, wavy brown hair, hazel eyes, 5' 8" tall, 150 lbs.

The youngest son of a farmer, Bryce decided to make his mark as a soldier. This decision greatly angered his father, enough so that the two haven't spoken in eight years. However, so far he is still part of the local village militia, the result of his lord's cowardice.

The only significant fighting he has been involved in dealt with the purging of a previously-abandoned temple that had been taken over by an outlawed cult. Only the chance intervention of a traveling wizard saved the militia forces from the otherworldly creatures unleashed by the cult. As a result, Bryce has a deep respect for mages and a great fear of priests and gods of any kind.

Several years ago, when drunk, he fell face-first into a cherry pie. A minstrel passing through started calling him "Red-Face," and the name stuck. Bryce doesn't like the nickname or bards.

Campaign Uses: If the PCs are from the same town, Bryce could be a friend or rival of one or more of the PCs. Perhaps the evil in the temple is only dormant, and the party has been sent to deal with it permanently; in that case, Bryce may be ordered (or, less likely, hired) to serve as a guide to the PCs.

Circaro

Goblin scholar

ST: 8 [0*] **Basic Damage** Thrust: 1d-3 Swing: 1d-2
DX: 11 [0*] **Dodge:** 5 **Block:** n/a **Parry:** 3 (brawling default)
IQ: 13 [20*] **Basic Speed:** 5 **Move:** 5
HT: 10 [0] **Encumbrance:** None (in the field, usually Light)

Advantages: Charisma +1 [5]; Contact (government, 12 or less, skill-15, usually reliable) [4]; Goblin [5]; Literacy [10]; Longevity [5]; Night Vision [*].
Disadvantages: Combat Paralysis [-15]; Greed [-15]; Impulsiveness [*]; Laziness [-10].
Quirks: Unconcerned with distinction between right and wrong; Extrovert; Looking for the "big find."
Skills: Administration-13 [2]; Anthropology-12 [2]; Archeology-12 [2]; Astrology-12 [2]; Crossbow-11 [1]; History-14 [6]; Research-14 [4].
Gear: notebook; ink and quills; crossbow (1d+1 imp; 1/2D 160) with 10 bolts and camping equipment (only when in the field).
Appearance: 45 years old, brown skin, graying brown hair, gray eyes, 5' 8", 145 lbs.

A scholar of questionable morals, Circaro searches for old humanoid ruins that may contain intact treasures. So far, his finds have barely managed to pay for themselves.

Until Circaro married Eaine, sister of the famous historian Neri, he was headed to a long and boring life as a scribe. He managed to become a close friend of Neri, who took him on as a pupil. It didn't take long, however, for him to become interested in the legends of lost cities and temples, and the unimagined wealth located therein.

After he had learned all he could from Neri, he abandoned him and Eaine and started looking for lost treasures. Unfortunately, his laziness often overcomes his greed, and what money he has found has been squandered on his many wives (currently he is on his fifth).

Campaign Use: Circaro could hire the party (or offer them a share of the loot) to accompany him on his latest venture. Or, he may use a more scholarly cover to dupe a more ethical party into grave-robbing. Finally, he and the party could independently be searching for the same lost treasure.

Special Note: Any point cost replaced by an asterisk is part of the Goblin racial package. If there is also a number (usually for attributes), then this is the cost after figuring the racial modifiers.

Herius

Idle rich

ST: 10 [0] **Basic Damage** Thrust: 1d-2 Swing: 1d
DX: 10 [0] **Dodge:** 5 **Block:** n/a **Parry:** 6 (fencing saber)
IQ: 10 [0] **Basic Speed:** 5 **Move:** 5
HT: 10 [0] **Encumbrance:** None

Advantages: Semi-Literate [5]; Status +3 [10]; Wealthy [20].
Disadvantages: Alcoholism [-15]; Compulsive Carousing [-5]; Lecherousness [-15]; Stubbornness [-5].
Quirks: Usually rude; Shows no respect to those of equal or lower status; Extremely organized.
Skills: Area Knowledge-12 [4]; Animal Handling-9 [2]; Carousing-12 [6]; Fencing-10 [2]; Gambling-11 [4]; Games (Chess)-11 [2]; Language (human foreign)-9 [1]; Merchant-10 [2]; Philosophy-10 [4]; Politics-10 [2]; Savoire-Faire-12 [4].
Gear: fencing saber (1d cut/1d-1 imp).
Appearance: 22 years old, white skin, dark brown hair, hazel eyes, 5' 9" tall, 150 lbs.

Herius came into the world under auspicious circumstances, all mirrors in the house shattering at his birth. So far, however, his life has proved to be unremarkable, no different from other rich, narcissistic young nobles.

During his teenage years, in an attempt to give his son more backbone, his father sent Herius to live with his brother, who operated a successful shipping business on a western island kingdom. Herius did learn some useful business skills, but his vices also grew in intensity.

Between binges of debauchery, Herius sometimes oversees trading missions for his uncle and diplomatic missions for his father. Unfortunately, Herius usually creates more problems than he solves.

Campaign Uses: The party could be sent with Herius on one of his trade or diplomatic missions. Or, the PCs could be hired by his father to keep Herius out of trouble.

Kylos

Warrior-mage

ST: 11 [10] **Basic Damage** Thrust: 1d-1 Swing: 1d+1
DX: 11 [10] **Dodge:** 5 **Block:** 6 **Parry:** 6 (shortsword), 5 (knife)
IQ: 12 [20] **Basic Speed:** 5.25 **Move:** 4
HT: 10 [0] **Encumbrance:** Light

Advantages: Combat Reflexes [15]; Sun-Aspected Magery [8].
Disadvantages: Jinxed x3 [-60].
Quirks: Wants to be famous adventurer; Excessively punctual; Devout follower of god of thieves; Annoyed by gossipers; Overly emotional at times.
Skills: Cooking-12 [1]; Crossbow-12 [2]; Fast Talk-11 [1]; First Aid-12 [1]; Knife-11 [1]; Riding-11 [2]; Shield-11 [1]; Shortsword-11 [2]; Survival (Woodlands)-11 [1] ; Throwing Stick-11 [1].
Grimoire: Detect Magic-12 [2]; Ignite Fire-12 [2]; Light-12 [2]; Purify Air-11 [2]; Seek Earth-12 [2]; Seek Water-12 [2]; Sense Life-12 [2].
Gear: large knife (1d-1 cut/imp); crossbow (1d+3 imp, 1/2D 220); 10 bolts; heavy leather vest (PD/DR 2/2); leather

helm (PD/DR 2/2); boots (PD/DR 2/2); small shield (PD 1).
Appearance: 25 years old, white skin, bald head with tattoos, hazel eyes, 5' 10", 145 lbs.

Kylos is a well-experienced adventurer who has, somehow, often been the only member of his party to survive their expeditions. Indeed, he has outlived almost everyone who he has spent significant time around him.

His lover died of the plague, his family home was destroyed by accidental fire, and his best friend died in a duel he seconded, among other tragedies. Kylos personally sees this as a test of the gods, but some are spreading rumors that he must be cursed.

Campaign Uses: Kylos is competent enough to sign on with most parties as an extra sword or spell-caster.

Salgar

Barbarian animal handler

ST: 11 [10] **Basic Damage** Thrust: 1d-1 Swing: 1d+1
DX: 10 [0] **Dodge:** 5 **Block:** n/a **Parry:** 4 (knife), 5 (hatchet)
IQ: 11 [10] **Basic Speed:** 5.25 **Move:** 5
HT: 11 [10] **Encumbrance:** None

Advantages: Alertness +2 [10]; Animal Empathy [5].

Disadvantages: Generosity [-5]; Pacifism (self-defense only) [-15]; Social Stigma (Barbarian) [-15].
Quirks: Sports a long braided moustache; Acts stupid (IQ 8) around strangers; Talks about his clan whenever he has the chance.
Skills: Axe/Mace-10 [2]; Agronomy-11 [2]; Animal Handling-14 [2]; Area Knowledge-11 [1]; Cooking-11 [1]; First Aid-11 [1]; History (barbarian clan)-14 [1]; Fast Talk-11 [2]; Knife-10 [1]; Language (local "common")-11 [2]; Streetwise-10 [1]; Veterinary-14 [2].
Gear: large knife (1d-1 cut/imp) and hatchet (1d+1 cut) worn on belt; no armor.
Appearance: 34 years old, ruddy white skin, brown hair, hazel eyes, 5' 11", 155 lbs.

At an early age, Salgar realized that he wasn't cut out for the life of a barbarian. Not only did he not like to start fights, he'd rather not fight at all. Fortunately, his affinity for animals kept him from being badly ridiculed. In the end, he decided he had to go to more civilized lands.

Salgar left his village many years ago and sought work as an animal handler in the southern kingdoms. He has had many employers over the years, some good, most bad. He often longs for the simple life of his village, but always put off returning.

Campaign Uses: A highly-skilled animal handler is always in demand; he could work for a PC's Patron or employer, or perhaps even a party member.

Lady Sileas of Cothas

Doomed noblewoman

ST: 10 [0] **Basic Damage** Thrust: 1d-2 Swing: 1d
DX: 11 [10] **Dodge:** 5 **Block:** 5 **Parry:** 5 (shortsword)
IQ: 13 [30] **Basic Speed:** 5.25 **Move:** 5
HT: 10 [0] **Encumbrance:** None

Advantages: Charisma +1 [5], Favor (Knight, 200 pt. character, 12 or less) [6]; Status +4 [15]; Wealth (wealthy) [20].

Disadvantages: Terminally Ill (6 months left) [-75}.
Quirks: Has advisors but won't listen to them; Avid card player; Proud of her ancestry.
Skills: Diplomacy-12 [2]; History-13 [2]; Hobby (Cardgames)-13 [1]; Literature-13 [2]; Merchant-14 [2]; Riding (Horse)-11 [2]; Shield-11 [1]; Shortsword-10 [1]; Strategy-12 [2]; Tactics-12 [2].
Gear: finely crafted shortsword (1d+1 cut/1d-1 imp).
Appearance: 42 years old, white skin, braided light brown hair, green eyes, 5' 6", 150 lbs.

Like her husband before her, Lady Sileas is dying from a disease caused by a magical curse. Lord Drusus, a military man, had made it a point to make sure his wife could run their walled estate while he was gone, in times of war or peace. She received combat training more extensive than that of other noblewomen.

A neighboring baron, responsible for the curse, is making plans to invade Lady Sileas' lands after her death, when her inept, teenage son will have the duty of defending the realm. Sileas is aware of this, and intends to start and end a war against the baron before this can happen.

Unfortunately, her son, appalled by a woman (his mother!) waging war, has used his influence with her advisors to delay any action until he can take over and run the campaign himself.

Campaign Uses: Lady Sileas may hire the PC's to aid her in the upcoming war. Or, the party may be serving a Patron who decides to give her aid. Characters who aren't combat oriented may be sent to find a way to remove her curse.

Marisa of Three Pines

Professional magician

ST: 9 [-10] **Basic Damage** Thrust: 1d-3 Swing: 1d-1
DX: 12 [20] **Dodge:** 5 **Block:** n/a **Parry:** 6 (Staff)
IQ: 13 [30] **Speed:** 5.25 **Move:** 3
HT: 9 [-10] **Encumbrance:** Medium (35 lbs from Fat disadvantage)

Advantages: Absolute Timing [5]; Charisma +1 [5]; Magic Resistance +2 [4].
Disadvantages: Cowardice [-10]; Fat [-10]; Intolerance (Mages) [-5]; Overconfidence [-10]; Poverty (Struggling) [-5]; Reputation -2 (Mages, on 10 or less) [-1].
Quirks: Loves carameled apples; Likes wine; Uncomfortable in enclosed places.
Skills: Acting-14 [2]; Area Knowledge-13 [1]; Astrology-12 [1]; Bard-14 [4]; Cooking-13 [1]; Disguise-12 [1]; Fast-Talk-13 [2]; Hypnotism-13 [2]; Occultism-13 [2]; Sleight of Hand-12 [4]; Staff-10 [1]; Ventriloquism-13 [4].
Gear: staff (cr 1d+1).
Appearance: 26 years old, frizzy shoulder-length auburn hair, brown eyes, fair complexion, 5' 5", 175 lbs.

As a child Marisa longed to be a wizard and even convinced her parents to try to get her apprenticed to a mage, but the attempt backfired: not only did Marisa have no talent for magic, but she had a definite resistance to it.

Rather than accept this failure, Marisa chose to do with mundane skills what mages did with their inborn talent. She became well-versed in many areas of trickery, as well as becoming a very persuasive person, which aids her "spells" greatly.

Unfortunately, Marisa's habit of passing herself off as a gaudy wizard has not made her popular with true mages, who feel that she is tarnishing their image. Her shows are what one would expect at a cheap circus, not from a professional wizard, and she uses as many props as possible.

Campaign Uses: A PC mage may well take a dislike to her (or be contacted by fellow guild members who do). Most likely, she will simply be a entertainer passing through, who seems to turn up in every other town the PCs travel to.

Take 'Em Down

by John Tynes

Art by andi jones

[*Editor's Note:* This article originally appeared in *Arcane* magazine, issue #20, June 1997.]

You're a hero. A two-fisted, no-holds-barred tough guy -- or gal. Your name is legend, your enemies quake in fear. The ground you walk on will soon be soaked with the blood of the guilty.

So why are you acting like such a loser?

Getting into the style of cinematic/four-color action ain't like dusting crops, boy. You can't just pussyfoot around. You've got to take charge, call the shots, and act with no regrets. You've got to be an action hero. When you go into combat, it's gotta be with guts, not with trepidation.

To be a real cinematic/four-color action hero, you've gotta have three things: panache, ingenuity, and guts. If you can work these things into roleplaying your character, you'll go far.

Panache

Cinematic/four-color action games like ***Feng Shui*** or ***Champions*** present a world where you're on top -- most of the time, at least. You're probably substantially above-average on most of the game's scales of human ability. Most people couldn't take you in a fight if their life depended on it. It's only other extra-tough people like yourself who you have to worry about, and most of them you can take in a fair fight anyway.

What does this mean? Quit wussing out! This isn't ***Call of Cthulhu.*** Talk big, act big, think big. When you open that door you're not going to be looking up at an aeons-old lord of the cosmos who can make your brains explode; you're going to be staring down at a bunch of frightened little losers trying to heist a bunch of fur coats so they can pay their bar tab at Vinny's Big Jugs & Grill. Scare them for crying out loud! The way to enter this situation is not to go slinking around so you won't get in a fight. The way to enter this situation is to ignite a smoke bomb, kick in the door, yell something frightening, and then stride cold-bloodedly in through the roiling fog.

"Wah!" you cry. "They might shoot at me!" Who cares? You think a buncha mooks are gonna gun your heroic ass down? Get real! Criminals are a superstitious, cowardly lot. Plus, they're lousy shots.

"Wah!" you persist. "What if the big boss guy is there? He's a good shot!" Quit whining! Do you really think the big boss guy is going to just shoot you on sight? Especially after you made such a mondo entrance? No! He's got to look tough in front of his men (who are all quaking in their boots at the sight of your awesomeness and thinking that maybe they're on the wrong side). So he's going to stride out of the shadows, say something menacing, and dare you to attack. You'll both circle around for a bit swapping insults, he'll sic his mooks on you, you'll stomp them, he'll get away, and you'll find the clue that leads to the next fight scene. No worries.

You've got to remember the kind of game you're playing, the kind of genre you're using, the kind of character you're portraying. You're an action hero, and you need to have the panache to match. If you get into your character and play him to the hilt, your GM should reciprocate by making your scenes with the villain more dramatic, by making the mooks even more pathetic, and by giving you more opportunities to have fun.

Ingenuity

Action heroes never lack for a good idea. That's because they're created by professional writers, who can spend months staring at a blank piece of paper, guzzling booze 'til their liver bursts, and finally figuring out the absolutely coolest stunt for the action hero to pull. But as a roleplayer, *you've* got to be the action hero -- you've got to think on your feet. You've got a little more real time than your character does in game time, but not much. To do your action hero justice, you've got to always be looking for an angle.

Television, as it does in all spectra of life, provides a flawless role model for us to emulate: MacGyver. Ever seen this show? MacGyver is this adventurer dude (I'm not sure what he does for a living) who keeps getting into dangerous situations. But he doesn't use guns, and he doesn't even fight that much if he can help it. Instead, he uses ingenuity to save the day.

Let's say that MacGyver is in some banana republic and there's a dozen personnel carriers sitting in the evil coup leader's compound. In about five minutes he's going to send a hundred armed thugs into those carriers and they're going to roll into the town plaza and kick out the good-intentioned but feeble-willed mayor. My gosh! What will MacGyver do? He can't fight all those people, he doesn't have any mines to blow up the carriers with (and killing is bad, anyway), and the town is defenseless until the federales arrive this afternoon. Happily, there's a dusty little cantina across the road. MacGyver runs inside, jumps over the bar, and grabs a big 20-pound bag of sugar from the kitchen. "Sugar? What's MacGyver thinking? This is no time for shortbread!" Hah! Clever MacGyver runs back outside and quickly dumps a load of sugar into the gas tank of each vehicle. Then he hides and watches as the troops stream out only to find that the carriers aren't going anywhere, and this little coup is over before it starts.

You've got to visualize the location of critical scenes in your head. Imagine it's a movie. What's around you? What do you need to accomplish? What do you see in your head that can help you achieve that goal? If the bad guy is about to escape, is there something you can throw to trip him up? If he's running down the stairs, can you grab a rope, jump out a window, and beat him to the street?

The point is, you can't rely on the GM to spoon-feed you the clever little bits of stuff you'll need to pull a slick move. You've got to extrapolate from what he does tell you and then ask innocently if there's a such-and-such there. "So we're in the motor pool? I don't suppose there might be some cans of oil around, are there?" (He's expecting gasoline, and was going to say no -- but oil? Why not!) Pour them out in front of the barracks door, make a commotion, and presto -- you've got the drop on a half-dozen stumbling, flailing guards who can't stand up straight let alone get their guns out. That's ingenuity, baby.

Guts

Last but not least, you need guts. Guts might sound similar to panache, but there's an important difference: panache is what you call it when you're in no real danger -- it's just posturing. But guts is what you call it when the spit hits the fan and it's time to show why you're a hero. Panache is the promise; this is the payoff.

What does it mean to have guts? In other styles of roleplaying, there's a line that you won't have your character cross, a line that demarcates the point where the character will more than likely die or be hurt badly. In those other games, you'll almost always pull back from the brink because you're very conscious of your

character's mortality. You'll figure that it's better to step back, bide your time, and find a better way to save the day, maybe a little later on.

In cinematic/four-color roleplaying, this is less appropriate. This is when you need guts, when you need to step across that line and do that dramatic, risky, desperate thing that you wouldn't do in other games. This is the defining moment of the cinematic/four-color style, the moment when you toss all that ingrained behavior aside and go for it. Because chances are, you'll win; that's why you're an action hero.

For example, the bad guy is in his chopper and has just lifted off and flew past a cliff's edge. In other games, this is the point where you turn to the authorities, or find the clue that tells you where he's going and race there, or just stand there and say something like "Next time!" But in the cinematic/four-color game, this is where you glare at him with steely eyes, take a running start, and leap off the cliff. As you sail through the air, you're shooting his face off/throwing a stun charge into the cabin/using your mental powers to dominate the pilot, and then you grab onto the undercarriage with your free hand.

"Wah!" you cry again. "I might not make it! I might die!"

Maybe. Maybe not. See, you've got guts. You've got ingenuity. You've got panache. You've taken a step that you wouldn't have taken in another roleplaying game. And this is where it pays off -- because even if you miss grabbing that undercarriage, the GM will offer the surprise announcement that while yes, this is a cliff edge, there's a ledge about 20 feet down. You'll hit the ledge hard and lose consciousness, sure, but as your vision blanks out you'll see the helicopter spinning crazily as it spirals down into the gorge and explodes. Congratulations.

The Shared Illusion

See, roleplaying is a shared illusion. The nature of the world you play in depends on the game you're playing. In some worlds, gravity is a force of nature: you fell off the cliff, you're going to die. But in other worlds, gravity is a dramatic force: you fell off a cliff, but only far enough to temporarily incapacitate you because that's dramatically appropriate given that you made a gutsy move.

The players and the GM have to be on the same wavelength. If you play your action hero the same way you play your Shadowrunner, your GM has every right to scale the genre conventions back towards grim realism. But that's not the idea. If you play your action hero like an action hero -- with panache, ingenuity, and guts -- your GM should reciprocate and rev the cinematic/four-color throttle up to eleven. That way, when you take that big risk for the sake of being true to the genre, the GM will likewise be true and not just kill you outright. This doesn't mean he should reward stupid behavior, but if your pulses are pounding and the pizza is forgotten and the dice are smoking, the GM should

meet you halfway.

You're an action hero. Cut loose. Take 'em down.

Icons of Cool

They loom large upon the silver screen, those heroes of our flickering cinema-days. They fight hard, stand tall, and in the end they're a lot cooler than we are. Still, we can cop them, can't we?

Name: Cyrano de Bergerac
Features in: *Cyrano de Bergerac, Roxanne*
Cool moves: He bests opponents with insults as well as swords (Panache).

Name: The Man With No Name
Features in: *Fistful of Dollars* and numerous other spaghetti westerns
Cool moves: Striding down a dusty street in a big poncho, taking one bullet after another and still coming on relentlessly -- surprise! He's got a big sheet of metal under that poncho, deflecting the bad guy's bullets (Ingenuity).

Name: Ash
Features in: *Evil Dead, Evil Dead II: Dead by Dawn, Army of Darkness (Evil Dead III)*
Cool moves: Even when his own hand turns against him, Ash never quits fighting (Guts).

Name: Luke Skywalker
Features in: As if
Cool moves: Screaming "No!" at Darth Vader and a hundred stormtroopers (Panache); using the tow cables to trip up the AT-ATs (Ingenuity); planting R2-D2 in Jabba's palace with the spring-loaded lightsaber ready to pop out moments before the execution (Guts), and on and on.

"Take 'Em Down" Quotes

"And what do you propose to do?"
"I'll organize a revolt. Exact a death for a death. And I'll never rest until every Saxon in this shire can stand up, free men, and strike a blow for Richard and England!"
-- *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (Panache)

"Maybe you will come in handy. While they're eating you, I'll get away."
-- *Tremors 2: Aftershocks* (Ingenuity)

"I see a red sash, I kill the man wearing it! So run, you cur -- run! Tell all the other curs the law is coming! You tell 'em I'm coming, and hell's coming with me -- you hear? Hell's coming with me!"
-- *Tombstone* (Guts)

by Kingsley Lintz

Art by andi jones

Everway presents an interesting dilemma. Almost immediately after presenting the potentially infinite potential of alternate universes, they slam most of the doors shut, homogenizing their Spheres (worlds) to the point that they might as well be just the next Realm (kingdom). In most cases, this can be gotten around just by ignoring some of their listed guidelines -- the suggestion that humanity is the dominant race everywhere, for example, is easily ignored, and setting up a world where orcs dominate doesn't require any real rebalancing of the setting or rules.

The restriction to a fantasy setting, however, bugged me, and adding technology in is a trickier matter. It annoyed me particularly that they forbid technology in the game, while in the same paragraph acknowledging that high-tech spheres probably exist. Writing an entirely new mechanic for it is clumsy, inefficient, and happily, unnecessary. ***Everway's*** system is loose enough to accommodate it well. I can see three possible routes to bring high-tech to the worlds of ***Everway,*** each with their own considerations.

Powers

Starting with the most conservative method, high-tech may not be readily available. Perhaps a few "alien" artifacts turn up now and again, hinting at a high-tech hub of Spherewalkers that might one day prove to be serious competition for the people of Everway. Maybe a few eccentric geniuses have devised steampunk devices that work. Or perhaps, far, far out from Everway is a Sphere with "cybertech" as the Usurper, which a single PC might be from . . . so far from home that his dialect of the Tongue presents a serious communications barrier, at least to start. ("Hoi, chummer! Upload me some chipbytes, eh?" "Huh?")

Adding such a smattering of technology to the world means rating it as Powers, strictly limiting it to specific devices. A regular hunting rifle or shotgun might count as little as a 1-point power; while it significantly increases the character's combat and intimidation ability (Major), the rate-of-fire and noise level hold it back from Frequent, and it really only has one purpose. A silenced pistol capable of firing bursts gains a Frequency point as it's a lot easier to carry around and can be used under more circumstances, like when you'd rather the guards didn't *all* know exactly where you are. Power-Armor should be at least 4 (Frequent, unless the game is highly political, at least twice Major, and definitely Versatile). A real battlemech is probably out of any price range.

This route keeps it firmly under GM control, and maintains ***Everway's*** predominantly fantasy tone -- any technology will be an anomaly. Even most PCs who actually have a technological device won't understand *technology*, per se; they've just learned through divination magics that if you pull this funny little metal piece out, the little ball will explode in a few seconds.

Magic

It's axiomatic that sufficiently advanced technology would seem as magic, but what if it actually *is*? This method can encompass anything from steampunk invention and alchemy to empirical study and rocket science. Given the mystical feel of ***Everway,*** I prefer to suggest, for purposes of the game, that the invention and building of high-tech is literally a magical process. This also helps the GM keep it limited, as just *anyone* mixing these two chemicals may not get the right results, in precisely the same way that a Words of Power mage can blast someone without having to worry that they'll just repeat the syllables and hit back.

For example, one might include Invention (Air) as a "magic" style. At one point, the Inventor understands the principles of the lever, pulley, and wheel. At three points, you can build serious "clockworks" and other such intricate or multiple-step devices. Common modern technology (guns, radios, cars -- including the ability to refine gasoline, given time and resources) should kick in as low as level 5. A rating of 7 should just start with the cyberpunk; implants, genetic engineering, real designer chemicals, but still with a respectable malfunction rate. With Invention at 10 . . . planet-buster bombs, genesis missiles, matter replicators. Maybe even time travel, if the GM wants to muck with it. I'd suggest anything two levels down can be made with "alternative" materials; e.g. a level-7 Inventor can build most common modern technology as a makeshift, but still perfectly reliable, device, like building a gun out of bamboo and rubber bands with a compressed-air propellant and small rocks for bullets. The MacGyver syndrome.

This method walks a middleground of versatility and restrictions. Almost any kind of technology is possible, and once a PC has the right level of "Magic," it's readily and continually available. However, it's comparatively limited by time and resources -- an Inventor will have to put more forethought into what he's going to need than most mages. It will still be viewed by the populace as an oddity -- people may go to the city's Inventor to buy watches, and he'll certainly be commissioned (or conscripted) by the local lord to provide cannons, but most people won't understand -- or really care to understand -- how it really works.

Equipment

Essentially, the "Just Do It" method. Make the executive decision, tell your players there are tech Spheres and they can have tech characters, and if they want tech stuff, just write it down . . . subject, as always, to GM approval. Fire makes as much, if not more, sense to guide firing a lasergun as a crossbow, so there's really no alteration necessary.

The downside to this path is that it radically changes the feel of the game. There's a significant risk of technology simply replacing magic, and it becomes more difficult to keep it limited. Many people who will cheerfully pay the points for a Ring of Flying won't understand why an Anti-Gravity Belt should cost the same . . . after all, it's just a tool, right?

The three routes probably work ideally in combination. Draw a line as to what's readily available, wherever you want to draw it. For a character to possess anything more advanced than that will require a Power or Invention Magic (or whatever other technology-as-magic path your player might care to create.) A possible alternative, if you want it to be more readily available to PCs but keep it rare in the setting itself, is to allow Invention simply as a base 3-point Power (frequent and twice-versatile), and then add a Major point in for any effects they want past 20th-century stuff.

Adding Technology to an already-existing campaign is simply rife with potential, and the three routes for doing it have a built in progression. If there are technological Spheres out there, then it can be presumed that Everway is many Gates

away from them . . . but as the Spherewalkers of Everway explore further out, contact will have to be made someday. First let the players find a few odd devices, which they can either figure out or not. Then maybe they'll run into a group of Spherewalkers with guns, or holograms. At this point, the technology is available on a single-case, Power-level basis, and makes for some excellent Boons. (This also works well on an experimental level; give one of the players a loaded pistol or a charged laser gun as a Boon, and see how it plays out. If you're not liking it, well, once they're out of bullets or the charge dies, they have an interesting paperweight with a story behind it. If you *do* like it, let them learn how to make their own bullets, or let the laser have highly efficient solar panels.) After several sessions of this, as contact increases, allow someone (a PC if anyone's interested, or just a background NPC) to start learning Invention. If it's a PC, they can start experimenting with their first couple levels of it . . . see what they come up with. If it's background, let the group hear about the new clockworker in Everway. The players may discover an Industrial Revolution sphere, where Fire and Earth are overwhelming Air and Water, and Pollution is the Usurper card and the Smith is the Sphere's Fate.

As it progresses, and technology becomes better known in Everway and surrounding Spheres, gradually increase the level of technology that's available as basic equipment, and hence the level available only as Powers. For most campaigns, I'd recommend keeping cybernetic implants always as a Power, even when a Mage is capable of building them; they're long-term intrinsic abilities. Getting cybereyes is like having a powerful enough Flux Mage permanently alter your retina so that you can see in the dark. Other cybernetics may act as further "specialties" on the attributes: Subdermal Armor will grant the "resisting impact" specialty to your Earth score, while a skillchip will temporarily grant the "perform [skill]" specialty to your Air.

Technology offers other adventure seeds if you don't want to break it to them so slowly. What if Roundwater doesn't hold quite *all* the gates in Fourcorner? Perhaps a neighboring Realm has stumbled upon a hidden gate that leads to a high-tech Sphere, and with the aid of some unsavory Spherewalkers has secretly established contact and trade with the locals there. Having a taste of the wealth available to Spherewalking, they want more . . . which means controlling Everway. Now they're rolling in with tanks and machine guns, making a mockery of the Keepers' Guard. It is, of course, up to the Spherewalkers of Everway -- and the PCs in specific -- to find a way to stop them . . . or the players may simply return from an outing to find that it's already happened, and Everway is being converted to a more industrialized society. From there, they get mixed up between progressives who want to see it happen and the traditionalists who want it stopped; loyalists who support the Emerald family and rebels who see potential in the new order . . . oh, and don't forget culture shock.

hastily prepared by David Streeter

Introduction

Where I Pretend To Cut to the Chase

I don't know about you, dear reader, but whenever my mates invite me to a game of ***INWO,*** I always find myself running 20 minutes late and without a deck made. Worse still, I discover that I haven't packed up my cards properly the last ten games, so I can't find anything. As you can imagine, I've developed a knack for making decks on the run, and in particular, making only one "pass" through my cards, the essence of making a quick deck. Anyhow, here's ten decks that can be made in under ten minutes. The first three you can make in under ten seconds.

Deck 1: The Deck You Used Last Time

There's no deck quicker to make than a deck that's already been made. If you've still got last game's deck hanging around, use it. If you've already played the same deck two or three times, change the Illuminati and choose a different starting puppet. Believe me, your friends are idiots and won't know the difference.

Deck 2: The Random Deck

Just grab an Illuminati (Bavaria, UFOs or Adepts are best), 20 groups (no resources) and 24 plots at random. You'll need more groups than a tuned deck since you'll need to deal with opposing alignments and so forth. Try and avoid choosing secret groups if you can. Whenever you draw a card during play, ask yourself the question, "can I trade this card with another player for something useful?".

Deck 3: Someone Else's Deck

This is really a variant on the random deck. Make a random deck as described above and turn up to the game. Before you start play, point out the window and yell, ***"Oh My god! It's Ellen Degeneres!"*** and quickly swap your random deck with one of your opponents' decks while they're not looking (I used to use Elvis, but my friends started to catch on). When they discover the switch, say "A real man would play with any deck, no matter how bad." Of course, don't tell them that it would be "a real *stupid* man." Another option is to turn up and say "I don't have a deck made, does anyone have an extra they can lend me?" Of course, that just shows weakness and is nowhere near as intimidating as the Ellen Degeneres trick.

Deck 4: The Bavaria Deck

If you have got a bit more time, you can make a quickie Bavaria deck without much effort. Grab Bavaria and pick 15 groups with a power of 5 or more. Then make a single pass through your plots and pull out every +10 card you find -- it

doesn't matter if you miss a few, time is of the essence. Fill out the rest of your deck to 45 with random cards. Plot cards aren't that essential to Bavaria -- just stick to the strategy of "one automatic takeover, one privileged attack" for each turn.

Deck 5: The Subgenius Deck

If you're like me, you practice ***Subgenius*** apartheid in organizing your cards -- after all, you recognize those heretical pieces of glossy cardboard for the corrupting filth they are. However, right at the moment they are as valuable as your dearest friend's left earlobe. Just grab a Subgenius Illuminati card, 19 Subgenius group cards and 25 Subgenius plots. If you have the time, swap a few plots for "Let's Get Organized" -- the Subgenius groups are a bit short of control arrows. The theory of this deck is that since the ***Subgenius*** set was designed to be able to be played standalone, every card you draw will be useful. If it isn't, cut it in half and burn it. You shouldn't stand for that kind of insolence.

Deck 6: Last Week's Quickie Deck, Only Better

INWO Quickie Decks

When you've been making quickie decks for a while, you'll get the hang of this one. When you play with a quickie deck, remember two or three cards that would make it a better deck. Then before the next game, swap out a few duds for those cards. Groups are particularly useful, but swapping plots with odd requirements for "Secrets Man was Not Meant To Know" and "Savings and Loan Scam" are also quite good. Keep swapping that Illuminati between games! After a while, you'll have a strong, versatile deck.

Deck 7: Here's a Souffle I Made Earlier

This one involves following a recipe, and requires a bit more organization. If your cards are in some sort of order, you can make a deck from a written list. Downloading one of the "decks of the week" from the Internet is a good start. Writing out the cards of any deck you win with is another handy trick.

INWO Quickie Decks

Deck 8: The Upheaval Deck

If you have a full ten minutes to make a deck, start with the UFOs, add Big Media, Madison Avenue, Clone Arrangers, Nuclear Power companies and all your Media Sensations. Also add any useful Media groups you notice until you have 20 (or more) groups. Put in all your Upheavals and the goal cards Arise! and Fratricide. If you still have space, add in Savings and Loans Scams, Hat Tricks, plot cancelers, one of each color NWO, and the Crystal Skull. Don't start playing Upheavals until you've got at least eight groups in your power structure (or you have Arise! in your hand). Then go crazy. Hopefully, you can either a) eliminate two players and win with Fratricide, b) goad someone into removing your last puppet and win with Arise! or c) eliminate so many groups that the other players cannot win, and free grab your way to victory with your group-heavy deck. Hey, it's

an obnoxious deck, but it's *fun.*

Deck 9: The Computer Deck

Simplicity. Start with the Network (obviously), then pull out all the computer groups. Trim that down to 15 groups based on "any attempt" control bonuses and add the resource Eliza. Add 29 plots. If you can be bothered, get +10 cards, power boosters, plot cancelers and the computer plots. This deck doesn't really need a very good set of plot cards, though.

Deck 10: One of the Alignment Decks

Pick an alignment, and pull out all the groups of that alignment. Liberal or government are your best bets, although corporate and violent are also good. For an Illuminati, Bavaria and Bermuda are good for all alignments, Gnomes are good for corporate and Cthulhu good for violent. A peaceful deck with Shangri-La is a bit more courageous, but not unwinnable. Trim the groups down to 15 cards. If you separate your NWOs from other cards, choose lots of the good ones first. For plots, you really want to look for the following in one pass: Plot cancelers, power boosters, appropriate +10s, any card with a pyramid or naked woman on it, or Voodoo Economics. The biggest risk with this quickie deck is that someone else will have a tuned version of your deck. If that happens, pay them $10 to throw the game. It's a cruel and unjust world.

Epilogue

The Bit Where I Make a Few More Cents by Repeating What I've Already Said in a Different Way

The common theme in making a quickie deck is concentrating on your group deck, staying away from resources, and making your groups deck bigger than normal to tolerate mistakes. As a consequence, you will draw plot cards that are useless, or nearly so. Trade these if you can, or use them to power other cards by placing them back on top of your deck. It might even be worth your while trading two or three useless cards to an opponent in exchange for one slightly less useless card. Your opponent can always use the duds to power other plots as well. If you're lucky, you'll "rediscover" a lot of useful groups and plots like I have. Necessity is the mother of invention, and she is a tough but instructive lady. Anyway, you need the discipline.

by Chad Underkoffler

Art by andi jones

[*Editor's Note:* Elements of this article will appear in ***Post-Modern Magick,*** an upcoming Atlas Games supplement for ***Unknown Armies.***]

In Atlas Games' new roleplaying game ***Unknown Armies,*** you and your allies in the Occult Underground mix it up with good guys and bad guys alike. At the street level, magickal Adepts duke it out with gun-toting enforcers and weirdos of every stripe. At the global level, organizations like the Sect of the Naked Goddess, the True Order of Saint-Germain, and the New Inquisition have set their sights on becoming the powerhouse of the Occult Underground. And on the cosmic level, soon the universe will die and be reborn. Next time around, the world might be a terrible place -- or it could be Paradise. Someone gets to decide. Might as well be you.

This article introduces a new school of magick -- Bibliomancy, plus a sample Bibliomancer character, two related artifacts, and some adventure seeds for your ***Unknown Armies*** campaign. Given the loose and abstract nature of the ***UA*** rules, there should be enough information here to convert the school, character, and artifacts to any desired system. Enjoy!

Bibliomancy

(Book-Based Magick)

"Book lovers are thought by unbookish people to be gentle and unworldly, and perhaps a few of them are so. But there are others who will lie and scheme and steal to get books as wildly and unconscionably as the dope-taker in pursuit of his drug."
-- Robertson Davies, Tempest-Tost

Knowledge is power.

The greatest repositories of knowledge -- and thus power -- are books. To gain power, one must seek out and read as many books as possible. Not only that, but to access and hold the caged power of a book, the adept must retain possession of the book in his Library. Possession is nine-tenths of Bibliomancy. Bibliomancers are often called librarians or bookworms in the slang of the Occult Underground.

The central paradox of Bibliomancy is that even though one may read a book and transfer its knowledge and power to memory, the physical book itself must still be kept -- purely for reference, you understand. Bibliomancers collect huge Libraries around themselves, much like the shell of an oyster. And like an oyster shell, a Bibliomancer's Library is usually immobile, strongly defended, and full of pearls (of wisdom, perhaps?). Attempting to attack a Bibliomancer in his Library is stupidity of the rankest sort.

Bibliomantic Library: A bookworm's Library is the center of his power. He can use it to charge himself up, store those charges, and use those charges on spells like Let Me Check My Notes and Arcane Knowledge. The downside is that his Library also limits his power: a bookworm only has access to those skills contained within the books of his Library; the number of books in his Library limits the number of charges he can hold; and he must remain in proximity to his books to use his magic. The GM should feel free to impose negative shifts as the bookworm gets further away from his books; the maximum distance is roughly a number of feet equal to the bookworm's Soul attribute. The player of a bookworm must detail what books comprise his Bibliomantic Library; this is important for a number of spells. See Taboo (below) for more details.

Also, very importantly, a Bibliomancer may not receive a charge from a book currently owned by another Bibliomancer, much as Dipsomancers cannot share their special drinking vessels. Thus, Bibliomancers often spend much of their energies theft-proofing their Libraries, and trying to steal rare books from each other.

Many bookworms believe that the Library of Alexandria was destroyed because it was the magickal Library of an ancient Bibliomantic scholar-king. And indeed, there are some indications that many Bibliomantic traditions have been inherited from a now-extinct old-school Bibliomantic tradition. Other Adepts point to strong correlations between Cliomancy and Bibliomancy, and believe that Bibliomancy is merely a variant form of that history-based magic.

For the purposes of Bibliomancers, any printed and bound material (including scrolls) is a "book." Thus, magazines, Xerox copies, and even comic books can be considered books; computer disks, "books on tape," and electronic files are not. Furthermore, electronic commerce involving books usually does not grant charges for discovery, purchase, or auction, though there have been very rare exceptions to this general rule. Time spent seems to be a large factor in qualifying a book search for charge generation.

All Bibliomancers know the Minor Ritual of Seek the Lost Tome. The ritual, which reveals the location of formerly owned but now missing books, is passed down from teacher to pupil as part of the Bibliomantic school. It is rumored that there is a Major Ritual known as Seek the Hidden Tome; this ritual is said to allow the caster to locate any book that exists, previous ownership is not a prerequisite. All bookworms drool for such a ritual, and will follow any leads or rumors regarding it relentlessly.

Bibliomancy Blast Style: Special. Bibliomancers have no Blast of their own, but can "borrow" the Blast of other schools through the use of the Arcane Knowledge spell (below). The Entropomancer Significant Blast or Killing Stare is often enchanted as a one-charge artifact into the valuable books in a bookworm's Library, to punish would be book thieves (usually other Bibliomancers!).

Stats

Generate a Minor Charge: Read a new (to the bookworm, at least) book of at least 100 pages, or 100 pages of a longer work that belongs to your Library. Find a rare book in a used bookstore, at a flea market, or successfully purchase one at an auction, then add it to your Library. Walking into the local mega-chain and paying for the New York Times number one bestseller will not work. (Please note that a Bibliomancer will receive two charges -- eventually -- for coming across a rarity: one for the discovery, and one for the reading.) Recall that a Bibliomancer may not receive a charge from a book currently owned by another Bibliomancer.

Generate a Significant Charge: Read completely or add to your Library a historically significant or famous book. Examples would be Mother Theresa's personal Bible, a Caxton *Le Morte D'Arthur,* the grimoire of another magickal school, an author's copy of *Foucault's Pendulum,* etc.

Generate a Major Charge: Read completely or add to your Library a one-of-a-kind book: the real *Necronomicon,*. the *Q Gospel,* the *Copper Scroll,* the *Red Book of Westmarch,* the *Voynich Manuscript,* the authentic diary of Howard Hughes (or Adolf Hitler!).

Taboo: The two major taboos of Bibliomancy involve the number of charges a bookworm may hold, and the need to remain in close proximity to one's Library.

Charges: A bookworm may only have as many charges as he has books: minor charges require 1 book per charge, significant charges require 10 books per charge, and major charges require 100 books per charge. Thus, for a bookworm to retain 1 major charge, 2 significant charges, and 5 minor charges, his Library would have to contain a minimum of 125 books. If he generates more charges without increasing the requisite size of his library (say, by coming across a mint-condition Storisende edition of James Branch Cabell's *Jurgen,* for example; a significant charge demanding an additional 10 books), the charge is lost!

Proximity: A bookworm must remain within a number of feet roughly equivalent to his Soul attribute, or lose access to his charges. The charges will remain with the Library. Recall that distance within the acceptable maximum range can still apply a negative shift to Bibliomancy rolls at the GM's option.

Luckily, a bookworm may put together a "traveling Library" of selected books, usually enough to fit inside a briefcase or backpack; otherwise, they would be unable to leave their lairs without being defenseless. Figure number of charges as normal.

Example: David the bookworm needs to travel to Pittsburgh to bid on a rare copy of the *Malleus Malificarum,* worth a significant charge to him. However, this takes him far from his Philadelphia home . . . and Bibliomantic Library. He outfits a small traveling Library of 50 books, which will allow him to carry his 2 significant charges and his 7 minor charges. He also has a major charge (from a rare copy of *The King in Yellow* that he acquired last year), but decides that carrying too much of his Library with him would be too high of a risk given the vagaries of travel and all, and leaves that charge at home with his Philadelphia Library, trusting the magickal defenses he's set there. While in Pittsburgh, it will be as if he had no major charge at all, since he's out of range of his main Library.

If another bookworm steals a book holding a charge from another Bibliomancer's Library, the held charge is lost, both to the victim and the thief. However, the thief immediately regains the charge by gaining possession of the book, and the victim loses a "slot" to hold a charge!

Random Magic Domain: Bibliomancy is concerned with the power of knowledge. It is powerful magic for finding things out, for illuminating or obscuring the facts of something, and for influencing events that are knowledge-dependent. Need a password to hack into a database? Sure. Need to cover-up the signs of a break-in? All right. Need to sift truth from a farrago of lies? You betcha.

Starting Charges: Newly-created Bibliomancers start with three charges and a Library of 10 books. The player needs to come up with the titles of those 10 books and receive the GM's approval on them.

Bibliomancy Minor Formula Spells

Speed Reading

Cost: 1 minor charge
Effect: By spending a minor charge, a bookworm may absorb all of the information contained within a single book -- which need not be part of his Library -- into his mind. The Bibliomancer retains total photographic recall of the work for around 30 minutes, which then fades to a normal level of recall, just as if he had read the book in a mundane fashion. A bookworm does not generate a charge when using this spell to read a book.

Let Me Check My Notes

Cost: 1 minor charge
Effect: A Bibliomancer has a magickal connection to his Library, and may spend a minor charge to retrieve any information contained within its books. This spell allows total photographic recall of any piece of information, provided there is a book that contains it within his Library. The bookworm must identify the target information he wishes, and the Library work from which he intends to retrieve it. "George Washington, from the W volume of *Encyclopedia Britannica.*"

If the Bibliomancer chooses to expend an additional minor charge, he may search all the works of his Library for a composite of all information contained therein on a single subject.

It's Right There in Black & White

Cost: 2 minor charges
Effect: When a bookworm needs to see what the future holds, he merely picks up a book, burns two charges, and riffles through it. Some of the words and letters on the pages will raise themselves up and glow, to spell out a cryptic message of the next 24 hours. The quality of starting text influences the quality of message received. If you use a telephone book, the message will be short and spotty. A *King James Bible* works better-but tends to archaic language. Casting this spell on a noir mystery results in short staccato sentences.

Bookworms do not use books from their Library for this spell unless it is a last resort; something in the divinatory magick summoned "taints" the book for weeks, making it unable to grant or hold charges, or be used by any other Bibliomantic spell.

I've Read the Manual

Cost: 2 minor charges
Effect: This spell allows the use of any mundane skills recorded in the books of the adept's Library. It is similar to the Cliomantic spell Instant Zen Master and the Dipsomantic spell God Looks Out For Drunks, allowing you to use your Bibliomancy skill in place of any other normal skill, including the ability to flip-flop rolls.

This means that a Bibliomancer can use I've Read the Manual to "tap" his Library to Fence like D'Artagnan, Notice like Sherlock Holmes, Seduce like James Bond, Speak Basque like a native, and so forth. That is, as long as he has an

appropriate book, and he's within proximity to it. The GM should feel free to apply negative shifts to the Bibliomancy roll if the bookworm is not actually touching the required book with one of his hands.

Blur the Lines

Cost: 3 minor charges
Effect: There are many facts out there that would be dangerous if they saw the light of day. Blur the Lines allows the bookworm to obscure any one fact, making it difficult for any researcher to come across it. This is very similar to the "disappearance" of all information regarding the true identity of the Naked Goddess. Always by happenstance or bad luck,-the needed page seems to be ripped from the telephone book, ink spilled over the name on the signed confession, databases lock up and crash the system when it comes across the Blurred address, no one seems to know the identity of that Cigar Smoking Man . . . Data obscured by this spell will usually reappear in a matter of days. If an additional significant charge is spent, the fact can be permanently Blurred, and will require magick to bring it to light.

Bibliomancy Significant Formula Spells

You Can't Judge a Book By Its Cover

Cost: 1 significant charge
Effect: Make an inanimate object look like another inanimate object for 15 minutes. This isn't invisibility, this is changing the way observers think about the subject. Though they may be looking at a chair, the part of their brain that would normally say "chair" is saying something else, like "motorcycle." Like Just a Harmless Drunk, the affected object will still appear in photographs, reflections, video cameras, and so forth.

There is a -50% shift to Notice "something odd" about the affected object, less if the object is in an incongruous area (a motorcycle in the living room). This spell will not make a living or animate being appear to be anything else.

Read Between the Lines

Cost: 1 significant charge
Effect: The short version: by spending a significant charge, you can ascertain whether or not a single fact is true, at that moment in time.

The long version: it's not as simple as that. When you cast Read Between the Lines, you are granted a vision of the reality behind the fact you wish to judge. These visions are believed to be glimpses into the statosphere: a look at the probabilities behind the machinery of the universe. As such, they are ever-changing, cloudy, and incredibly vague. In general, when asking about the veracity of a mundane fact, the result will either be "true" or "false." When magick gets involved, results can vary from "sorta true" to "almost totally but not quite false." Evaluating facts that have to do with Avatars return a solid "maybe." And any fool silly enough to attempt to Read Between the Lines on a fact having to do with an archetype or the Invisible Clergy directly is really asking for it.

Cross-Reference

Cost: 2 significant charges
Effect: Gathers and correlates any and all extant and available printed information on a living target into a blank book, much like those sold in most local bookstores or stationery stores. If there is too much information to fit in the book, the type will become smaller, until there is enough room. (Rumor has it that a Bibliomancer once cast this upon a business rival, unaware that the man was secretly the Comte de Saint-Germain. The pages of the book turned black.) This does not include information available upon the Internet, unless that information has been downloaded, printed out, and bound (it's magick, deal with it!). This reference work will bear the target's name as its title, and the bookworm as its author.

Your Life is an Open Book

Cost: 3 significant charges
Effect: Ever wanted to know exactly what someone does all day long? This spell will transfer the entire current life experience of a living target -- who must be within line of sight -- into a blank book, much like those sold in most local bookstores or stationery stores. The book begins with the last sunrise or sunset, and details every action that is taken, every word that is spoken, every idea that is thought up until the second the spell is cast. The title of the book is "A Day in the Life of (target's name)", and the author of the work is the Bibliomancer. A target of this spell will notice the casting of it, much as if someone were staring at them concertedly, studying them like a bug under glass.

Arcane Knowledge

Cost: 2 significant, plus any other charge requirements
Effect: This is the Big Gun of the Bibliomantic School. A more powerful version of I've Read the Manual, it allows the use of mystic skills (even from an Avatar skill) magickal skills (the formula spells of other schools), other magical effects (the magic phrase "Open Sesame," for example), or out-and-out super-powers ("Up, up, and away!") recorded in the books of the adept's Library, as long as all requirements are met. Remember, the GM should feel free to apply negative shifts to the Bibliomancy roll if the bookworm is not actually touching the required book with one of his hands. This means that a Bibliomancer casting an Epideromantic spell like Warping would need to spend 2 significant charges (for Arcane Knowledge) plus the 1 minor charge (for Warping itself). GM has the final call on whether an effect will work, and how it will work. Bookworms should take warning, however: the last Bibliomancer who tried to duplicate the Biblical feat of Moses parting the Red Sea apparently suffered a Reality Erase (p. 146), according to witnesses of the trigger event.

Bibliomancy Major Effects

Discover any desired piece of information, no matter how well-concealed. Obscure any fact such that it not only drops off of the world's radar, but looks as if it never existed. Learn any skill. Translate or decode any representation of knowledge.

Sample Character

David Robertson, Bookworm

Summary: Surprisingly dapper for a portly man, David Robertson hasn't always been the urban and worldly gent he is today. Just a decade and a half ago, he was a sickly, chubby teenager. Bedridden much of the time, his only friends were books. He got to know the County Librarian quite well -- Miss Agatha Minsky, spinster, last survivor of to an old-money publishing family . . . and Bibliomancer. Miss Minsky shared young David's love of adventure fiction -- many are the hours they spent discussing *Treasure Island, Kim,* and *Captain Blood* --and she nurtured his magickal talents as well. She also gave the young man a taste of what true refinement was.

As David grew in power, his sickliness decreased; with the support of his magick, he took up fencing at the local YMCA. He fenced for the college team, and won a second place ribbon in a tournament during his sophomore year. He eventually graduated with honors, double-majoring in Library Science and English Literature.

Currently, David works as a consultant for the Philadelphia Public Library system. He also operates an Internet-based bookfinder service, which pulls in some supplementary income and allows him to travel in order to search for rare and occult books for his personal Library.

Personality: A film noir Victor Buono.

Obsession: The knowledge and mysteries contained within long-lost books, and the power such information grants

(Bibliomancy).

Wound Points: 40

Passions

Rage Stimulus: Book mutilators (this does not include those who add high-quality marginalia) and book burners.

Fear Stimulus: (Helplessness) David is afraid of any harm that may come to his books from sources that he is unable to plan for.

Noble Stimulus: Free Expression; he is strident in his condemnation of those people who ban books and tireless in supporting those who uphold this most sacred of rights.

Stats

Body: 40 (Pudgy)
Speed: 45 (F) (Leisurely)
Mind: 65 (Font of Knowledge)
Soul: 70 (Deep & Mysterious)

Skills

Body Skills: General Athletics 15%, Struggle 30%, Fencing 25%
Speed Skills: Driving 15%, Dodge 25%, Billiards 35%
Mind Skills: General Education 35%, Notice 40%, Occult & Rare Books 20%
Soul Skills: Lie 20%, Charm 25%, Magic: Bibliomancy 55%

Madness Meter

Violence: 1 Hardened, 1 Failed
The Unnatural: 3 Hardened, 1 Failed
Helplessness: 0 Hardened, 1 Failed
Isolation: 1 Hardened, 1 Failed
Self: 0 Hardened, 1 Failed

Possessions

David's prize possession is a Xerox copy of an unpublished Dirk Allen manuscript called *Djinn Blossoms,* written in 1983. It appears to be a barely fictionalized account of a severe occult dust-up in Pittsburgh in the late '70s. The work includes an adequate description of the magickal "how-to's" of three Dipsomantic formula spells: Moment of Truth, Lil Whammy, and Now I See . . . David can use his Significant spell of Arcane Knowledge to cast any of these Dipsomantic spells, so long as he retains ownership and is in proximity to the manuscript.

Also of note in David's Bibliomantic Library is a *Gutenberg Bible*, a shooting script of the *Babylon 5* episode "The Geometry of Shadows," a battered paperback copy of the first Doc Savage book, *The Man of Bronze,* a first edition of L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz,* a signed copy of Rafael Sabatini's *Bellarion,* and Robert Louis Stevenson's treasured copy of *Le Vicomte de Bragelonne,* by Alexandre Dumas, pere.

His traveling Library usually contains -- at the minimum -- a copy each of the following: *Goldfinger* (Ian Fleming), a leather-bound *Complete Shakespeare, The Three Musketeers* (Alexandre Dumas, pere), a *King James Bible*, *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (Arthur Conan Doyle), *Roget's Thesaurus, Yeager: An Autobiography* (Chuck Yeager), a *Webster's Pocket Dictionary*, *The Lord of the Rings* in one leather-bound volume (JRR Tolkien), *Groucho and Me* (Groucho

Marx), *The Complete Books of Charles Fort* (Charles Fort), a *Random House Desk Encyclopedia, Galactic Patrol* (EE "Doc" Smith), and a handful of foreign language phrase-books. He also carries a few books in his jacket and pants pockets; *Riders of the Purple Sage* (Zane Grey), *The Great Houdini* (Beryl Williams & Samuel Epstein), the *Boy Scout Handbook*, and *Buckaroo Banzai* (Earl Mac Rauch) are particular favorites for these "last resort" selections. Note that as David carries this load around with him in his shoulder bag, the weight of all those books will cause him to suffer a -10% shift in combat while he carries it.

Bibliomantic Artifacts

Transcription Volume (Minor)

This common artifact is one-use by it's very nature. Simply, a Transcription Volume is a blank bound book-much like the ones you can find at your local bookstore or stationery store-that can be left to transcribe a conversation within its presence. Keep in mind that human speech is normally around 250 words per minute -- more if the speaker is excited -- and that a normal book page can hold roughly 250 words. So, in general, assume a page is required per minute of conversation.

The book starts with a bookmark jammed between the front paper of the book and the first page. To begin recording, one must merely remove the bookmark. All spoken words or noises that would be audible to a human listener are copied down in a firm, dark font on the pages of the book. To stop the transcription, one need only place a bookmark between the pages currently being filled with text. You can run out of pages just as you can run out of tape on a recording cassette.

The Garden of Forking Paths, by Ts'ui Pên (Significant)

A late 18th century Chinese work of mystery.

"Ts'ui Pên -- Governor of his native province, learned in astronomy, in astrology and tireless in the interpretation of the canonical books, a chess player, a famous poet and calligrapher. Yet he abandoned all to make a book and a labyrinth. He gave up all the pleasures of oppression, justice, of a well-stocked bed, of banquets, even of erudition, and shut himself up in the Pavilion of the Limpid Sun for 13 years. At his death, his heirs only found a mess of manuscripts. The family, as you doubtless know, wished to consign them to the fire, but the executor of the estate -- a Taoist or Buddhist monk -- insisted on their publication."

The book appears to be a shapeless farrago of rough drafts that contradict each other. Heroes die, then show up in later chapters as if nothing has happened; armies are destroyed, then march through sunny fields unchallenged. All in all, it is a terribly confusing work to read . . . unless you know its secret.

The Garden of Forking Paths is a puzzle, a written labyrinth, whose solution is "time." The author wished to illustrate his view of the bifurcating quality of time: for every action, there is a reality where that action is successful, and one where it has failed. Ts'ui Pên's masterpiece follows both possibilities and their subsequent bifurcations.

If the owner of this work is aware of the solution to its central puzzle, he may elect to alter any one success or failure into its opposite, once per day. The owner of the book must be present at said success or failure to alter it, and actions may only be changed within the few moments immediately after their occurrence.

Both Entropomancers and Bibliomancers seek to hold this powerful work; it has been the cause of at least a half-dozen magickal duels.

Bibliomantic Adventure Seeds

* A rare copy of *The Garden of Forking Paths* is taken from a New Inquisition team in Chicago. The Occult

Underground is up in arms, as the book is being stolen and restolen, bouncing between cabalists and dukes like a tennis ball at Wimbledon. Word on the streets is Alex Abel's sending in his favorite Enforcer, that hardcase Eponymous, to get it back.

* The Sect of the Naked Goddess has been looking for a copy of the actual shooting script (if you can call it that) of the pornographic film in which the Naked Goddess Ascended to the Invisible Clergy. Several known bookworms are interested in it as well, as it's rumored to have what amounts to detailed descriptions of You Know You Want it, Dazzle, and Synchronicity in the "dialogue" and "plot" of the video; furthermore, it's a worth a significant charge on it's own. It's turned up in the hands of a small-time Avatar of the Merchant know as Jimmy "Pickles" Green, who's trying to arrange an all-out auction of the script in Las Vegas. Other cabalists are planning to show up for the festivities. Daphne Lee doesn't plan on leaving Vegas without the script, come hell or high water.

* One of the player characters inherits, finds, or accidentally comes across a slim volume entitled *Atlantean-English Dictionary*, by Dugan Forsythe. Those in the know recognize the name: he's the founder of Cliomancy, and the father of Angela Forsythe, one of the Sleepers. Could it contain secret "Atlantean" code phrase that Cliomancers recognize? Could it contain hidden Cliomantic spells hitherto unknown to the world at large? Or could it very well contain the evidence that the Atlantis that Cliomancers revere is nothing more than a scam? No one is quite sure. Get ready for a visit from Daoud Masbut, Angela's insane Indian bodyguard; David Robertson, freelance Bibliomancer interested in expanding his Library; and . . . Dirk Allen, legendary boozehound? How is he involved?

Bibliomantic Bibliography

Some Bibliomantic Patron Saints:

Jorge Luis Borges
Italo Calvino
Umberto Eco
Tim Powers
Robertson Davies

And a must-read for prospective Bibliomancers:

The Club Dumas, by Arturo Perez-Reverte

A GURPS Traveller Setting

by Mike Kelly

Art by andi jones

. . . And in the groove, by gate and hill, midst merry throng and market clatter, stood the Hall of the Mountain Grill where table strained 'neath loaded platter . . .

Hall of the Mountain Grill is an adventure for ***GURPS Traveller*** and uses information from ***Behind the Claw,*** the Spinward Marches sourcebook. However, it can be easily adapted to any space game very easily.

Rumors abound in the Spinward Marches of a most unusual hunting lodge located on Jesedipere (3001-Aramis Sub sector). Jesedipere is an Earth-like world, with a standard oxygen-nitrogen atmosphere and 58% surface water. The climate is warm, and the world has a class 3 starport. The world's population is low, with only 4,100 humans and 3,500 Vargr currently in residence.

The government of Jesedipere is Anarchy, and the downport area is a famous den of iniquity. Almost anything can be found there-for a price. Rumors gathered in the downport area and elsewhere in the Spinward Marches will cause the travellers to wonder about the "Hall of the Mountain Grill" -- a hunting lodge located on a deserted continent of the planet completely away from what little civilization there is on this planet.

Hall of the Mountain Grill

The rumors say that the "Hall of the Mountain Grill" hunting lodge was built out of the hull of a Akkigish-class Subsidized Merchant that crash-landed on the planet some 20 to 40 years ago. (A basic description of this starship is in ***GURPS Traveller,*** page 146.) Some enterprising Vargr found the ship's hull basically intact and decided to convert it into a hunting lodge. It's out-of-the-way location in the middle of a forest with huntable local wildlife made it ideal for that purpose. Currently, well-to-do Vargr and humans stay at the lodge and enjoy the fine food and luxurious accommodations while hunting the local game. The lodge is located at the base of a mountain range and offers an excellent view of the snow capped peaks. A small flat area of forest has been cleared to allow Safari Ships to take off and land. The clearing would be considered to be a ***GURPS Space*** Class I Starport (p. 122). The owner of the lodge is an older male Vargr named Kverokh. A seasoned and expert hunter, Gherohl is also an ex-corsair. He retired from the corsair band Touzagh when becoming a professional hunter seemed to be both a safer and more profitable way to earn a living. The money he saved while a corsair allowed him to setup the Hall of the Mountain Grill hunting lodge.

As the band of adventurers approach the lodge, the first thing that they will notice is how intact the ship is for having crash landed there. From the outside, there seems to be no major structural damage at all. A large ramp leads up to the stern of the ship, where the aft cargo section is. The aft cargo

section is a large room, approximately 45 feet square. This room is the main meeting room, and the walls are covered with animal head trophies of various alien beasts. The room is filled with Vargr and human hunters, sipping drinks and bragging about their latest kills. The furniture and room appointments are of very fine quality, indicating high wealth. The drinks and food are expensive, but of the very finest quality. The hunters are an excellent source of rumors, and also make excellent patrons. Also, this lodge can serve as a great place for wealthy travellers to spend excess credits.

The ship's galley is located behind the main meeting room and still serves as a galley, but now it has a master Vargr chef cooking exotic meals made from fresh kills. The food is very expensive, and probably the best food to be had in the Spinward Marches. The very finest wines are also available to accompany the excellent cuisine.

A large spiral staircase is located in one corner of the room that leads to the second floor of the lodge. On this floor are 13 suites, each one adorned with animal trophies and filled with the plushest furniture and latest gadgets. While luxurious, each suite is small -- only 10' x 13'. One suite is much larger than the rest (20' x 10'), and commands a premium price. It is usually reserved by wealthy patrons well in advance.

In addition to the 13 hunting suites, the upper floor has another two recreational lounges, one forward of the suites and one aft. These lounges are smaller than the downstairs lounge (15' x 30' aft and 20' x 40' forward), but otherwise similar. The forward lounge is dominated by a huge video screen that covers one wall completely. On this wall, films of various successful hunting expeditions is shown. This room also serves as a casino; various games of chance are constantly run here.

A small spiral staircase is located in the aft second floor lounge, leading up through the ceiling of the lodge. Located on top of the lodge is a special hunting launch that was converted from the standard 10-ton ship's launch described on p. 139 of ***GURPS Traveller.*** Major changes include a retractable roof to allow open air shooting, and a large game capture tank. The hunting launch will seat six hunters in comfort in customized hunting chairs that can rotate freely. In addition, the chair arms are braced to absorb recoil (for weapons that have them) and to aid in aiming.

On the first floor, behind the the galley, the forward cargo hold has been converted into large capture tanks to hold the hunter's game. There are two large capture tanks (10' x 20'), and they are accessed through special fittings to transfer game directly from the hunting launch through the port and starboard cargo doors.

A fine example of huntable local game would be the "Destier Deer" (***GURPS Space Bestiary.*** p. 32). The Destier Deer is a large, noble beast, standing about six feet high at the shoulder. Bucks have low, curving horns. Colonists on other worlds have tamed these animals and used them as riding beasts, much like horses on Terra. If these wild Destier Deer were to be caught alive and sold off-world, they would bring a very high price.

ST40-50 **Speed/Dodge** 14/7 **Size** 3
DX 5 **PD/DR** 0/0 **Weight** 1,500 lbs.
IQ: 15 **Damage** 1d+2 cr
HT: 15/21 **Reach** C

The travellers should acquire suites (cr 200-300 per night) if they plan on staying in the lodge. Staying in the lodge is not a bad idea, even if they brought their own ship with them, for the privileges of the lodge are available only to those who rent a suite. This includes the organized hunting expeditions. Drinks bought in the lodge are cr 10-30 each and meals are cr 40-90 each. The party should be encouraged to meet their fellow hunters and mingle. As they mingle, they can pick up new contacts, make deals, find patrons and hear rumors.

Some sample rumors, which can be true or false depending on the GM's whim, and can be used for anything from local flavor to a full-blown adventure:

The Most Dangerous Game

The Vargrs hunt humans from the lodge! In the wee hours, several Vargr slip away in the hunting launch for a truly challenging hunt: A human being captured by the Vargr and released in the middle of the forest. There is even a rumor

that these hunted humans even find their way into the Vargr master chef's best meals!

Buried Treasure

When the ship crash landed years ago, the surviving crew removed the cargo from the ship and hid it inside nearby caves. The crash site was remote, and since all communication equipment was destroyed on impact, the remaining crew eventually died off. The ship was originally a Vargr pirate ship, and when it was finally discovered, the salvaged cargo was valuable enough to pay for the restorations and conversion of the crashed ship into a hunting lodge. One intact cargo container, however was missed by the salvagers. This cargo container is hidden deep inside one of the many nearby caves, and could contain anything the GM needs for his campaign.

The PCs could be hired by an aging hunter to help secretly retrieve the cargo container, or they could discover the container themselves while chasing some game into the cave. One suggestion for the cargo: military items that are hard to come by, like 20 suits of Improved Battle Dress with matching FGMP-12 energy weapons. (***GURPS Traveller,*** pp. 115 and 118). The street value of this cargo is very high, but double or even triple value could be had on the black market because of their military pedigree.

Forced Retirement

The owner of the hunting lodge was a crew member of the pirate ship when it crash landed! He knew he wanted to retire from the dangerous corsair band he was a member of, so he sabotaged the ship, silenced the communication equipment and using his superior hunting and weapon skills, killed off the rest of the crew before they even knew what was happening. This would also explain the lack of crash damage on the ship's hull. He then hid the bodies and the cargo when he landed the ship in the middle of an uninhabited continent.

Again, while hunting, the travellers come across some intact cargo containers filled to the brim with valuable cargo. The party must figure out a way to remove the cargo without alerting anyone to what they're up to.

Hide in Plain Sight

The ship is still an operational pirate ship! This would also explain the intact hull. What better place to hide a corsair ship than in plain view. During the winter season, when there is no hunting due to the extreme cold and everything is covered with snow, the ship works the rich merchant routes in search of victims. Before the hunting season begins, the ship returns to its "crash site" and sets up shop again. Most of the Vargr hunters aboard the ship would be pirates, who also enjoy local hunting during the "off" season. Possible ways for the adventures to catch on to this is through overhearing conversation, or blundering into one of the ship's many restricted areas. If the corsairs find out that the adventures know their true identities, they will try to kill them.

Bring 'Em Back Alive

An enterprising merchant wants to capture some the Destier Deer alive to take off-world and breed elsewhere. This would be a very profitable cargo, for the deer are very much in demand on other planets. However, the local hunters would object because of the reduction of the native population, and the lodge owners would *definitely* object to anything that would threaten their monopoly. The merchant, with the help of the party, must capture the deer and get them off planet without being detected.

Episode One: Getting Dirty

In which the Author introduces himself, reveals why Chumbawumba is the key to great game mastering, then discloses why everything you know is wrong.

Hello.

My name is John Wick. I believe we've met before. No? Funny, your face is familiar. Well, if I am hallucinating, maybe I should introduce myself. I've served a term with a company called Alderac Entertainment Group, and while there, I was a staff writer for *Shadis Magazine*, Continuity/Story editor for three collectible card games, wrote three roleplaying games along with over two dozen supplements, helped design a collectible dice game, and bunches more.

Now-a-days, I'm starting up my own little game company, writing about orks and fluxes, freelancing for folks who can tolerate me and keeping up with a regular weekly column over at gamingoutpost.com. I've also got a day job, but don't tell my wife that. She'll wanna know where the money is. Oh, and I'm married to a girl named Jennifer. Been that way for two years on December 31. Got a dog, two cats and a rat.

So, that's me. And now that we're all acquainted, maybe I should get to the job that I'm here to do. You know. Talk about Game Master stuff. That's why you're reading all of this, right? To see what I've got to say about nasty, underhanded, sinister and otherwise praetorian (like that one? I paid four bucks for it) tricks to play on unsuspecting, innocent, naive and culpable players.

But before I get started, I'd like to lay a couple of ground rules. After all, the title of this column could be a little deceptive. We're here to talk about GM tricks. Nasty GM tricks that would make Ol' Grimtooth himself do a double-take. What we are not here for is killing characters. Nobody wants to play with a Killer GM.

But everybody wants to play with a Dirty GM.

Just to make sure you know what I'm talking about, let's spend a moment or two defining terms. In some circles -- the ones I was educated in -- that's a pretty important step.

A Killer GM is someone who takes glee in destroying characters. He kills them without remorse, without compassion, without care. He does it because he can. Gives him some sort of sick rush.

This is bad.

A Dirty GM, on the other hand, is someone who uses every dirty trick in the book to challenge the players. Keeping them off balance with guerrilla tactics, he increases the players' enjoyment with off-beat and unorthodox methods, forcing them to think on their feet, use their improvisational skills and keep their adrenaline pumping at full speed.

This is good.

So, now that we're all speaking the same language, let's get down to business.

***

The first step to becoming a Dirty GM involves a little syndrome I call "The Die Hard Effect." (I've talked about this before in other places, so I'll keep it brief.) Essentially, all players want their characters to be John McClane. You know, the guy Bruce Willis plays in the *Die Hard* films. They want to be knocked down, punched out, bloody, battered and beaten.

But (and this is an important "but", folks), every time they get knocked down, they want to be able to get back up.

That's right. Just like the Chumbawumba song.

Being Irish, it just comes to me naturally.

Players want to be a bloody mess at the end of the adventure, but they still want to win. And they want to feel like they won by the skin of their teeth. They want to think that last die roll was the luckiest one they ever made. They want to feel that their characters' lives were hanging in the balance, ready to fall like a pin hanging on the edge of a precipice.

That's what players want.

And that's what a Dirty GM gives them.

Because he throws stuff at them that they never counted on. He uses techniques that are so outside the mainstream that they hit the players like a left hook to the jaw. He uses everything at his disposal to knock them down -- so they can get back up just in time to dodge the next hit. All of this comes under the basic premise that the GM is there for the players' enjoyment; he's providing them what they want. That's the GM's job. When it's all said and done, the Game Master's fun is helping his friends have fun. At least, that's the way I've always seen it.

Bad Guy Corwin

Now, on to the Game Mastering advice.

I'm going to be using a very specific method in this here column. First, I'll explain a technique, and then I'll give you a practical application. In other words, I'm going to tell you, then I'm going to show you. The first technique we'll employ is something a friend of mine nicknamed "The Bad Guy Corwin Technique." He dubbed it thus because he first saw me use it in my ***Amber Diceless Roleplaying Game,*** but you can use it in just about any licensed game. In fact, you can use it in almost any RPG setting the players are familiar with. It works something like this.

We get to see Roger Zelazny's famous *Chronicles of Amber* through the eyes of one character: Prince Corwin. (For those of you who don't know a single thing about *Amber*, here's the run-down. You've got one real world and everything else is just a pale imitation of that one real world. Even Earth isn't real, it's just a "shadow" of this place called Amber. That means that everyone living on these shadows aren't real either, and the only real people are those from Amber. "Amberites" can walk through shadows and are ten times faster, stronger and smarter than us shadow-people. And because they're the only real people, the only folks that are worth challenging are their own siblings, making Amber a hot-bed of political and military intrigue. That's the gist of it. Now go read the books and find out what you're missing.)

As you read along, you watch his transformation from egocentric bastard to sympathetic martyr. The change is incredible.

A little too incredible if you ask me. Corwin himself admits that he's not an entirely trustworthy narrator. When I started planning an ***Amber*** campaign, I decided to take that statement to the extreme. I based the idea on a great little book by Philip José Farmer called *The Other Log of Phileas Fogg.* In that book, Farmer uses all the mistakes (not a very pretty word, but an accurate one) Verne and his editors missed in *Around the World in 80 Days* and uses them to build a quiet conspiracy the likes even Umberto Eco has never seen. When a character has his glass in his left hand in one passage, then in his right in another, that's not a mistake -- it's a clue! It's a brilliant little book whose methods have inspired me on many occasions.

On this occasion, I decided to use the same technique on Zelazny's *Amber.* I told my players that they'd be making characters that were sons and daughters of the Elder Amberites (the characters from the books), but the game would take place during the time of the novels. They'd get to witness all the cool stuff that was going on and fill in the blanks that Corwin never quite filled in. They made up their characters and got ready to watch the events of the novels unfold.

But things didn't go exactly as planned. Not by a long shot. In fact, within one hour of gameplay, they were as jittery

as a junkie waiting for his fix. You see, everything was wrong. That is, everything was happening the way it did in the books, but Corwin's role was a lot different than the role he spelled out on the page.

In other words, he lied. A lot.

As soon as the players thought they had things figured out, I threw another loop at them, playing off their assumptions and using those same assumptions to set them up for nasty traps. Here's an example.

In *Amber,* it's possible to go out into shadow and find a perfect (albeit inferior) duplicate of yourself. After all, anything an Amberite can imagine is out in shadow, you just have to be willing to look for it. At the end of the first book, Corwin is imprisoned for four years in the bowels of Castle Amber. What's worse, he has his eyes burned out. The player who took the role of Corwin's nephew didn't like that one single bit.

But there's a snag, you see.

That ain't Corwin down in the dungeon. It's his shadow.

And so, all through the rest of the series, the Corwin that's telling the reader his story is a shadow who believes he's Corwin, while the Real Deal is behind the scenes, operating unseen, manipulating events while his dummy-self keeps everybody's attention.

And make no mistake, Corwin is a bastard.

Now for those of you who don't read or play ***Amber,*** here's another example so you can get a picture of what I'm talking about.

Good Guy Vader

Chew on this.

In *The Empire Strikes Back,* Yoda warns Luke about the Dark Side of the Force: "Once you turn down the dark path, forever will it dominate your destiny."

Yeah. Right. And the Good Side makes you want to sleep with your sister and kill your father.

Think about it for a second. What if Vader ain't such a bad guy? What if Vader only wants to be reunited with his son, overthrow the Emperor and rule with his boy at his side? What if he wasn't lying? And what if Kenobi and Yoda are just playing a very complicated game of revenge?

Watch *A New Hope* again. Watch the scene with Kenobi and Luke in the old guy's house when R2-D2 shows the video of the fair princess begging for help. Kenobi turns to Luke and says, "You must come with me to Alderan and learn the ways of the Force." What's good-hearted, sweet-faced Ben Kenobi trying to do there? He's using the Old Jedi Mindtrick! Watch it! Watch Luke staring at him with glassy eyes! Watch Luke pull away (because the Force is too strong in him). Then watch Kenobi use Luke's desires against him. "I need your help Luke. She needs your help."

Yeah, Luke. You know what she needs.

They even lie to him. They tell him his father was betrayed and killed by Vader. And no, it ain't a different point of view. It's a lie. My mommy taught me better than that. Kenobi and Yoda manipulate Luke all through the films, trying to convince him that the Dark Side isn't stronger, just quicker, easier and more seductive.

Let's think on that for a while.

The Dark Side is quicker to learn, easier to learn and just as powerful? Where do I sign up?

And for those of you who are saying, "Yeah, but it'll forever dominate your destiny!", I got one thing to ask you. Did Ol' Emperor Palpatine look all that dominated to you when he was frying Luke's skull with blue lightning? Ever see Yoda or Kenobi do the blue lightning trick? I didn't think so. He was the absolute ruler of the Universe! Come on! If that's dominated, I'd hate to see "liberty."

Oh, wait. That's right. Liberty is living in a desert wasteland scaring Sand People for fun. Or how about rotting away on a mudhole hiding out from the big guy in black armor that can kill you with a flick of his wrist. You know. The one that's got his destiny dominated. The one with his own Star Destroyer.

You can use the Bad Guy Corwin technique in just about any game that's licensed from film or literature.

Think about Bad Guy Gandalf or Bad Guy Aragorn.

Think about Good Guy Doctor Doom or Good Guy Lex Luthor.

Think about Bad Guy Picard or Bad Guy Kirk.

If you're willing to look, you'll find the patterns.

The Bad Guy Technique throws players' assumptions out the window and forces them to think on their feet. Everything they believe they know is now wrong. It doesn't matter if they own every little sourcebook on every little subject, because everything is up for grabs.

And once their confidence is shaken, once they don't know where they're going, they'll realize that there's nothing they can count on -- but themselves.

That's a great starting point for that li'l thing we call the Hero's Journey. And you haven't broken a single rule or fudged a single die roll. But you're still playing dirty.

***

Convinced? How about a little shaken? You pullin' out your copies of the *Star Wars Trilogy*, ready to look for more? Congratulations. You've just graduated Dirty GM 101. And, by the way -- Welcome to the Dark Side. Hope you enjoy your stay.

by Joe G. Kushner

Art by andi jones

The wind tore through the town of Guller's Falls without resistance. Almost all of its inhabitants had fled after the initial wolf onslaught. Men still cursed at the cunning of the beasts. Almost human in their efforts. Those dead left behind though, there wasn't something quite right about their wounds . . .

Chiang X'so was too sick to move. Neither his herbs nor acupuncture were able to deal with the sickness eating away at him. The stranger stood by his side, feeding and tending him as necessary. Chiang only knew the stranger from when he had fallen unconscious at his doorstep with horrible wounds that took many weeks to heal. His repaying of the care that Chiang performed on him was surprising. Did the man not know that the wolves weren't done with Guller's Falls?

As if on cue, a howl tore through the scream of the wind. The stranger stood up, his hand reaching into his black overcoat. A sword of the old world came forth, a weapon that Chiang had not seen in years. Not a normal piece of work either. This katana seemed an amalgam of gold, silver and cold iron. Such an alloy should've been impossible to make, but the gleam of the blade's edge told reality that it was so.

"Flee while you can stranger. There are things in the night that no man should stay and face."

"Your right about that." The stranger said. Too bad old Chiang didn't know that the stranger was referring to himself. Even here, thousands of miles away from his home, the stranger was still a Shih and even here, thousands of miles away from home, there were still Shen to deal with.

Outside, the Black Spiral Dancer was waiting.

Werewolf: the Wild West has many opportunities for allowing a player to customize his character. Even better for Game Masters is that there are so many more options for the birth of devious NPCs. Still, the ***Wild West*** isn't unlimited in its scope. Some may have aspirations of playing something outside of the kennel.

Demon Hunter X introduced the Shih and Strike Force Zero. While the technology for Strike Force Zero, as well as the history by which this group comes into power are still far off, the Shih have been hunting the Shen since the dawn of China itself.

The discovery of gold in 1848 spurred many Asian immigrants to seek a new life in the Americas. For many of these individuals, the chance to start a new life loomed like a beacon. For others, the opportunity to continue their good work posed a challenge few could walk away from. The Shih were such a group.

The Shih have come to America to continue the old fights on new shores. But why? Why leave a home where so many of the Shen are still in power? Some of the older Shih asked this of those who were planning on leaving. Those younger Shih smiled at their elders. "We don't protect China, we protect Chinese." While true, another part is that the

Shih never settle in one area for too long. The history of the Celestial Army and it's folly still burns strong in the Shih and many of them feel that only by moving, even to other parts of the world, can the Shih methods survive. Besides, the Shih will grant their assistance to anyone suffering under the Shen, not just their fellow Chinese.

And protection the Chinese would need. In addition to strong anti-Asian prejudice, the West had its share of problems that could not be overcome with hard work and the hope for a better tomorrow. Between the menace of Garou who wanted to wipe out any settlements that came too close to their sacred grounds and the corruption of the Wyrm, the Shih have their business cut out for them. To individuals used to dealing with the Shen however, the Garou weren't too bad. Many of them were capable of dealing with humans on a normal basis. In some cases, it was those Garou who came from across the seas who posed the most problems. Some Shih find it ironic that they came all the way to America when they could've just gone to Europe.

To protect their unaware brothers, the Shih stay in the West. Most of them take mundane jobs, working in orchards, vineyards, and fields. A few go beyond that and work on the railroad and are present when the transcontinental railroad is completed in 1869. Very few take to the life of a gold prospector, but a handful do stray into those lonely areas to insure that the western Shen behave themselves. Because of discriminatory U.S. laws and Chinese customs, all of the Shih in America at this time are male.

The Garou know nothing of the Shih outside of rumors and hearsay. In another twist of irony, most Garou believe that the Shih are servants of the Wyrm. Due to their low numbers, the Shih usually strike only when they know they can win. This allows them to maintain an air of mystery about them. Still, the battle against the Garou and the Wyrm is nothing if not dangerous. Most of their mentors had stayed behind, and this cripples the amount of new Shih that can be taught the old ways.

By the end of the western expansion, due to attrition with their battles with the Shen of the West and the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the Shih fail to make it into the 20th century on American soil. Because of this, the GM should set his ***Wild West*** campaign in 1849 (when gold is discovered in California) or somewhat later. Some may balk at this, but that still gives the GM to 1880, over 30 years of game time.

Shih character creation is identical to the methods outlined in ***Demon Hunter X.*** Game Masters who own ***Combat*** but do not use it for their ***Wild West*** settings should allow Shih characters access to those abilities. If the GM does not own ***Demon Hunter X*** but does have ***Mage: the Ascension*** or ***Mage: the Sorcerers Crusade,*** he should substitute members of the Akashic brotherhood for the Shih. If he owns all of these supplements, then he must decide if the Shih are here not so much to protect the Chinese from the West, but to protect the West from the Chinese. The Shih hunt all the Shen, even those who are human! In such a campaign, the Shih might even act as protectors for the Garou. The Akashic brotherhood might be seeking the places of power sacred to the werewolves and need to be reminded of their proper place.

Another option for mixed campaigns is the one where the Shih battle alongside members of the Akashic brotherhood and the Garou. The influence of the Wyrm is vast and terrible and limits itself not to things of the changing breeds. Perhaps the Akashic brotherhood will offer to help the Garou purge a careen if they agree to share its power for a few times a year.

When considering a crossover of this type, the GM should decide ahead of time if the Shih are a permanent part of the ***Wild West,*** or just a one-shot. Newer GMs should allow the creation of a Shih and let player test it. If it doesn't work out, then the Shih decides that it's time to go back to the motherland.

There is nothing that states that the Shih must destroy the Garou either. One of the Shih's most intriguing facets is that they accept the presence of the supernatural and only strive to rein in those they feel have stepped beyond the boundaries of reason. While they term all of the supernatural creatures Shen, there is nothing that states that this isn't the Wyrm. Evil can have many names. In the West, this would be the Black Spiral Dancers, Bane Spirits and Texas Tarantulas. By allowing the Shih to concentrate on defeating the Wyrm, the GM allows mixed groups to function without the friction that would eventually build. Still, a Garou whose rage threatens a whole town better remember that the Shih would consider that a crossing of the line.

In some cases, the Shih may attempt to teach the Garou methods to control their rage. Sometimes that Shih, since they are not bound by the Garou teachings, may even act as mentors for a metis character. Imagine a Black Spiral Dancer's terror when he finally defeats the Shih swordsman only to have an albino metis leaps into the battle.

Just remember to set the proper ambiance when Shih and Werewolves start their battles. "Everybody was kung fu fighting . . ."

Sample Character

The Stranger

Ming Lo'tau

Strength 4
Dexterity 5
Stamina 4
Charisma 2
Manipulation 3
Appearance 2
Perception 3
Intelligence 3
Wits 4

Demon Hunter West

Talents:
Alertness 3
Athletics 2
Brawl 2
Dodge 5
Intimidation 3
Leadership 1
Streetwise 2

Skills:
Animal Ken 2
Firearms 3
Melee 5
Martial Arts 5
Stealth 2
Survival 3

Knowledge:
Linguistics 1
Medicine 2
Occult 4

Special Abilities:
Qiao of the I Shen 2
Qiao of the Mo Kung 2
Qiao of the Feng 3
Qiao of the Shi 2

Backgrounds:
Allies 2

Favors 2
Resources 1

Virtues:
Conscience 3
Self-Control 4
Courage 5
Humanity 5
Willpower 7

Ming's mentor approached him from out of the blue, sensing a great potential within him. This feeling proved correct as Ming managed to finish the Shih training in less than 12 years, a record.

The problem, though, was that while Ming excelled at training, he didn't believe in the Shen. His world was that of a fairly normal member of society, in that he worked hard and loved his family. When he heard about the discovery of gold in California, he decided that a man of his many skills and talents would be able to get work easily.

He failed to take into account the prejudice of the American people. Worse still, he discovered slowly but surely that there were indeed things worthy of the label Shen. Most of these were the horrid mockeries. After dealing with a small family of these so called "fomori," he began to learn about the Wyrm and the Garou.

Knowing that if either the Garou or the minions knew of him and his abilities, he lifespan could be measured in weeks rather than years, Ming has cultivated allies among the Chinese immigrants. He rarely speaks to anyone not of Chinese descent, but has been known to help those who are in need of it.

Dressing in dark clothing with different styles of hats and gloves, the layers of dust often tell of his time on the road. The one thing that makes Ming stand out is his katana. This unique katana has gold, silver and cold iron in its makeup and is quite recognizable.

Ming has short cropped black hair and dark brown eyes that hold softer earthen tones in bright light. His body is crisscrossed with scars from his battles with the American Shen, and his face bears a long scar from the top of his right eye that works its way to behind his right ear.

Possessions: Colt "Peacemaker," Yamato's Katana, Strength +3 plus considered to have enough iron, gold, or silver to make wounds aggravated for damage purposes, long coat, derby hat, boots, spyglass, chewing tobacco, and $100 in small bills.

Ming is meant to be used as a mentor for starting Shih characters. As such, most characters should not be allowed to take special abilities that Ming himself does not have, unless the GM has decided that there are other Shih out there that could have taught the character their abilities.

Adventure Seeds

A Friend in Need

If one of the players creates a Shih and needs to be introduced to the party, the easiest way to do so is to showcase the new player's abilities. This is the easiest to do when the Garou are in trouble. In such a case as this, the Garou may be outnumbered by Black Spiral Dancers and have nowhere to retreat. Preparing to face a horrid death, they are given at least a temporary break by the Shih.

What Is It?

The GM has decided that the Tengu, Kumo, or Oni have migrated to the West, attracted by the release of the Storm

Eater. Most Garou have no knowledge of these minions of the Wyrm and must seek out one who does. Local rumor has it that one of the Chinese herbalist has some knowledge of Shen, so called supernatural creatures. Can the Garou in their human form gain the knowledge they need? Perhaps one of their Kinfolk?

No Garou

In this case, the whole party is made up of Shih and Akashic brotherhood members. Their goals are to protect the men and women of the frontier from any supernatural creature regardless of its origins.

Resources

Werewolf: the Wild West
The Wild West Companion
World of Darkness: Demon Hunter X
World of Darkness: Combat

Recommended Viewing

Kung Fu. The original cult classic staring David Carradine, can set the stage for many *Storyteller* sessions.

Red Sun. Charles Bronson and Toshiro Mifune show how easily Japanese and Western cultures can mix to make an interesting adventure.

by Dan Howard

Art by andi jones

Introduction

This article is a general overview to be used in either a realistic or fantasy setting. Specific terms, such as "Japanese" or "Chinese," which relate to the real world have been replaced with the more generic terms, such as "Oriental." It should also be noted that the stats given for specific weapons correspond to those found in various ***GURPS*** sourcebooks, though some might disagree with how accurate those figures are.

References to "p. Bxx" refer to the ***GURPS Basic Set.***

A Ranged weapon is any weapon that is used at a distance. This includes missile weapons, thrown weapons, siege engines and many types of hostile magic. There are several different types of ranged weapons, each with its own characteristics. This article deals only with missile weapons (including siege engines).

Missile weapons include bows, crossbows, slings, and blowpipes. Siege engines propel huge stones or darts at their targets. Their target could be either groups of men or stone fortifications.

Bows

The bow was almost certainly the earliest mechanical device to create greater speed in a projectile than could be attained by throwing it. It does this by accumulating energy in the bow limbs while pulling the bowstring back. This potential energy is stored temporarily while holding and aiming the bow. When the bow is released the potential energy is converted into kinetic energy in the form of the arrow's flight. The ST of the archer determines the range and damage of the arrow. Bows are constructed in three basic forms: a self-bow is made of one homogeneous piece of material; a built bow is made of joined pieces of the same material; and a composite bow is made of different materials.

Technique

It takes years of practice to become proficient with a bow. The technique involved in executing a shot can be explained in ten basic steps. With practice these will become one smooth, flowing motion:

1. Stance. Stand side on, with both feet shoulder-width apart, in a

direct line with the target.
2. Fingers. Place the fingers so that the string is held with the index finger above the nock, and middle and ring finger under the nock; hook the string between first and second joint.
3. Bow hand. The pressure of the bow should be distributed along the pressure line; relax the fingers.
4. Bow arm. Bring the bow arm to shoulder height; the elbow of the bow arm is turned away from the string.
5. Drawing. The string is drawn along the bow arm in a straight horizontal line to the anchor point; stand straight up and relaxed; keep both shoulders as low as possible.
6. Anchoring. The string should touch the middle of the chin; the index finger is placed under the chin.
7. Holding. The back muscles are kept under tension; bow hand, draw hand and elbow should form a straight line.
8. Aiming. Done with the dominant eye; shut the other eye; keep the arrow a little left of the target.
9. Release. Keep pulling the shoulder blades towards each other, while relaxing the fingers of the draw hand.
10. Follow Through. The draw hand should be relaxed and near or behind the ear; keep aiming until after the arrow hits the target.

Terminology

Arrowhead. The striking end of an arrow; usually made of a different material to the shaft such as iron, flint or bronze.
Back of the bow. The surface of the bow furthest from the archer when the bow is held in the firing position.
Belly of the bow. The surface of the bow closest to the archer when the bow is held in the firing position.
Built bow. A bow constructed from joined pieces of the same material.
Cock feather. The feather at right angles to the string position in the nock on three feathered arrows.
Composite bow. A bow constructed from laminated pieces of different materials.
Cresting. Identifying colored rings applied to the arrow shaft forward of the fletchings, used to mark ownership.
Draw. The act of bending the bow to full arrow length by drawing the string backward while holding the bow steady.
Feathers. The flights on the back of an arrow to aid in stability in flight.
Limb. One of the arms of a bow, from grip to tip.
Loose. The act of releasing the string of a bow to propel an arrow towards its target.
Nock. [1] (noun) the end of an arrow with a notch in it for the string. [2] (noun) the grooves in the tips of the limbs of the bow to fit the bowstring. [3] (verb) the act of fitting an arrow to the string.
Rankling arrow. An arrow with a detachable head that remains in the wound when the arrow is removed.

Self-bow. A bow made from one piece of wood.
Shaft or Stele. The body of an arrow.
String. [1] (noun) a bowstring. [2] (verb) to fit a bow with a string.

Types of Bows

Regular Bow. The standard bow (straight or recurve) is made from a single staff, or joined sections of pliable wood such as yew, maple, elm, ash, hickory, oak, birch, walnut, or cedar. The wood must be seasoned slowly and split rather than cut with a saw. The more the bow-stave follows the grain of the wood, the stronger it will be. The back of the bow should be the side that is closest to the outside of the tree or branch -- this is called the "sapwood," and is usually more elastic than the heartwood.

Tillering (shaving down the timber) is then done to ensure that the bow bends evenly, and at the required draw weight. Nocks are then cut into, or slid over, the ends of the staff.

Recurving involves bending the tips of the staff backward in a curve. If this is done while the wood is wet or hot, the wood will retain the curve when relaxed, thus making the bow flex more when drawn. This increases the power of the bow without increasing the drawlength. A thin elastic backing is then glued on, and the string is attached last.

Shorter recurve bows can be fired from horseback. The average bow weighs 2 lbs and costs $100.

Shortbow. A shorter version of the regular bow -- usually about half the height of the archer. It has a shorter range and inflicts less damage, but it is light and easy to use. It can be fired from horseback and is also easier to conceal. The average shortbow weighs 2 lbs and costs $50.

Longbow. The typical longbow is a little taller than the archer, and is made of the sap and center-wood (heartwood) of the yew tree. Yew is perfect for longbows -- the heartwood is able to withstand compression, its sapwood is elastic by nature, and both tend to return to their original straightness when the bow is released. Longbows are cheap and relatively easy to fashion. They are a little heavier than other bows and require a higher ST to use properly. Weight 3 lbs; Cost $200.

Composite bow. There are three layers in the composite bow: sinew on the back (the side under tension); wood for the core; and horn on the belly (the compression side facing the archer). Various hardwoods or bamboo can be used for the bow's core. If bamboo is used, the outer layer of a stem should face the horn.

Composite bow cores are made of several sections, roughly worked to shape before final assembly. First, a handle section joined to two arm sections. These are then joined to strongly reflexed tips, usually pieces with nock grooves at the ends, reinforced with a piece of horn. Fishtail splices and glue are used to join the various segments.

Pre-shaped horn strips then are glued onto the belly of the bow. Both horn and wood are scored with a special toothed tool and glued together (tight rope binding is used for clamping). Buffalo horn is highly preferred but longhorn (as in the cattle) can be used.

The back of the bow is then covered with sinew, leaving most of the tips bare. Sinew usually comes from the leg tendons of cattle, or wild animals such as deer and moose. The bow is then seasoned for at least six months, after which it is severely reflexed. This makes tillering and stringing a long and complicated process.

Composite bows are usually a little shorter than the archer and fairly heavy. When firing the composite bow, the central grip remains rigid throughout the draw. This contributes to a smooth action and greater accuracy. Releasing the bowstring of a composite bow produces no kick, which also assists in a smooth, more accurate shot. A well-trained archer with a good composite bow is a formidable foe indeed. Weight 4 lbs; Cost $900.

Hornbow. Shorter than the standard composite bow, the hornbow is designed to be fired from horseback. It is used extensively in horse cultures (probably due to the scarcity of good hardwoods rather than for any technological reason), and is more powerful than the typical shortbow. Arrows are released with a thumb and forefinger technique

rather than the three-fingered style used with longer bows. The thumb is protected by a special thumb-ring. This technique takes longer to learn but results in a crisper release. Weight 3 lbs; Cost $500.

Dai-kyu. An Oriental composite longbow made of wood sandwiched between two pieces of fire-hardened bamboo, held together with glue and twine. It is asymmetrical, with two-thirds of its length rising above the archer's shoulder. This allows it to be fired from horseback unlike symmetrical longbows, which can only be used on foot. Weight 4 lbs; Cost $900.

Han-kyu. An Oriental half-bow designed to be concealed in the sleeve (+1 holdout). It has similar range and power to a shortbow. Weight 2 lbs; Cost $80. A small quiver, made of cloth, holds 12 arrows and can also be concealed in a loose sleeve.

Elven longbow. A composite longbow which is light yet extremely powerful. The methods used in its manufacture are similar to those of a normal composite bow, but the exact technique and materials used are known only to the Elves. It is very accurate and has unsurpassed range. Weight 3 lbs; Cost $40,000. Of course, Elves very rarely sell their prized bows, but they are occasionally presented as special gifts for services rendered.

Accessories

Bow case. A protective slip-cover used to prevent the bow from warping. Costs $25 and weighs 1 lb.

Bowstring. Soft, sinew strings fray easily and must be replaced often. An attack roll that misses by more than 5 can represent a broken bowstring if it had not been changed recently. Each string costs $5; weight negligible. It takes 2 seconds and a ST roll for a standing person to change bowstrings, if the replacement is already in hand. A person on horseback would need 4 seconds; a ST+2 roll and a DX roll are required.

Flax and other hemp fibers can also be used for bowstrings. These strings last much longer but cost $15 each. They will only break on a critical miss.

Bracer. An archer's leather arm-bracer gives the off-hand arm (area 6) DR 1 but does not affect PD. It protects against snapping bowstrings, and subtracts its DR from any damage caused by a critical failure with a bow. Cost $8; weight 0.3 lbs.

Bowtip. Bows can be designed with a pointed end to be used as a spear in an emergency. This only applies to regular bows, longbows and dai-kyu. A bow designed to take this sort of punishment is not likely to be damaged on any individual thrust, but if it is used repeatedly, it will probably be damaged. Roll 3d for each time the bow is used to thrust or parry; on a 16 or more, it is no longer useful as a bow. If it is parried by a sword it is ruined on a roll of 12 or more. Add 20% to the cost of a bow with this feature. It cannot be added later, it must be incorporated when the bow is first constructed.

Extra-powerful bows. A skilled archer can use a bow that requires more than one man to string. This only applies to longbows, composite bows, dai-kyu, and Elven longbows. The maximum is a seven-man bow. These bows have special costs and minimum ST. Their Damage amount and Range is also increased.

Bow	Dam.	Range inc.	Cost.	Weight.	Min. ST
2-man	+1	+1	x 1.2	+0 lb.	12
3-man	+2	+3	x 1.5	+0 lb.	14
4-man	+3	+5	x 2	+1 lb.	16
5-man	+4	+7	x 3	+1 lb.	18
6-man	+5	+9	x 4	+2 lb.	21
7-man	+6	+11	x 5	+2 lb.	25

When readying these bows, it takes longer to draw them if your ST is below the ST of the bow. For every 2 points of

ST above your own, add an extra turn to ready. For example, a character with ST 14 is using a 6-man bow with ST 21. It takes one turn to select and ready an arrow (2 if there are multiple arrow types in the quiver). It takes an additional turn plus 3 more to nock and draw the arrow (a total of 4 turns spent drawing the bow). On the next (6th) turn he can aim or fire. Using a bow with a ST of 4+ higher than the character's also expends 1 point of Fatigue (ST), making the next shot more difficult . . .

Crossbows

In a crossbow, the bow is shorter, and horizontally mounted in a stock (tiller), which is aimed and fired much like a rifle. Because of its mechanical advantage, the crossbow permits smaller men to fire at greater ranges. Unlike bows, the range and damage is determined by the crossbow's ST, not the archer's. The disadvantage is that crossbows take longer to reload than bows. See p. B114 for rules on cocking a crossbow. A typical crossbow weighs 6 lbs and costs $150.

Types of Crossbows

Pistol crossbow. This light one-handed weapon cannot have a ST above 5 and requires small, custom-made bolts. It weighs 4 lbs and cost $150.

Chu-Ko-Nu. This famous Oriental repeating crossbow contains a magazine of 10 bolts over the stock, with an automatic loading mechanism. It is heavier than a standard crossbow and has a poorer range. Warriors sometimes use them to "hose down" underbrush or light fortifications before entering them. Cannot have a ST above 9; weight 10 lbs; cost $500. The only medieval weapon with a Recoil value (-2).

Dwarven crossbow. This could be treated as a small ballista. It is the heaviest of crossbows with a long range and huge damage potential. They are heavy and bulky, perfect for Dwarves, who use them with ease. Humans have more difficulty and find them almost impossible to reload without mechanical assistance. Weight 12 lbs; cost $6,000.

Prod. Looks very similar to a standard crossbow except it is designed to fire pellets rather than bolts. It is less accurate than a normal crossbow but ammo is cheap. Weight 6 lbs; cost $150.

Accessories

Goat's foot. A device for cocking crossbows of ST 3 or 4 greater than the character's. It takes 20 seconds to cock a crossbow with this device, plus an extra turn to place the bolt on the bow. Weight 2 lbs, Cost $50. For crossbows with ST greater than 4 more than the character, some sort of windlass is required. It takes 60 seconds to cock a crossbow with this device. Weight 3 lbs; cost $200.

Crossbow sight. This crosshairs device adds +2 to accuracy. Only expert bowyers and fletchers know about these devices. Someone with the Armoury skill and a specialization in bows must make an Armoury roll at -3 to install one. They are fragile; any damage done to the bow will result in the sight being misaligned (another Armoury roll at -3 to fix) or destroyed. Weight negligible; cost $10.

Slings

A very simple device used to propel stones or pellets at a target. It consists of two lengths of cord with a piece of soft leather in the middle. The stone is placed in the sling, and it is swung above the head to increase velocity. One end of the cord is then released and the projectile flies towards its target. The most famous use of a sling is in the story of

David and Goliath. As with most missile weapons, the user's ST determines the range and damage, but swinging damage is used instead of thrusting. Weight 1/2 lb; cost $10.

Staff sling. Very similar to a standard sling except the levering action of a staff is used to increase the range and damage. Weight 2 lbs; cost $20.

Blowpipes

A long length of cane or reed, hollowed out and polished. It fires small darts which cannot pierce normal clothing except on a critical success, and never penetrates padded cloth or better armor. These darts are smeared with poison, which takes effect if the dart hits flesh or light clothing. The darts can be anything from slivers of metal to long thorns. Modifiers: -2 and up for wind, if outdoors. A good blowpipe can cost $30, can be anywhere up to 10 feet in length, and weighs 1 lb. Darts cost $1 each.

Fletching

The skill of making arrows and bolts. A Fletcher makes arrows; a person who makes bows is called a Bowyer. These skills are covered under the same Armoury skill (p. B53) by specializing in bows and arrows. At TL5 or lower, specialization is not compulsory. A skilled fletcher will be able to make an arrow from any available materials, including wood, metal, feathers, twine, glue, paper, etc. Specialized types of arrows may also be crafted, such as hunting or armor-piercing arrows.

A successful roll creates a single arrow. Each arrow takes 1 hour to make, minus 10 minutes per point by which the roll was made (minimum 10 minutes). For example, If the Armoury roll was made by 3, then the arrow would have taken 30 minutes to finish. This assumes that specialized arrowheads have been crafted beforehand. A good fletcher with the proper equipment can turn out six arrows an hour.

If the roll is failed, then the arrow is still usable; but reduce its effective range by 20% and accuracy by 1 for every point by which the skill roll was failed (failure by 5 or more means that the arrow is useless). A critical success could result in an increased range (add 20%) for that particular arrow. Critical failure would result in the materials being destroyed.

If keeping track of individual arrows is too much paperwork then discard all arrows that fail the Armory roll -- the materials can be reused in the next arrow.

Modifiers to the fletching roll could include:
in the field with the proper tools and materials necessary: +0
a fully equipped workshop stocked with proper materials: +2
improvised materials: -2 to -8
inadequate or improvised tools: -1 to -4

Ammunition

A missile weapon is not much use without some sort of missile to fire. There are three main types of ammunition: arrows for bows; bolts or quarrels for crossbows; and pellets or shot for slings and prods.

Arrows and Bolts

Ammunition for bows and crossbows. Arrows consist of three parts: the arrowhead; the stele (shaft); and the fletching (feathers). The shafts are usually made of wood such as ash, birch, or oak. The heads are sharp metallic wedges, and the flights are made from feathers to increase stability and accuracy. The length of the arrow/bolt depends on the size of the bow. Arrows are usually much longer than bolts. An arrow weighs 2 oz.; a crossbow bolt weighs 1

oz.; and they all cost $2 each.

Pellets, shot. Ammunition for slings and prods. The most preferred material for pellets is lead shot, but stones can be used in an emergency (reduce effective range by 20% and accuracy by -2). The average weight of a pellet is 1 oz. and cost is $0.10.

Different types of arrowheads can be fitted to arrows or bolts. Cost is the same for both types of ammunition.

Fire-hardened tip. No head. Only good for hunting. It does crushing damage rather than impaling. Against DR 2 or better, it shatters on impact. It is not as well balanced as a tipped arrow so the effective range is reduced by 20% and accuracy is at -1. Cost $0.50.
Blunt. For target practice, small game, and possibly to stun and take prisoners. They are treated as normal arrows, except they do crushing damage instead of impaling.
Bone or flint. Only good for hunting and against light armor. Against DR 3 or better, it shatters on impact. Cost $1.
Standard. Normal steel, wedge-shaped broadhead. A general purpose hunting and war arrowhead. Cost $2.
Leaf-head. Fitted with a broader, barbed head to inflict more damage. It does cutting damage rather than impaling. Sometimes called a "bowel-raker" because its barbed head inflicts extra damage, 1d-3 hits (min. 1), upon removal, unless a successful surgery roll (p. B56) is made. Accuracy is -1 and both 1/2D and Max ranges are reduced by STx5, due to the poor aerodynamics. Cost $3.
Armor-piercer. Called a bodkin, it is a four-sided, narrow, spiked head designed to punch through heavy armor. They are sometimes waxed to assist in penetration. DR of armor is -2 against a bodkin point. Wounding damage done by the arrow -- after DR is penetrated and impaling damage doubled -- is also -2.
Flesh-cutter (watakusi). It spins as it leaves the bowstring and burrows into unprotected flesh. It is particularly ineffective against armored targets, though. +2 damage against DR 2 or less; -2 damage against DR 3 or more. Cost $4; weight 3 oz.
Frog-crotch (karimata). Used to demonstrate the precision of the archer's aim. The head forms a U-shaped cutting blade. It is designed to cut ropes and cords. To cut a rope, use the rules for attacking inanimate objects (p. B125) and consult the tables on p. B201. Ropes are always very hard targets (at least -6). When using this arrow to attack a living target. it inflicts cutting damage rather than impaling. 1/2D and Max ranges are reduced by STx5. Max damage to a human target is 1d-3. Weight 4 oz. Cost $10.
Flaming arrow. Made by wrapping oil- or fat-soaked cloth or grasses around the shaft just behind the arrowhead. They are -2 to skill. A flaming arrow does ordinary damage plus 1 point for the flame. The chance of the flame spreading depends on what the arrow strikes (see pp. B129-130).
Turnip head. A signal arrow, sometimes called a "humming bulb." The head is made of hollow, carved wood, and the shaft is also is hollow with holes drilled along its length. When fired, it emits a loud humming or whistling noise that can be heard up to a mile away. It can be filled with oil-soaked cloth or straw and used as a fire-arrow. Accuracy is reduced by 1 and both 1/2D and Max ranges are reduced by STx5. Maximum damage is 1d-3 crushing.

Selecting Arrows

If more than one type of arrow is in the same quiver, it takes an extra turn and an IQ roll to ready the right arrow. If the arrows are distinguished by markings or colored feathers then this roll is made at +5 -- if you can see them. A failed roll means that you are momentarily confused and no arrow is selected at all. A critical failure means that the wrong arrow is selected (another IQ roll must be made at +5 to realize this before firing). Fastdraw can be used but the arrow cannot be chosen. A successful roll means an arrow is selected at random.

Breakage

Any arrow that does not embed itself into a soft target (leather, flesh, thin/soft wood, etc.) upon impact stands a good chance of breaking. Any arrow that hits a target but inflicts negative damage (after subtracting DR) is considered to have bounced off (damage of exactly 0 will leave the arrow embedded in the target). Arrows that miss by less than the PD have glanced off the armor and may hit something behind the target (see p. B117). If the arrow bounced off the new target it will also have a chance of breaking. To check for breakage roll 3d. On a 12-15, the arrow has broken but

the pieces may be recovered. On a 16-18, the arrow has shattered and fragments are lost (including the arrowhead). Crossbow bolts only break on a 13-15, but still shatter on a roll of 16-18. Special materials can reduce the chance of breakage (very hard arrowheads will always be recoverable even if the missile shatters).

Materials

Soft metals. Bronze and iron can be used for arrowheads, but they bend on impact and inflict crushing damage against DR 4 or more instead of impaling damage. These materials cannot be used for armor-piercing arrowheads (bodkins).

Exotic timber. Special woods can be used in arrow construction. They are either unusually light (increasing range) or very resilient (decreasing the chance of breakage), or both.

Exotic timber can also be used in bow construction. They will always be self-bows. Treat as a longbow that weighs less (perhaps a lower minimum ST), or has a greater range, and increase the cost appropriately.

Silver. This is rumored to be especially effective against demons, undead, were-creatures, etc. Silver weapons cost 20 times the price of normal weapons (assuming they are available) but break as if they were Cheap quality.

Dwarven steel. An alloy of iron, carbon and titanium, Dwarven steel is extremely tough and perfect for armor piercing arrowheads. Against DR 4 or better, a bodkin inflicts +2 damage. They cost 40 times more than a standard armor-piercer.

Dwarven bolts. This crossbow bolt is made entirely of steel -- except for the feathers, which have to be large to stabilize the heavy missile. The shaft is of light, hollow steel and the arrowhead is of heavier Dwarven steel. It inflicts +1 damage on all armor types and will not break. Each bolt weighs 1/2 lb, costs $120, and can only be used in the heaviest of crossbows -- ST 11 or more.

Elven steel. This special alloy has been forged and tempered using secret techniques known only to the elves. It usually weighs about the same as normal steel but it is as tough as heavy steel. Only elves know how to work with this material and they only make one type of arrow. **Elven arrows.** Elves have a reputation for being consummate archers. Their arrows are of exceptional quality and craftsmanship. Their superb range and accuracy can be attributed to many factors: the head is longer and more streamlined than that of a standard arrow; the shaft is not cylindrical but barreled (tapering from the middle to the ends), is exceptionally straight , and markedly resilient; the nock is light and elegantly shaped; and the feathers are stiff and very thin. All Elven arrows add +1 to accuracy; add 30% to the effective range of the bow (exceptional arrows add 50%!); and inflict +1 damage against all types of armor. Elves only make one type of arrowhead -- but it is fashioned from Elven steel rather than normal steel. Their arrows cost $400 each and are occasionally traded for hard-to-get items (like exotic wine and precious metals). Elven arrows only break on a roll of 14-17 and rarely shatter (roll of 18 only).

Mithril. A wondrous (some say enchanted) metal, stronger than the heaviest steel but only a fraction of its weight. It can be found only in areas of high mana, and only then if the conditions are right. Mithril is perfect for arrowheads, being both light and tough. All types of arrowheads can be fashioned from mithril. Add 20% to the effective range, +1 to accuracy, and +2 to damage. For example, an Elven arrow with a mithril head would add 50% to the effective range, +2 to accuracy, and inflict +3 damage to any armor type. An arrow with a mithril tip costs 100,000 times that of an arrow with a tip of steel -- if they are available for sale (not bloody likely).

Siege Engines

Ballistae

Ballistae are available at TL3. These are large crossbows of various sizes. They require a crew of more than one person to load and handle them and smaller ones are sometimes used in the field. They fire large, heavy darts and are most effective against massed groups of men. The Gunner skill (p. B50) is required to operate any siege engine. The

minimum ST rating is the total strength of the crew needed to properly man the engine and keep it firing at its normal rate. For example, a ballista with a min. ST of 50 needs five men with an average ST of 10 each to operate the weapon. Any less than this and the weapon can be fired but it cannot be reloaded.

Sangmiau. This Oriental ballista is fired from the shoulder. The gunner needs two assistants and 5 seconds, or a windlass and 20 seconds, to cock it. Weight 16 lbs; cost $300; min. ST 16.

Arcuballista. This huge crossbow can be loaded with up to 10 bolts at once and can hit multiple targets up to 1,000 yards away. It requires only one operator, but once assembled it cannot be moved. It inflicts 3d impaling damage. Note that the gunner can only use his skill against one target. The other bolts hit random targets on a flat 9 (see p. B117). The arcuballista is most effective mounted on fortifications against a besieging army (lots of targets!). Weight 100 lbs; cost $1,000; min. ST 16.

Scorpion. This light ballista can be carried by one man, but requires a crew of two to operate. It is mounted on the ground and inflicts 3d impaling damage. Weight 25 lbs; cost $500; min. ST 20.

Medium ballista. Sometimes carried on horseback and set on the battlefield for long-range fire, but is usually only used in fixed positions: in fortifications, during sieges, and on ships. They require a crew of three or four and inflict 6d impaling damage. Weight 60 lbs; cost $900; min. ST 40.

Heavy ballista. Too large to move long distances. They are always constructed on-site during sieges and are crewed by at least six men. It inflicts 8d impaling damage. Weight 120 lbs; cost $1,500; min. ST 60.

Other Siege Weapons

When striking fortifications, consult p. B125 for rules on attacking inanimate objects. For exceptionally thick stone walls, simply add 200 hit points for every 1 foot of thickness over 12". For example, a 3-foot thick stone wall has 580 hit points.

Catapults. TL2. These weapons usually fire rocks weighing from 10 to 600 pounds. They are always crewed by at least six men. Damage is 6dx9 for a 10-pound stone. For every 14 pounds over 10 (maximum 600), add 1 to the multiplier.

Trebuchet. TL2. Instead of flinging stones into walls like a catapult, a trebuchet uses a cantilevered weight to lob stones over walls. It is capable of hurling boulders of up to 100 pounds and its payload can be any shape. It requires a crew of at least 10 men and it cannot fire at targets closer than 200 yards.

Battering Ram. TL2. While not a missile weapon, it is a common siege weapon and so is listed here. It is a heavy wooden beam used to knock down walls and gates. The simplest ones are trimmed tree trunks, and are used against gates. Others rest on a sling, have a huge metal head, and require up to 200 men to swing. A simple wooden beam does thrust damage equivalent to 1/4 the total ST of the men wielding it (1/2 ST if the ram has a metal head; wooden beams cannot be used against stone walls without a metal head). A sling ram uses 2/3 of the ST of the men using it. A 200-man sling ram does 14d crushing damage every time it strikes!

Medieval / Fantasy Missile Weapon Table

Malf. The die roll on which a weapon jams. A gunner may restore the weapon in 2d seconds by making a Gunner roll. Note that the GM rolls all dice and does not reveal how long repairs will take until they are complete. A critical failure breaks the weapon; only an Armourer can fix it.
Type. The type of damage a weapon does.
Dam. The number of dice of damage the weapon does.
SS. The snap-shot number, which is the final to-hit number needed to avoid a snap-shot penalty of -4 with the weapon.
Acc. The accuracy modifier of the weapon; see p. B115.

1/2Dam. The range at which the accuracy modifier drops to zero and damage is halved; see p. B117.
Max. The maximum range of the weapon in yards.
Wt. The weight of the loaded weapon in pounds.
Cost. The price to purchase the weapon.
RoF. Rate of Fire; see p. B208.
Shots. The number of shots the weapon holds.
ST. The minimum ST necessary to avoid additional turns readying the weapon after it is fired.

Weapon	Malf	Type	Dam.	SS	Acc	1/2Dam	Max	Wt	Cost	RoF	Shots	ST	Special Notes
BOW (DX-6) 2 hands to fire. 2 turns to ready													
Short bow	crit.	imp.	thr	12	1	STx10	STx15	2	$50	=	1	7	* Max. dam. 1d+3.
Han-kyu	crit.	imp.	thr	12	1	STx10	STx15	2	$80	=	1	7	* Max. dam. 1d+3.
Regular bow	crit.	imp.	thr+1	13	2	STx15	STx20	2	$100	=	1	10	* Max. dam. 1d+4.
Longbow	crit.	imp.	thr+2	15	3	STx15	STx20	3	$200	=	1	11	* Max. dam. 1d+4.
Dai-kyu	crit.	imp.	thr+3	14	3	STx20	STx25	4	$900	=	1	10	* Max. dam. 1d+4.
Hornbow	crit.	imp.	thr+2	12	3	STx15	STx20	3	$500	=	1	9	* Max. dam. 1d+4.
Composite bow	crit.	imp.	thr+3	14	3	STx20	STx25	4	$900	=	1	10	* Max. dam. 1d+4.
Elven longbow	crit.	imp.	thr+4	14	4	STx25	STx30	3	$40,000	=	1	10	* Max. dam. 1d+4.
CROSSBOW (DX-4) 2 hands to fire. Four turns to ready (eight if ST is greater than yours)													
Pistol crossbow	16	imp.	thr+2	5	5	STx15	STx20	4	$150	#	1	7	Max. ST 5.
Prod	16	cr.	thr+4	12	2	STx20	STx25	6	$150	#	1	7	fires lead pellets.
Crossbow	16	imp.	thr+4	12	4	STx20	STx25	6	$150	#	1	7	* Max. dam. 3d.
Chu-Ko-Nu	14	imp.	thr+2	10	3	STx15	STx20	10	$500	1	10	9	Max ST 9.
Dwarven crossbow	crit.	imp.	thr+5	12	5	STx25	STx30	12	$6,000	#	1	12	* Max. dam. 3d+2.
SLING (DX-6) 2 hands to load. 1 hand to fire. 2 turns to ready.													
Sling	crit.	cr.	sw	12	0	STx6	STx10	1/2	$10	=	1	-	Fires rocks.
Staff sling	crit.	cr.	sw+1	14	1	STx10	STx15	2	$20	=	1	-	Fires rocks.
BLOWPIPE (DX-6)													
Blowpipe	crit.	special (p. B49)		10	1	-	STx4	1	$30	=	1	-	See p. B49.

BALLISTA Gunnery (DX-5)

Sangmiau	16	imp.	3d	14	4	400	500	16	$300	1/20	1	16	Can be reloaded in 5 secs.
Arcuballista	crit.	imp.	3d	-	2	300	1,000	100	$1,000	1/20	10	16	
Scorpion	crit.	imp.	4d	15	4	400	500	25	$500	1/120	1	20	
Medium ballista	crit.	imp.	6d	15	4	400	500	60	$900	1/120	1	40	
Heavy ballista	crit.	imp.	8d	15	4	400	500	120	$1,500	1/120	1	60	

SIEGE ENGINE Gunnery (DX-5)

Trebuchet	crit.	cr.	1d/10lbs	-	1	1,000	1,500	900	$800	1/240	1	-	load up to 100 lbs.
Catapult	crit.	cr.	varies	-	1	300	500	800	$2,000	1/300	1	-	load up to 600 lbs.

* Max. damage does not include extra damage inflicted from special arrows or extra powerful bows.
= see p. B104 for reloading a weapon -- usually 1/3 unless attacker is Aiming.
See p. B114 for Rate of Fire for crossbows.

References: ***GURPS Basic Set (3rd edition), GURPS Imperial Rome, GURPS Japan, GURPS China, GURPS Horseclans.***

by Steve Kenson

Art by andi jones

The standard ***GURPS*** magic system assumes that mana is an unlimited resource, for all intents and purposes. Mages cannot deplete the local mana level except through specific spells like Drain Mana (p. M54). Mages cast spells using their own Fatigue to represent the effort of channeling mana. As a mage's skill increases, he can draw more energy from the surrounding mana with less effort (reducing the Fatigue cost). As the mana level increases, a mage can cast spells with less effort.

This article follows the assumption that mana is a *limited* resource, one that mages can use up. When all the mana is gone, magic is no longer possible. This idea can be found in fictional sources like Larry Niven's *The Magic Goes Away* and Roger Zelazny's short story "Mana from Heaven."

Limited Mana is a mana *type*, much like Unlimited Mana, separate from mana level. On limited mana worlds, only mages can cast spells, but casting spells requires no Fatigue. Instead, the energy cost of the spell is paid in "Mana Points" that must come from somewhere, either the environment or a storage item known as a "mana battery." Once Mana is used up, it is gone, so it is quite possible for a mage to completely deplete the mana resources of an area. It is quite possible that the Limited Mana style of spellcasting (where the caster spends no Fatigue) is the cause of this depletion; rather than putting some of his own energy into the spell, the mage puts all the burden on the environment.

In a Limited Mana world, mages get normal reductions in energy cost for spells known at a sufficient skill level (they know how to do the same spell using less energy). However, the cost to cast or maintain a spell can *never* be reduced below 1 point. A mage with no mana resources cannot cast spells *at all.* Likewise, the Power enchantment does not exist. Magical items are never "self-powered," although they may have dedicated powerstones (see below).

Mana Resources

The amount of "free mana" available from the environment is up to the GM. A single hex may contain 1 point of mana, more points or none at all. Free mana may only be available in certain places or at certain times. For example, during thunderstorms, volcanic eruptions, meteor showers or similar events. Over time, mages come to know what areas have free mana and what events provide it, and flock there to take advantage of (and, perhaps, fight over) the mana resources available. A mage in a Limited Mana world can roll against (IQ + Magery) to sense the presence of any free mana in an area.

If an area provides free mana, mages will most likely try to "harvest" as much of it as they can, tying it up in mana batteries (below) or in permanent spells like enchantments. A campaign can have a "mana rush" (similar to a "gold rush") when a particularly rich source of mana is discovered and all the mages rush there to grab as much of it as possible.

Mana Batteries

Mana batteries are physical objects that store mana for a mage to use at a later time, much like a powerstone. In fact, powerstones *are* one type of mana battery. The types of mana batteries available in the game are up to the GM. The limiting factors are that they must be physical, non-living objects of some kind. Each mana battery has a "Strength" that defines how much mana it can hold.

To use a mana battery, the mage must be touching or holding it. Some mana batteries may have quirks that require a mage to do other things in order to use them (see *Quirks*, below). A mage can normally only draw mana from a single battery at a time. If the battery doesn't have enough mana for the spell the mage wants to cast, the mage will know it and may choose to cast a different spell. This makes a larger mana battery more valuable and useful than several smaller ones. The GM can allow mages to draw mana from multiple mana batteries at once, if desired. This makes smaller mana batteries more useful, and encourages a mage to carry several rather than putting all of his mana "eggs" in one basket.

Recharging a mana battery requires putting additional mana into it. Mana batteries do not recharge on their own in a Limited Mana environment, their owner must specifically draw free mana into the battery to recharge it. Nearly all mages in a Limited Mana world know the Powerstone spell to create and recharge mana batteries. Recharging a battery requires a casting of the Powerstone spell (at no cost in Mana or Fatigue). For every point the caster makes the skill roll by, he may put one point of Mana into the battery, up to the battery's maximum Strength. A failure means no mana from that source may be stored in the battery. A critical failure on a recharging roll means the battery picks up an additional quirk (see below).

In addition to batteries created by mages, some Limited Mana worlds may have naturally-occurring mana batteries, objects that accumulate mana in their structure and can be tapped by mages. Such things may include magic mushrooms from a faerie glen, body parts from enchanted creatures (if they exist), water from a certain spring, and so forth. Mages will seek to find and control such natural resources, possibly leading to the extinction of some highly magical species. Perhaps there *were* unicorns and dragons on Earth once, until ancient mages killed them all for their mana!

Certain objects may also become mana batteries due to years or reverence or use by humans in spiritual or religious rites, making ancient talismans and artifacts useful as mana batteries, leading mages to plunder tombs and take up careers as archeologists and museum curators (or simply wealthy art collectors).

Most naturally-occurring mana batteries cannot be recharged. Once their mana is used up, they become ordinary objects. Some man-made items that become mana batteries *can* be recharged like other batteries. The GM decides the Strength of these items. Very high Strength batteries are quite valuable, and likely to be fought over almost as much as the mana they contain!

Quirks

Also like powerstones, mana batteries may have "quirks" regarding how they are used or recharged. An ordinary failure in casting the Powerstone spell to create a mana battery or increase ones Strength adds a quirk to the battery. Naturally-occurring batteries may have their own quirks at the Gamemaster's discretion. The fewer quirks a battery has, the more valuable it is.

Quirks can be almost anything, from the type of spells the battery can be used for (enchanted water might be good only for Water Spells, for example), to things the mage must do in order to use the mana (chant, sing, dance, recite bad poetry, etc.). Some batteries have quirks limiting them to certain users (only women, or redheads, or virgins, or natives of a particular region, etc.). Rechargeable batteries may also have quirks about how they recharge (only while submerged in bat's blood, only using mana from active volcanoes, etc.).

Limited Mana Mages

Mages in a Limited Mana world tend to be even more reclusive and competitive than mages in normal or even low mana worlds. The mage population may be quite small, depending on how scarce the mana resources are, and mages may deliberately keep their numbers low to share the remaining resources among themselves. If mages are especially rare, the Gamemaster may wish to charge an Unusual Background cost to possess Magical Aptitude.

Limited Mana mages always learn the Powerstone spell as soon as possible, allowing them to create mana batteries and "store up" mana for when they need it. They often have numerous caches of batteries concealed in various places in case of emergency. A mage's power depends greatly on the size of his personal mana "hoard."

In general, Limited Mana mages are more "miserly" with their magic, casting spells less frequently and casting smaller spells. Very powerful spells and enchantments are virtually non-existent, except for occasions when a group of mages can manage to cooperate together and agree to spend their precious mana on such a large spell. This makes Limited Mana very useful for "low-magic" campaigns as well as "secret magic" campaigns, where mages conceal themselves and their abilities from the general populace.

Mages spend a great deal of time simply maintaining their mana-stores. If free mana is rare in the world, many mages are constantly on the move, searching out sources of free mana to store and recharge their mana batteries. The Seek Magic spell (p. G60) allows a mage to locate the nearest source of free mana. Mages also learn what circumstances tend to create free mana and keep track of them. If free mana is a more regular occurrence, mages plan to take advantage of the occasions when it is available to recharge their batteries. Spellcasting may be more common right before "payday," as mages feel freer to spend energy, and rarer during "mana droughts" when free mana is less available.

There may be rituals and protocols for mages to follow regarding the gathering of free mana, such as the first mage present "staking a claim" or agreeing to divide the mana evenly or even ritual contests and magical duels to decide who gets the most mana. Alternately, mana gathering may be a free-for-all, the strongest and cleverest mages get the lion's share of the mana while everyone else gets whatever scraps they can scavenge.

Other Energy Sources

The Limited Mana option uses the same base assumption as the ***GURPS*** magic system: that mana is a natural resource unconnected to any other natural resource or energy. However, that does not *have* to be the case; mana could be derived from certain other natural or artificial sources, requiring mages to tap into those sources to get their mana. Two options are presented below.

Necromana

In this case, living beings are the source of mana. In a normal mana campaign this has little effect except that the mana level of an area may be affected by how much life is there. Overgrown jungles or crowded cities may be High Mana while lifeless deserts are Low or even No Mana. Most of the world is Normal Mana.

In a Limited Mana world, mana is only available by draining the life force of living beings. In effect, a mage must kill (or at least deplete) a living being in order to use magic. This functions much like the Limited Mana described above,

except the only mana batteries are living creatures.

A mage in this setting may drain the HT of a living being by touch to power his magic. Intelligent beings get a Will roll to resist this, roll a Quick Contest of the caster's Will and the subject's. The caster drains as many points of HT as he wins the contest by. Living creatures have a number of Mana Points equal to their HT. The mage must use this mana immediately. Any not used by the next turn dissipates into the environment. Alternately, mages may be able to store the mana in non-living batteries. When drained to HT 0, a creature dies and becomes a withered shell, its vital life force sucked away. A mage can use *himself* as a source of HT in this case. Ethical mages limit themselves to this method and taking HT from willing donors (but not enough to kill them).

This effect is not limited to just animals; plants may be used as well. Assume a hex of plants like grasses and shrubs has 3 HT, larger plants like trees have correspondingly greater HT. A mage may drain energy from plants in a radius equal to his Magery in hexes. So a mage with Magery 2 could drain HT from all the plants of the hex he was in and all plants within 2 hexes of that hex. Plants drained of all their HT wither and turn brown. A world where necromana is the only source of magical energy may become a barren desert as mages slowly suck the life from the world to power their spells.

Needless to say, mages have a poor reputation in a necromana world. Even "good" mages have a Reputation of -2, while mages known to casually drain life force to power their spells may have a Reputation of -3 or worse. An area where a mage lives will eventually become drained of life unless the mage is quite careful in the use of his powers. Evil mages will have numerous slaves and "pets" for use as sacrifices when needed. Regions they control will tend to become barren and inhospitable.

Energy Conversion

In this type of campaign, mana does not exist naturally, but is *created* by mages from other forms of energy like electromagnetic and kinetic energy using the Draw Power spell (p. G101). The mana created can be channeled into another spell or stored in a mana battery for later use.

In a low-tech Energy Conversion world, mages tend to flock towards natural energy sources like waterfalls, hot springs, volcanoes, lightning storms and similar locales, giving them a regular source to draw power from. (See More Power!, for more on this idea.) In a high-tech or ultra-tech campaign, mages will use modern conveniences like energy cells and power plants to power their magic, giving them a *lot* of energy to work with. A circle of mages drawing power from a fusion plant can accomplish tremendous spells at virtually *no* energy cost to themselves. Gamemasters take note! Of course, a mage with no energy source to draw from has no power whatsoever.

by Chuck Cooley

Art by Art Today

It was three seasons since the Monolith had fallen. Three seasons since the Old Ones had gathered in its shade to discuss the tribe and its future. Three seasons of hardship without their guidance.

First there had been the hyena that had carried off Chya's little one. Then the disastrous warm season when not one hunter brought back a scrap of meat and all the spearheads were broken. And now, as Graht sat among the smoldering coals that had been the Forest resting his deformed leg, he thought, "Why was there no one to advise us of all these things? Are the Spirits angry?"

Dreading the trek to new lands now that the Forest was no more, Graht looked up at the night sky. A star fell from the sky and streaked to the east, glowing brightly before it burned out just above the horizon.

Graht was stunned. The spirits had spoken to him! They had told him where the tribe must go! He climbed to his feet and hobbled back to the tribe, with joy in his heart. The spirits had chosen to speak again, and they had chosen to speak to him!

He would become the new Shaman, advisor to the tribe. He would watch the shapes in the sky for signs. He would read the entrails of the animals the hunters brought to the tribe. And he would find a new Monolith, and make sure it was properly venerated.

Besides, as a Shaman, he probably wouldn't have to walk around so much.

In general, a Shaman is simply a different kind of Crafter. When in doubt, any rule that applies to Crafters would apply to a Shaman. This includes Learning a Craft, working as an unskilled Hunter, and Child Care. Unless the Shaman has trained someone, there should only be one Shaman in the tribe. More than one Shaman in a tribe is not simply unproductive; it could lead to contradictory results or even Conflict.

Just like anyone else, a Shaman must Work before he could Eat. The Shaman's work consists of looking for portents in the environment, making sacrifices to the Spirits, and entering trances to commune with them. A Shaman who spends the season Meditating sacrifices 2 Food and rolls one die on the following table:

1. Nothing Happens -- The Shaman's meditations are fruitless.
2. Good Sky Omens -- Vegetation is lush; each uninjured Gatherer brings home 4 Food in addition to whatever else they do this season.
3. The Spirits Are Pleased -- Game is abundant; all Hunting rolls this season are made at +1. Injury is less probable and the +3 cap does not apply.
4. The Earth is Generous -- The Shaman finds ideal raw materials; each Crafter makes one item of their choice in addition to whatever they do this season.
5. Glory Season -- Fertility is high; +1 to all Conception rolls.

6 The Ancestors Provide -- The Shaman chooses one of the above results. Also, the Prophecy is guaranteed to be right (if using that option).

Other Benefits of a Shaman

A Shaman can speed the Healing of someone who has been Injured by Chance or while Hunting. This is mostly a matter of good nutrition, so it costs 1 Grain. Once that cost has somehow been paid, the Shaman rolls one die. Unless they roll a 1 or 2, the person is Healed, and may Work at half effectiveness (round up). For example, Nog the Gatherer was Healed and rolls a 10 on the Marsh table; he brings home 4 eggs, instead of the usual 7. If he had a basket, he still gets his second roll, but it is also at half effectiveness.

The Shaman's role as repository for the traditional lore of the tribe makes him more effective at Gathering than Hunters or other Crafters (but not as effective as a lifelong Gatherer). A Shaman rolls on the Gathering table at -1 (not -3). Note that this precludes any Healing or Meditating.

A Shaman's knowledge also makes childbirth less risky. If there is a Shaman in the tribe who is *not* off Gathering, all Birth rolls are at +1. (However, only a natural 17 results in twins.)

Clearly, there are benefits to the tribe if the Shaman stays well fed. But can they afford to do so?

Other Variants

Since ***Tribes*** is as much a social experiment as a game, here are a few more variations you might try. Be sure to clarify before the game begins exactly which options are in use.

Prophecy

Under this option, during any season the Shaman chooses to Meditate, he also receives what he believes is a vision of the future. The Shaman rolls on the Chance table immediately; this is what the Shaman predicts will happen. When it is time to roll on the Chance table for real, roll one die:

1-3. Prophecy was wrong -- roll on the Chance table as usual.
4-6. Prophecy was right -- do not roll an Event; use the event the Shaman rolled instead.

The Prophecy results should generate some interesting discussions. Does the tribe plan for an event that may not occur?

Advanced Prophecy

Instead of simple 50% reliability, the Prophecy can be made a little more complex. Compare the "real" Chance roll to the Prophecy roll, and use the higher one. For example: Graht has an ample supply of food, so he chooses to Meditate. After rolling on the Meditation table, he also rolls on the Chance table for his Prophecy and gets a 10 (hyena attack). At the end of the season when the tribe rolls "for real," they roll a 7 (fire). Since his roll was higher, the hyena comes -- just as Graht predicted!

Good News and Bad News

If you aren't using the Strength option, the extreme rolls of 3 and 18 on the Chance table come to naught. Try these as replacements (which can significantly effect "victory"):

3. A Curse on the Tribe -- a child of this season is sickly and counts as an extra child to be watched when the hyena comes. Use the same procedure to select the chosen one as with #18 below.
18. The Signs are Right -- a child of this season will be favored by the Gods. The child counts twice for Victory purposes. If more than one is born, the child with the highest Birth roll is the favored one. If none are born this season, then favor the highest Conception roll. If no one is even Conceived, then there is no favored one during this cycle of the stars.

Secret Conception

This option provides a method for preserving the mystery of fatherhood. It also tends to result in "marriage" laws. Before play begins, gather two sets of dice: big and small, red and white, it doesn't matter. What is important is that you can tell the "boy" dice from the "girl" dice but you can't tell the "boy" dice apart. Give each male character two "boy" dice, and each female character two "girl" dice.

During the Reproduction round, the male characters give the "boy" dice to the female characters via whatever "mating rituals" the tribe has evolved. Once all exchanges are complete, each female character then rolls any "boy-girl" pairs she has managed to collect. Conception is determined normally (a 9 or better means success).

Two successes do *not* indicate twins; that is still determined at Birth. The "boy" dice are returned to the males at the end of each round.

However, what is written on the Birth Record? That is a Good Question, likely to bring on heated discussion among the tribe. The only indicator of fatherhood is circumstantial evidence. Under this variant, male "victory" becomes a very thorny topic . . .

Risky Childbirth

Historically, delivering a baby is one of the most dangerous things a woman can do. If using this option, a roll of exactly 5 (4 if a Shaman is available) at Birth results in the woman being Injured. While realistic (if still generous), this rule increases the disparity between the sexes.

Hyena Surprise

Instead of automatically taking the youngest of the poorly guarded children, let the die roll choose. If a guardian is watching 3 children and the hyena die comes up a 3, it is the oldest child that is lost. A 2 would indicate the middle child and a 1 the youngest. Of course, if the die comes up with a number higher than the number of children, the guardian has successfully fended off the hyena.

Kindness to Crafters

Some ***Tribes*** players (especially males) find Crafting unprofitable. Experiment with giving Crafters +1 on their manufacture rolls (making baskets becomes a certainty) or letting them roll twice. Crafters might alternately wish to consider a sideline as day-care providers.

Hints for Play

It often isn't easy to gather enough of the right people to make a good game of ***Tribes.*** When you do, you want to make the most of the time. Here are some ideas that can help ensure you get through the whole game in an evening.

Four Dice At a Time

When making Hunting or Gathering rolls, put an extra, different colored die in your hand, and use that die to determine if your spearhead or basket survived the season. There's that much less time spent shaking the dice, plus you won't forget to make the roll for the item.

Colored Pencils

Select a different colored pencil for recording each character's parenthood on the Birth Record. This makes keeping score much easier; you can tell at a glance how many children everyone has.

Die-Roll Summary

Some players get confused by the varying number of dice you roll for the various types of rolls; here's a quick summary:

Hunting -- 3 dice, refer to the table relevant to the current Area.
Gathering -- 3 dice, refer to the table relevant to the current Area.
Crafting -- 1 die, 2 or more succeeds on a basket, 3 or more succeeds on a spearhead.
Craft Training -- 2 dice, 10 or more to become trained.
Conception -- 2 dice, 9 or more is success (10 or more if she's nursing).
Birth -- 3 dice, 5 or more is success (17 means twins).
Child in Danger -- 1 die, more than the number of children watched is success.
Conflict -- 2 dice with modifiers, 8 or better is a hit.

(Many thanks to the Lafayette Tribe that helped Chu'ug playtest this: Nog, Thor, Chya, Graht, Ayla, Gronk, Erk, Mukluk, and especially Lana.)

by Sean Jaffe

Art by andi jones

Had they been human, Hector, Dodger, and Raxl's hearts would have been pounding, and their breaths coming in ragged gasps. But they weren't human, and they weren't tired. Just hungry, and at each other's throats. They paced at the end of a dead-end alley, and tempers were running high.

"What the Hell did you get us into?!" Raxl screamed, waving his hands in the air for emphasis.

"How the heck should I know?! They were trying to kill me too, you stupid lick!" Hector snapped.

"Antedeluvian-loving hand puppet!"

"Sabbat imbecile!"

"Guys guys guys guys!!!!" Dodger put his hands up between the two Kindred. "Listen, I know you both come from rival sects, and I know you guys must really hate each other. But can it please take a backseat until we do something about that holy Roman terminator that's been chasing the three of us all night?! I mean, we've shot him, stabbed him, burned him, and driven a Buick Skylark up his backside, and it hasn't seemed to do anyone much good."

The other two suddenly gave him a wary look.

"Waitaminnit . . ." Hector started." Listen to you go off . . ."

"Yeah, you're a Ravnos . . ." Raxl agreed.

"Yeah, guys, you got me. This is all a gypsy hoax. That's why my hand's still burned from where I grabbed his shoulder, remember? Honestly, you licks drive me absolutely --"

"Get Down!" Hissed Raxl. The City Gangrel lunged out and yanked Dodger into a inky black shadow that Hector provided. The three vampires hid in muted silence as the sound of footsteps proceeded down the alley.

"That's him!" Whispered Hector as a tall, thin, battle-worn blonde man entered the alley, now being followed buy a hyperactive teenage girl.

"Ok, Buzziel, remember that Archangel David wants all three parts of the amulet. Tell Yves that we will have the completed relic by morning, and that with the arrival of the Malakim, the . . . difficulties we've run into will be dealt with."

The three Kindred exchanged uneasy glances as they each withdrew a piece of a shattered amulet from their pockets.

"What's a Malakim?" Whispered Raxl.

"Shhh!" Hissed the other two.

"We'll meet back here in two hours. You deliver your message, and I'll greet the Malakim."

With that, each burned from within so brightly that Raxl, Dodger, and Hector felt their skin tingle as though exposed to sunlight, and they had to shield their eyes. When they looked up, a many-eyed serpent spiraled upwards on feathered wings, and a burning wheel of fire bounced off three walls and a dumpster before gathering enough momentum to tear out of the alley at incredible speeds. The three vampires exchanged worried glances.

"Oh, man, oh, man . . . he said "Archangel," didn't he? I distinctly heard him say "Archangel" . . . " Hector shuddered.

"Oh, man, this sucks!" Barked Dodger. Raxl merely groaned; watched the night sky.

"I'm gettin' too old for this."

The respective worlds of ***In Nomine*** and the ***World of Darkness*** both share the same focus, a blind and apathetic humanity unaware of the war engaged on its own streets, and in its own backyards. The two worlds are very similar, and occasionally, interests may overlap. Let's face it, what self-respecting gamer with a single Sisters of Mercy album hasn't found themselves in a late-night argument over who's a dirtier fighter, Troile or Michael? Or who would win if you raced a Silent Strider and an Ofanite?

These pages have purposefully left out rules in favor of ideas, for two reasons. First, to cover every possible aspect of a full crossover, this article would be a 150-page book. Second, it is simply more fun to decide for yourself how Beleth reacts to chimera, or what The Balseraphs think of the Pooka. After all, It's your game! Included are a few guidelines for creating angels and demons in the *World of Darkness,* and a few guidelines for running these characters with each of the five *World of Darkness* game lines.

Creating an Angel or Demon -- W.O.D. Style!

Celestials in the World of Darkness

The three forces still apply to the celestials, however with completely different effects.

* Corporeal Forces determine Attributes.
* Ethereal Forces determine Abilities.
* Celestial Forces determine Willpower, Celestial Perception, and Songs.

A starting celestial has nine forces, just like in ***In Nomine.*** After determining forces, the character can use the following formulas to carve out the rest of the stats.

* Corporeal Forces x 5 for Attributes. (These points can be allocated freely to all attributes, without the 7/5/3 split.)
* Ethereal Forces x 10 for Abilities. (Same as above.)
* Celestial Forces x 2 for Willpower, Celestial Perception, and Songs. (So a character with four Celestial Forces has eight points in Willpower and Celestial Perception, and eight points to distribute among Songs.)

Celestial Perception is different from normal perception. and can be used several different ways. It can be used to sense disturbances in the Symphony, to sense a person's true nature, or if a given person is preternatural. Also, if the storyteller agrees, a celestial can burn a Celestial Perception point to gain a keen insight into a situation. this ability should not become a crutch.

The character must buy backgrounds with freebie points. This is the closest approximation to Roles.

Discord is the Same. Imagine Paradox with an Ice Cream Headache. You get the idea.

Resonances

Seraphim: Celestial Perception, Check successes against chart.
Cherubim: Celestial Perception, Check successes against chart.
Ofanim: Celestial Perception, Check successes against chart.
Elohim: Celestial Perception, Check successes against chart.
Malakim: Celestial Perception, Check successes against chart..
Kyriotates: Willpower Check vs. Host.
Mercurians: Celestial Perception, Check successes against chart.

Balseraphs: Celestial Will, Check successes against target.
Djinn: Celestial Will, Check successes against target.
Calabim: Celestial Will, Check successes against target.
Habbalah: Celestial Will, Check successes against target.
Lilim: Celestial Perception, Then, Will to inflict geas. Level is mix of successes and storyteller discretion.
Shedim: Willpower Check vs. Host.
Impudites: Celestial Will, Check successes against target.

Songs

Obviously, the wide array of celestials' Songs would take pages and pages to work out, so I'll give a basic system here and leave the specifics to the storyteller. A character can buy songs with the system above, derived from Celestial Forces. Songs can range from one to five, with only word-bound celestials able to exceed five, and only angelic and demonic Superiors capable of ratings of ten or more. Treat number of successes rolled as a check digit, and remember the disastrous effects of a botch!

New Rules!

* Angels and demons can buy the other's powers up as songs.
* Consider Disciplines and Cantrips to be Corporeal.
* Consider Arcanoi and Gifts to be Ethereal.
* Of all the powers, though, only Spheres are Celestial (That's what makes 'em so neat. And that's why only Mages get paradox.)

Also, use your discretion when dealing with Psychic Numina, Mummy Hekau, Fomori Powers, Spirit Charms, Hedge Magic and Gypsy Blood Affinities. Obviously,True Faith is out of the question. Demons hate it, angels are it. Also, yes, Faith will repel demons. Duh.

Adjustments for Vampire

"These losers are our unfinished business. If you see one, kill it. It's that simple."
--Tobias, Malakite of Dominic

"AAAAAAAgh Help help I'm on fire help meeeee!"
-- Mitch, thirteenth generation Sabbat Ventrue

"Listen, Ms. Galbraith, I'm sure we can reach some sort of an . . . agreement."
-- Malcolm, Balseraph of Malphas, on a recent trip to Mexico

Background

It's natural. After all, weren't God's angels, instead of God himself, responsible for the curse? The older a vampire would be, the greater his hatred for these celestials. This can add a whole new dimension to things, as vampires face their tormentors and throw off petty grudges such as the Sabbat-Camarilla lines or elder vs. young.

Superiors in the Fray

In the ***Book of Nod,*** Michael, Uriel, and Gabriel all have a stake (ha!) in this one, alongside a relative unknown, Raphael. But that doesn't mean we can ignore the infernal! Naturally, any vampire can fall to any demon when the lures of Servitor Attunements and demonic investments gets too much to pass up. But the demons with the most interest would probably be Andrealphus, Mammon, Malphas, Valefor (stealing blood is still stealing), Saminga, and a very amused Lilith.

System Elements

Ghouling and Bonding: Angels and demons are, by nature, unbondable (Heaven help the vampire who tries to bond a Lilim!) Angels, who share the Lupine's liberal, egalitarian views on vampires, will refuse vampire blood under all but the most bizarre of circumstances. They suffer one point of discord for every point ingested, and gain no real benefits from the drink. Demons, on the other hand, consider vampire blood a tasty treat, gaining essence from the stuff. (How much depends on the vampire's generation.) This is not so good for the vampires. Very few demons go out of their way to get vampire blood, but if a demon by some chance finds a tasty vampire with nothing better to offer . . .

Feeding: Well, if somehow an enterprising vampire can manage to drink the blood of a celestial, he'll take three levels of aggravated damage for every point he imbibes, either through the massive divinity or utter corruption of the blood. The only exception to this rule is if the drinker is an Infernalist, and the drinkee a demon. In this case, see ***The Storyteller's Guide to the Sabbat*** for more on Infernal Diablerie.

The Embrace: If by some even more bizarre stroke of luck, some wildly creative vampire manages to pin an angel, drain its blood, and give it some of her own foul ichor, the angel will wake up a Remnant. (***In Nomine*** Remnant, not the Ghoul family.) If she does this to a demon, the demon will get up, unharmed, and either continue on his way, thank the vampire for such an interesting good time, or whup the ever-loving snot out of her. In any case, it doesn't seem to have any real effect. (Remember, that's *seem.*) Kyriotates and Shedim who possess vampires find them to be unusually cold. Kyriotates don't seem to gain dissonance for leaving a vampire in worse shape.

Adjustments for Werewolf

"These are our allies, the Red Talons. They strike for our people, for Jordi. Together, we will rip the human scourge from Gaia's heart, as God has commanded. Amen."
-- Garonel, Malakite of Jordi

"I can look through the eyes of Gaia and remember a time when souls fell burning through the Umbra like rain, when the angels fell to the same hubris that took my tribe. Don't fall, pups. You are all that will stand at the apocalypse."
-- Joshua Tribe-Keeper, White Howler Ancestral Spirit

"Hey, hey, why are all you big, German guys looking at me like that?"
-- Izzy, unfortunate former Impudite of Haagenti

Background

Wait a minute! God and Lucifer don't leave much room for the Triat! Or-do they?

Well, If one assumes the Triat to be a creation of both God and Lucifer, things become more clear. The Devil's tie to the Wyrm is screamingly obvious.

Oddly enough, God, at least, The Jehovah of ***In Nomine,*** seems most like the Wyld, with the mystical other, the ethereal force of the Weaver being Mankind. The "Collective Spirits" of each concept gave rise to the Triat that the Garou hold dear. Certain superiors favor certain aspects of the Triat. For example, Novalis would probably have little trouble getting werewolves to believe she *is* Gaia, with all but the most enlightened Stargazers and Children of Gaia being completely fooled.

Superiors in the Fray

Obviously, the more earthy-crunchy Archangels would fall in love with the werewolves right away. David, Eli, Jordi, Michael, and Novalis would all have their own different uses for the Garou. Meanwhile, the Glasswalkers could work something out with Jean, and one could see Janus, Laurence, and Gabriel getting mixed up with the other Changers.

Meanwhile, a conspiracy in hell may number Mammon, Haagenti, Belial, Saminga and Vapula as having a "lower calling" for the Wyrm's Minions in the pit. Now there's an ugly fight . . .

System Elements

The Delirium: First off, celestials are invariably Immune to Delirium.

Angels of Jordi: A new Servitor Attunement is Defender of Gaia. This allows the servitor to take a human vessel, which is then granted the "umbral mass" that converts them into a changer, with all the physical advantages therein.

Seraphim become Rokea.
Cherubim become Bastet.
Ofanim become Corax.
Elohim become Mokole and Nagas.
Malakim become good ol' red blooded Garou.
Kyriotates become Ananasi.
Mercurians become . . . well, use your imagination.
Kyriotates and **Shedim** who possess Werewolves find them to be uncomfortable and itchy.

Adjustments for Mage

"I'd say you have to take each one of the Magi as individuals because no two are alike and even two who are supposed to be on the same team usually have really different goals but they have all this neat stuff that goes real fast like this one guy I met was called the Son of Ether and I said `I have this go-cart and It doesn't go fast enough' and he said `I can make it real fast' so then . . ."
-- Buzziel, Ofanite of Jean

"That is to say that these Sub-umbral proto-spiritual emanations resonate with either `divine' (enthalpic) or `infernal' (entropic) energy, leading the layperson who has been subjected to the sanctimonious dronings of the Celestial Chorus to mistake them for Angels or Demons. Now here's something that I had R&D develop after doing some experimentation on one of these things myself . . ."
-- Hunter Grant, NWO Man in White, New York Region

"You are going to die, and I'm going to write `Loser' across your forehead. You actually believed I was your friend?

Loser!"
-- Shannon Rock, Nephandi Soldier of Belial

Background

Remember how celestials can buy the "Lesser" powers of Songs? And how only Spheres are a Celestial Power? Well this is very important to the Magi on the whole.

Of the five major archetypes, Magi are the only humans. This humanity is what allows a Mage to tap into the celestial power within, for better or worse, and warp the world.

Superiors in the Fray

Each of the four persuasions in ***Mage*** would have its own set of backers, although their allegiance may be surprising. Certain Marauders may answer to Eli, Haagenti, and Kobal. Tradition Mages may secretly be in league with Yves, Kronos, Gabriel, Belial, Blandine, Belelth, Fleurity,or Khalid. The Technocracy would fall under the sway of Asmodeus, Dominic, Marc, Nybbas, Jean, and Vapula. Lastly, the Nephandi don't need to disguise their control, hence, a Nephandi can pledge allegiance to any demon prince they like.

System Elements

Celestial Spheres: Celestials either roll Celestial Perception (If they are an angel) or Will (If they are a demon) to determine the results of a sphere effect. They do not need foci.

Adjustments for Wraith

"We . . . must . . . fight . . . for this place. The souls of mankind are right here, and we are . . . losing . . . them."
-- Milky, Mysterious Angelic Celestial

"Oh, you'll see 'em sometimes, out in the tempest. Prolly as confused as the rest of us, thinkin' they're angels and

whatnot. Poor bastards."
-- Chamberlain, Ferryman

"Can't stop shaking . . . sooo horrible . . . soo horrible . . . Never go back . . . we can't win . . . can't win . . . can't win . . ."
-- Nicholas, former Mercurian of Michael, now Impudite of Saminga

Background

OK, big sticky problem number two. What happens when you die? In the world of ***In Nomine,*** your soul goes where it belongs, Heaven, or Hell. In the *World of Darkness,* things aren't so cut and dried. The most obvious answer is that the Shadowlands are -- you guessed it! -- purgatory, where tepid souls await either Final Salvation or Final Damnation. Remember, however, oblivion is not a one-way ticket to hell, it is a ticket to nothing. A character who succumbs to or is destroyed by oblivion is, quite simply, no more. Oblivion, above and beyond the call of good or evil, is simply the state of "not being." Consider it. On the other hand, Transcendence may take on a whole new meaning for the wraiths, as they shed their mortal vessels for the last time and look down upon their new angelic forms.

Superiors in the Fray

Obviously, Saminga has been busy here. This is clearly a realm he's got an interest in, for readily apparent reasons. However, Blandine, Dominic, Marc, Laurence, and Yves have staked various claims in the Shadowlands, standing fast against Saminga's Spectres. Not to be outdone, Baal, Beleth, Kronos, Malphas, and Vapula have come to their friend's aid. It would seem that if one presses deep enough into the tempest, or the Labyrinth, they will wind up in Hell. Who do you think those Malfeans are, anyway?

It would be worthwhile to note that Eli sees the whole of a the Shadowlands as one huge problem that needs to be dealt with, soon. He is the antithesis of oblivion.

System Elements

Celestial Form: Another thing to consider is that given the discovery of Angelics, Archangelics, Demonics, and Archdemonics in the Tempest, this may be a place where celestials are stripped of their vessels and are forced to take their celestial forms. Yes, that *is* Archangel Gabriel under the description of Angelics.

Fighting for Hosts: Kyriotates and Shedim can fight with wraiths for hosts, leading to three-way Will rolls for the host body. The angel or demon and the wraith go head to head first, the winner takes on the host. Nether type of celestial can possess a wraith, for obvious reasons.

Adjustments for Changeling

"Hey, um . . . excuse me, why am I holding this string? Why are you all laughing? What's with you people? Why won't you -- PAUGH!! Ptt . . . Ptt . . . Mmm Hmm. Banana creme. Very original, kids, very original. Oh, stop it."
-- Mr. Whiting, unwitting servitor of Dominic who needed to come down a few notches.

"Ok, so you're saying that your angel king, or queen, or whatever, is using us all to fight the Unseelie, who are under the control of a demon queen? Yeah. Unh-hunh. Pull the other one, dog-ears."
-- Megan O'Leary, Skeptical Eshu

"So you are sayin' we work for Beleth, who is a demon queen? Kick ass! At least I'm not some hippie seelie."
-- Cartman, Redcap Childling

Background

Born from the dreams of Mortals, The Fae established themselves as gods and tyrants in their day. While the Fae can be cold and beautiful, they can also be passionate and dangerous. Well, It seems like a certain pair of celestial ex-lovers have been having a spat, in the form of Seelie vs. Unseelie. At least, Until guys like Asmodeus and Dominic moved in, with their schedules and inquisitions and appointments, and they ruined all the fun. The nice thing about ***Changeling*** is that it gives the storyteller a chance to really solidify ties between one group and its celestial counterpart. In other words, it's a good beginner's crossover.

Superiors in the Fray

Blandine and Beleth! Each celestial, still in love, and unable to let go, yet consumed with rage at the other, has sent a mighty army against the other in the form of walking dreams. This was all well and good until Dominic and Asmodeus, respectively, poked their cold noses in and told them both to cease. Since then, being a fairy hasn't been the same, what with all these sticks-in-the-mud. It is important to emphasize that these celestials are merely using the Kithain, and they did not necessarily create them.

System Elements

Yes, Blandine's and Beleth's Marches are the Dreaming. Arcadia is still a mystery, and neither celestial is talking. That said, here's a new Servitor Attunement, common to both:

Kithain Boon

This attunement allows the celestial to take a little of the dreaming into their corporeal vessel. While this does not render the celestial a changeling per se, they will appear as one chimerically, and will be granted the ability to see chimera.

Seraphim and **Balseraphs** become Sidhe.
Cherubim and **Djinn** become Trolls and Ogres.
Ofanim and **Calabim** Become Pooka (Calabim hate this).
Elohim and **Habbalah** become Nockers.
Malakimbecome Redcaps (hmmm).
Lilim become Satyrs (hmmm).
Kyriotates and **Shedim** become Sluagh.
Mercurians and **Impudites** become Boggans.

Enchantment: Any Celestial can be enchanted, but it takes twice as much glamour if the celestial is a servant of either Dominic or Asmodeus. Impudites, much to the amusement of their cohorts, can enchant themselves by accident while attempting to steal essence from a Changeling.

Kyriotates and Shedim who possess Changelings are left inexplicably giddy and whimsical. In other words, they get high.

by Brent Knowles

Art by andi jones

A certain amount of realism disappears from the game when the "monsters" we know from real life act incorrectly. These monsters, the lions, wolves, and sharks of this world, are portrayed as weak cannon fodder, upon which the characters can build their experience.

Consider this example:

Two warriors are crossing the great plains of the Nugelian Empire.

DM: [fumbling with dice, rolling a random monster encounter] "Uhm, four jackals come running at you, yelping and yowling."

Alfonso: "I draw my sword and start attacking."

Drake: "I do the same."

The battle proceeds for some time. All the jackals are dead, save one. The DM doesn't feel like looking up the jackal's morale. The lone jackal fights to the death, even though the morale of the jackal is only 2-4.

The DM obviously never read the entry on the jackal in the monster manual, stating they are a scavenger and not a predator. In fact, no natural animal would behave in this manner, unless it was very hungry, or the party was endangering its young.

Even the predators towards the top of the food chain are not the fierce fighters they are portrayed to be. A leopard will gladly give up a fresh kill to a pack of hyenas, to avoid a fight. It knows that it could probably win the fight, but in so doing might injure itself, or at the very least expend valuable energy.

Animals operate on the principle of conserving energy. Before engaging prey they decide whether it will be worth it for them to fight or not. If the chance is high that they will be wounded they will avoid an altercation. An injury to the jaw stops an animal from being able to eat.

Making the Animals Act like Animals

Most animals are never seen, and when they are it is usually because they don't consider the human a threat or prey. As long as humans avoid the animal's zone of control, they are safe.

The problem comes when a random monster encounter is rolled. This does not mean that the randomly-rolled monster has to attack the

players! This is a perfect opportunity for roleplaying.

The previous example could have been played out as follows:

DM: "You stumble across some fresh prints in the ground."

Drake: "I examine them."

DM: "The tracks appear dog-like. There are a lot of them. There are small pools of blood in the mud as well. Off in the bushes you can hear some growling."

At this point, you can do a number of things. The party might find the hidden remains of a scavenged kill, a wounded jackal, or any number of things. Instead of just another combat, here is an opportunity to do something different.

The ***AD&D Monster Manual*** gives a lot of detail on the habitat and society of individual animals. Anything more that you know can be used as well. If you watched an interesting documentary on wolves the other weekend, apply what you've learned. Zoologists are constantly learning more about animals. This knowledge may be used to add an element of unpredictability to your animal encounters.

The Komodo dragon is one such example. A rare lizard, numbering around 1,000, it exists in an isolated area. Very little has been learned about its habits since Europeans discovered it in the early 20th century. The end of this article concludes with an updated description of this strange reptile. As a DM, you should use every random encounter as a roleplaying opportunity.

Give the Critters an Edge

Your animals now behave like real animals. Now let's make them more of a challenge. Below are rules that apply when an animal is defending its territory or young, when it is starving to death, or it is cornered. These are the Intrusion modifiers.

These Intrusion modifiers only apply if the animal cares about what it is defending. An animal that is nomadic and has no territory to defend won't care if the party trespasses. Using the Komodo dragon as an example, you see that an adult Komodo dragon gains no Intrusion bonuses if its young are attacked, because adults do not defend their offspring.

Intrusion Modifiers

Modifiers are not cumulative with each other. For example if a mother is defending her young and her lair, she only receives the highest bonus.

Morale

1. If defending a lair, morale is doubled.
2. If defending young, double morale and add 10. This only applies to the mother or father of the animal that cares for the children. If both parents contribute equally to the offspring's defense, then both receive this bonus.

3. For all other conditions, add 5 to morale.

Hit Points

1. If you use the death's door rule (***Dungeon Master's Guide,*** p. 75), then you can give enraged animals 10 bonus hit points. For example, to incapacitate an animal under the Intrusion rules requires bringing it to -10 hit points. This is especially applicable to an animal like a bear, which, when injured can go mad, not even realizing that it is already dead. This rule should be invoked when the DM feels it is appropriate. After using the rule once, the DM should remain consistent when applying it.

Attack

1. Add a +1 to Hit Rolls.
2. Add an additional +2 to hit, if defending its young (or in some cases, any young in the group).
3. A roll of 19-20 results in double damage, on top of any other species-specific bonuses received for such a roll.

Defense

1. Due to the enraged and careless behavior of the animal, it receives an AC penalty of 2.
2. The young get a +2 to their AC, reflecting the fact that the adults are trying to defend them.

These rules add a level of unpredictability when dealing with wild animals that foster a feeling of realism in your campaign. Players will not know when they are intruding on an animal's territory. Attacking a pack of wolves that is away from their lair will be significantly easier than invading their den. In the first case the wolves would likely run away; in the second, they would fight to the death. And remember, the young of many species are often quite difficult to see, for the parents will hide them. A party may accidentally anger an animal, without realizing why. It may make the difference between being able to win a battle or losing it.

The importance of the ranger, and non-weapon proficiencies dealing with animals, rises when the party has to worry about intruding on an animal's territory. A good ranger, if tracking an animal, will also be able to point out when the party is getting too close to an animal lair. A successful animal lore check will reveal the mood of a creature.

By learning to roleplay your real life animals properly, you will also find that your created monsters behave realistically. You may decide to expand the Intrusion modifiers to apply to other, non-natural species. Treating each encounter as something more than a chance to make a few attack rolls will create a series of memorable experiences for your players. Years later, you may find yourself discussing an accidental meeting with an angry moose and her calf, but be unable to recall what adventure you were playing at the time.

Komodo Dragon

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: volcanic, temperate islands
FREQUENCY: Uncommon
ORGANIZATION: Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE: Day
DIET: Scavenger
INTELLIGENCE: Animal
TREASURE: Nil
ALIGNMENT: Neutral
NO. APPEARING: 1-4
ARMOR CLASS: 4
MOVEMENT: 6
HIT DICE: 2+1

THAC0: 19
NO. OF ATTACKS: 3
DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1-2/1-2/2-4
SPECIAL ATTACKS: poison
SPECIAL DEFENSES: Nil
MAGIC RESISTANCE: Nil
SIZE: M-L (4'-10')
MORALE: Unsteady (6)
XP VALUE: 65

Komodo dragons are dull, gray skinned lizards. Beneath their skin lies bony plates of armor, which grants the Komodo formidable protection.

Combat: Komodo dragons will not attack unless cornered. Even then, they flee at the first opportunity they get. In combat they will rake with their talons and try to bite their attacker.

The saliva of the Komodo dragon contains disease-causing bacteria. If the Komodo bites a victim, then a saving throw versus poison must be made. If failed, the victim will grow progressively weaker. The victim loses 1 point of Constitution each day until cured. After the fifth day, all other ability scores will begin to drop by one each day as well. This pattern repeats until any ability score reaches zero, at which point the victim dies. If cured, the ability scores return at a rate of one point per day of bed rest.

Habitat/Society: Komodo dragons live a solitary existence. Although they do cluster in small groups, there is no social organization. They do not protect their young, which resemble gold-flecked iguanas. In fact, these young, which are less than 2 feet long, have 1HD and bite for 1-2hp damage, and fear adult Komodo dragons. After hatching from eggs laid in burrows, the young live their youthful days in the tree tops. Some small adults, those less than five feet in length, are also quite nimble in trees.

Although the adult Komodo dragons are not protective of their young, they do protect the eggs. The female will lay her clutch in a burrow she has dug and then stand guard over it, without eating, for several weeks, until the young are hatched.

Komodo dragons seldom hunt. Mostly they eat the remains of fallen animals, or those that they have poisoned with their putrefied saliva. Komodo dragons rely heavily on their senses of smell and sight. Their sense of hearing is not very good.

Komodo dragons wrestle each other. Each Komodo lunges up on its powerful hind legs and grapples by using its fore-claws. The winning dragon tries to pin its opponent to the ground. The loser must endure a talon raking by the victor for several minutes. This punishment usually doesn't hurt the loser, it is just humiliating.

Ecology: Komodo dragons are a novelty species. They are unpleasant to eat, and anyone doing so must make a save versus poison, as discussed in the Combat section. Their hide is flecked with chunks of calcium, rendering it useless as a source of leather. For these two reasons, they are not hunted.

by Damen V. Peterson

Art by andi jones

"Okay, so my cousin said that his roomie was at the mall once, and the guy's sister had to take a leak, so he's waiting outside the bathroom for her, and she's taking forever, so the guy decides to snoop around a bit, and he opens these doors, and there's just this corridor, you know? So he walks down the corridor, and he sees another set of doors, so he opens those doors, and he's back at the same corridor with the bathrooms. So he thinks he just got turned around, you know the guys my cousins hangs out with, and he waits some more for his sister, but he gets bored, so he walks around the mall, thinking she can just find him, but the mall looks different now, ***because he's in Kansas*** *or somewhere, and he's so freaked out that he runs back down the corridor, and his sister's waiting for him outside the bathroom, but he doesn't tell her or anyone else where he was until he gets drunk some night and tells my cousin. Oh, and the sister was taking so long in the bathroom because there was a Doberman in there choking on some fingers he bit off of the serial killer hiding in one of the stalls."*

"Dude, that story sucks! There wasn't even anyone making out in it!"

A Little History

The first malls were strip malls (stores placed side by side with a parking lot in front) made when the popularity of the automobile, the highway, and the suburb made these distant, but compact commercial establishments feasible. This article has nothing to do with strip malls, simply because there is not and never will be anything interesting about them.

However, when some malls became enclosed, and people could consider them destinations for travel, something happened to make these malls interesting. Some overly curious people discovered that some doors (usually in the drab, ugly corridor with the restrooms, the lockers, and the security office) opened up to plain, cinder-block corridors that couldn't actually be in the mall. These corridors led to places that, at first glance, looked exactly like the places where the corridors started. However, further examination by any overly curious person would lead to the discovery that he or she was in another mall, very far away from their point of origin.

Reactions to this unexpected turn of events were limited in number. Most overly curious people simply turned around, went back through the corridor to their old mall, forgot what they had just done, and never did an overly curious thing in their lives ever, ever again. This is actually the typical reaction for most anyone when something impossible, yet not immediately fatal, happens to them.

Others recognized that something impossible had just happened and immediately thought, "I could make some money off of this." Most of these people, to their misfortune, found that it was very difficult to make money from being able to, for instance, go from a mall 5 miles from Manchester, NH, to a mall 10 miles from Flint, MI in only 30 seconds. But some of these budding entrepreneurs persevered, finding other connections between malls and other people who knew about "Advanced Mallwalking." This group of underground (or at least indoor) capitalists now call themselves

the Couriers, as their most profitable business comes from carrying goods quickly from place to place.

A few people also recognized the impossible when they saw it and immediately thought, "This is bad." They were especially motivated to find as many inter-mall connections as they could find and make certain that no one else tried to use them. These opponents of time-space violations also formed a group, calling themselves the Locksmiths, after their favored method of dealing with the corridors -- installing locks on the doors. Other methods preferred by the Locksmiths include slapping "Fire Exit Only" stickers on the doors and getting jobs as mall security guards and administrators (to keep an eye on any doors that, for some reason, they don't want to lock).

What's Really Happening (Honest)

There is only one Mall, and it's got the corridors to prove it.

Like most any collection of units in the right situation (see below), some of the malls have collected into a group mind. It's a shame that, due to the situation, only the most unimaginative , dull (and successful) malls are part of this group mind, but that's the way things are sometimes.

Like any group mind, the Mall has beliefs and goals, low-level as they may be. Also like any group mind, these beliefs and goals do not exactly correspond to anything dealt with by its components, although, in this case, they are derived from the beliefs and goals of the people who use malls.

The Mall believes:

1) There exist Customers. Customers should always be pleased and never be surprised. This is done through Convenience and Sales.
2) There exist Goods, like Stuff and Money. Customers like getting Goods; some prefer Stuff, while other prefer Money.
3) Convenience consists of giving Goods to Customers (according to their preference) as quickly as possible.
4) Sales consist of creating signs saying "SALE" and placing those signs on goods.

The Mall has these goals: increase Convenience, increase Sales, increase Customer pleasure, and decrease Customer surprise. Due to the fact that the Mall has no concept of physical laws or social niceties, its methods of achieving these goals have gotten a little heavy-handed. The cinder-block corridors between the Mall units exist to increase Convenience, and Customers are supposed to use them to reach Goods as quickly as possible.

The corridors also serve as the main communication between Customers and the Mall (since the Mall is "purest" there, not having to share with Space or Time or the Government). When someone walks into one of the corridors, the Mall basically tries to figure out what Goods that person desires and tries to get these Goods to the Customer. However, the only things that the Mall can influence are the Customers themselves. In game terms, anyone who uses a Mall corridor must roll against Will (with a 1 cumulative for each additional use). A failure causes that person to either develop the Greed disadvantage (if they prefer money to possessions) or an Obsession with finding a certain item at the Mall, even if he or she has to start a new store in the Mall to get that item. Also, that person must roll against IQ (also with a 1 cumulative for each additional use); on a success, they get a feeling that there is something else in the corridor with them. These two rolls are independent; many Locksmiths know that "something's wrong" in the corridors, yet have developed an Obsession that they have satiated by getting management jobs at the mall and attracting stores that they would prefer. Since overly curious people are often curious in more ways than one, the Locksmiths have gotten some unusual stores to the Mall (the author swears that he saw a store once that sold only miniature combat games). Only one disadvantage can be gained; if a person is already greedy, there is no effect.

As an additional side effect, as more people use the corridors, the Mall develops more power. For now, the Mall's

power is used to find and build corridors to other units, influence Customers in the corridors, and make the units of the Mall more similar to each other to decrease Customer surprise, i.e. if a store exists at one end of a corridor, sooner or later, that store will exist at the other end of that corridor.

Needless to say, the Mall is a touch annoyed that some of its Customers insist on placing locks on its corridors, but the Customer is always right, so it must be for a good reason.

How Somebody New Could Get Involved in This Mess

For law enforcers or do-gooders, it's very easy to end up involved, as almost every idea a Courier has for making money is illegal (or at least suspiciously secretive). Couriers could be smuggling drugs, breaking into malls after closing time, taking soft drink cans from no-deposit states to Michigan (for that 10 cent deposit!), or just loitering around suspiciously, waiting for all eyes to be turned away so that he or she can duck through a door. Some Couriers are good thieves, but most are greedy individuals who have learned a new trick.

If a group needs to hide from someone, a contact could direct them to someone who can get a person out of town, guaranteed. This person, a Courier, blindfolds the characters, takes them through a Mall corridor, puts them in his van, and drives around his daily business for the "right" amount of time, then lets them off. Of course, this fellow has never heard of Absolute Direction or Psionics.

Anybody who has the Curious disadvantage and who has ever walked into a mall has probably already found a corridor and just hasn't bothered to tell anybody. Walking into the mall again should prompt a memory. If this is not enough fun, get the curious characters into the mall and point out the unmarked door around the corner from the restrooms (side note: It's shocking how many characters go romping through gunfights and sewers and never think of getting some new clothes at the mall).

Or maybe the Locksmiths need some competent people to pretend to be security guards, and the characters are the right thugs for the job. They're told to make sure no one goes into a certain door, especially not themselves. But what do your characters do when someone walks *out* of the door?

Need More Weirdness?

There is one corridor that the Locksmith keep open and use regularly, for two reasons. First, it is used to train new Locksmiths on the dangers of the corridors, for this one has been used so often that the corridor now connects two identical malls, in California and New York. Second, the corridor is incredibly convenient; it connects both coasts, it's only marked as an Employee Entrance, and the door isn't hidden in some back corner, but is a few steps down a corridor right by a department store. Thus, the Couriers use it, too, and they aren't willing to let anyone stop them.

One day, something happen. First, the two corridor doors no longer lead to a corridor, but to the outside (like they were originally supposed to do). However, there is now a gumball machine by each door, selling "Big Center Gumballs" for a quarter. Everyone "in the know" quickly figure out that buying a gumball allows one person to use the corridor.

This should send the Locksmiths into a paranoid frenzy; *someone* is charging a toll for the corridor. The Couriers

probably see this as an unwelcome, but minor, dent in their profits. The gamemaster should play the situation as this: The Mall has gained enough power to make simple, common Stuff, and is using that power to get Money (which it still doesn't have the hang of making).

It will get worse. After a few months, the gumball machines will be gone, and "The Center" kiosks will be in their place. They are each run by a very happy woman named Debbie (two different Debbies) who answered an ad placed in a newspaper she found on a bench by the mall (she doesn't have the paper anymore; no one will find that ad in any other paper printed that day). Debbie is actually perfectly normal; she is very happy because lots of store employees are buying stuff from her right before they go into the employee's entrance. She sells a lot of candy, but she also has unusual items like lockpicks (Debbie thinks they're bicycle repair kits) and vests that add +2 to Holdout skill (fishing vests with pockets everywhere!). It seems that the Mall does know its Customers pretty well, and its ability to make Stuff is improving.

If people are willing to stand for this, one day, the kiosks will be gone and plywood barriers will be blocking the doors. Sounds of construction can be heard, and a sign is announcing, "Coming Soon! The Center! More Sales! More Convenience!". Investigations will reveal that the corridor is slowly morphing (like molten plastic) into what looks like a regular mall corridor with a department store called "The Center" in the middle, and there are no doors at the end. The Mall is trying to literally become one place.

Trying to destroy the Center will not permanently work; the Mall just keeps flowing. Trying to reason with the Mall through the Debbies will work; they have an address that they get their paychecks from, and they are on paid vacation at this point. Ideas include informing the Mall that this is just too big a surprise (in which case the Mall will stop, although figuring out the magic word "surprise" will require some major research or special abilities), or educating the Mall on the basics of economics (as in the importance of not just creating Stuff) and letting this go as planned (and investing in it).

Other Institutional Dimensions?

The Mall is related to L-Space, the library-connecting universe (***GURPS Discworld,*** p. 115), but they are not connected, nor do they know anything about each other (The Mall would certainly find L-Space terribly Not Convenient, whereas L-Space would be horrified to find a place where books are sold like slaves and have little protection from food and drink). Are there others? If something as superficial as the Mall can exist, why not?

Defining certain factors can help you define your institutional dimensions:

1) Are there a lot of places that the dimension can connect, and are they usually thought of as being much the same, e.g. "I'm going to the library/the mall/the doctor's"? While you can have a dimension connecting your father's bedroom closet to the trashcan in your boss's office, I wouldn't expect it to be that interesting or fun.

2) What difficulties are there in accessing and surviving in the dimension? The Mall is about as convenient as possible without having everyone know (at least immediately), and it tends to be hidden out of the way, little-used, and slightly confusing at first, and it doesn't allow time travel (like L-Space). A dimension associated with prisons could be positively fatal.

3) How much of a personality does it have? The Mall is somewhat simple-minded and materialistic, but good-natured. Dimensions could have more consciousness than that, but that might make them too powerful. If you want alien intelligence, I suggest filling a dimension with forms of life (once again, like L-Space).

4) Finally, how does the dimension affect those who use it? Dimensions don't like physics at all, and tend to be based on strong principles that need not agree with any silly human assumptions. They don't have to care about sanity or feelings or logic; they're just in it for the existence. Of course, for playability, dimensions should be nicer than "You all go psychotic and kill each other with spoons. The end."

With enough work, your characters could be saying things like, "We'll place ourselves in a package, sneak through

Postal-realm, hop through the Mall, and get to Walla-Walla before anyone can miss us!" Whether this is desirable is entirely up to you.

by Jason Wittman with Hilary Moon Murphy

Chess. What other game has such a history, or such fanatical devotees? From the royal courts of Persia, it swept both east and west. Over the centuries, players who excelled in the game were revered as members of an intellectual elite. The game itself became a metaphor for struggle in all its myriad forms: religion, politics, and even love. It has inspired scholarly treatises, poetry, novels and at least one Broadway musical.

There are other games that just as ancient, checkers and Go among them, but chess has a personality that sets it apart. Instead of uniform, interchangeable pieces, it has Bishops and Rooks, Knights and Queens, Kings and Pawns. The interplay of these pieces and their varied moves creates a game of endless complexity.

The only real limitation of chess is that it has always been a game for only two players. Any additional participants have been relegated to the role of spectators. Although a number of variants for multiple players have been designed, all have been somewhat lacking. Variants for four players (the most common multiple-player variant) can only be played well with four. If you want more than four to play, you are out of luck. If you want to play with three players, it can be done, but a four-sided game board dictates that one player is besieged from both left and right while the other two players fight the war on only one front.

How then, could one create a chess game versatile enough to be played with any number of players? The answer, it turned out, was to get rid of both the board and preset layouts altogether.

Early Origins

The genesis of ***Tile Chess*** was in the late eighties, when I was still in high school. As part of a freelance project for my art class, I developed a game that was a cross between chess and dominoes. The result was a variation that required no board because the pieces had square bases that fit together snugly. The basic object was the same, but there was the additional rule that all the pieces had to remain connected to each other. No piece, or group of pieces, could at any time be apart from the others. At the time, it was just a two-player game. I got a decent grade for the project, and that was that for a while.

Tile Chess Designer's Notes

Fast-forward about ten years. I'm still an enthusiastic (if somewhat mediocre) chess player, and I just love the game. I started thinking about the Domino Chess game that I invented in high school, and wondering if I couldn't adapt it for more players. Versions for four players had already been done, but what about six? I constructed a quick mock-up of all the pieces drawn on flat squares of cardboard, and then brought the game over to some of my friends, and forced them to playtest it for me.

Now, if you use your friends as guinea pigs, you have to expect that they will be more polite than honest with you. Most of the time, everyone will say they liked the game, pat you on the head, and damn you with faint praise, like: "Good colors on those playing pieces." I had gotten that response to other games I

had designed, and knew that it was a death knell. If a game doesn't impress your friends, it won't impress anyone else, either.

But this playtest went differently. After everyone laid out their pieces, the game became an all-out killing spree, followed by a more thoughtful cat-and-mouse period where the players stalked each other. Instead of the usual polite (and bored) compliments, one person exclaimed, "My God, it's like chess on steroids!"

Without any prodding from me, they all clamored to play it again, and then again another time. After the last game was over, they all sat around discussing the quirky strategy involved, and how different moves at critical moments would have affected the game as a whole. Then, one of my friends turned to me and said, "You know, you could sell this."

I still wasn't sure. So one of my friends helped me arrange a playtest with a bunch of gamers that I didn't know. For the price of a few pizzas, I got detailed feedback that helped me refine the game and gave me the confidence to go on with marketing it.

Variations

In the early playtests of ***Tile Chess,*** we tried a number of variations. By far the most strange was ***Knightmare Tile Chess,*** where we combined ***Knightmare Chess*** with ***Tile Chess.*** We discovered early on that some ***Knightmare Chess*** cards (for example, "Earthquake", which involves rotating the chessboard) just don't work with ***Tile Chess.*** However, once we eliminated those cards, the game worked fine. It was complete and utter chaos, but we enjoyed it enormously.

Although most of the variations we tried made the final rules, there were some cut because they caused confusion or ill will among the players. The one that I miss the most was the "Blaze of Glory" maneuver, which was allowed to a player who could not move his King out of check. The blazing piece was allowed to make any legal move *except putting an opponent directly in check.* Although direct attacks were out, indirect ones were fine. It was perfectly legal for a blazing piece to create a situation that put an enemy King into check from *someone else's pieces.* If that was not possible, the player was encouraged to look carefully for other opportunities to create mischief. While the variation played well with the first group of people that playtested it, later groups found that if led to arguments and bad feeling. With regret, the "Blaze of Glory" maneuver was eliminated from the final version of the rules.

What I've Learned

I came up with a dozen games before ***Tile Chess*** was accepted for sale. Though they are good enough for my own private amusement, I doubt very much that they would sell on the market. I have also come up with several games after the invention of ***Tile Chess,*** but none of these have met with more than mild enthusiasm. The lesson here is that persistence pays. Not every idea you come up with will make it.

Also, the games that you design should reflect your passion. If you cannot be enthused about your game, who will be? My passion is chess, so I came up with a game that lets me do things with chess that have never been done before. I enjoyed creating ***Tile Chess,*** and I hope that you will enjoy playing it.

by Steve Kenson

Art by andi jones

The ***Aberrant*** RPG from White Wolf Games Studio features a world transformed by the presence of "novas," people with super-human powers. The year is 2008, and novas first "erupted" in 1998. Their presence has revolutionized technology, politics, entertainment, society, and culture. From a handful of individuals, the number of novas has grown until there are some 6,000 of them by the start of the game described in the main rulebook. Roughly one person out of every million is a nova, making them rare indeed.

Aberrant turns many of the conventions of the super hero comics on their heads. For example, novas don't become "super criminals" simply because it's far easier to sign a multi-million dollar endorsement contract with Nike or Disney than it is to use your super-powers to rob banks. Also unlike the comics, novas have a real and measurable impact on the world around them. They don't just limit themselves to catching muggers and stopping the occasional armored megalomaniac from conquering the world, they clean up the environment, invent new technologies, stop wars (and occasionally, fight in them), and really make a difference.

One of the other comic book staples ***Aberrant*** challenges is the demographics of the average super hero universe. Most comic books would have us believe 99% of the super humans in the world live in the United States. In fact, in the Marvel Comics universe, 99% of super humans live in Manhattan! This is not surprising for the comics, which want to appeal to a primarily American audience. However, in ***Aberrant***, novas are distributed more evenly across the world's population. *Anyone* can erupt into a nova, from a teenager in Montana to an old woman in sub-Saharan Africa. If we take the "one in a million" figure for the nova population, and assume novas are fairly evenly distributed across Earth's population, we get some very interesting figures that can provide ***Aberrant*** Storytellers and players with plenty of character and adventure hooks.

The fact that Earth's population reached 6 billion has made the news recently. ***Aberrant*** takes place in 2008, with an average world population growth of 1.3%, so the world population is probably closer to seven billion by then, but the numbers work well using current figures, taken from the CIA World Fact Book. Storytellers interested in more exact figures can use the individual population growth percentages of each nation to estimate its 2008 population. The changes wrought by the novas themselves, such as cures for AIDS and many diseases, and the alleviation of starvation in many nations, plus things like wars and natural disasters, provide Storytellers with some "wiggle room" to alter population figures a bit more, if desired.

Running the Numbers

The ***Aberrant*** rulebook says there are 6,000 known novas world-wide in 2008. According to current world population figures, more than one-third of these novas (around 2,246 of them) come from China and India alone. China has the largest nova population by far, 1,246, closely followed by India's 1,000 novas.

This fact alone yields some startling ideas. At the very least, Chinese and Indian culture are going to start influencing

the world in art, music, food, and fashion simply because of the number of novas they have. It's little wonder that India has become the film capital of the world in 2008, cities like New Delhi are practically brimming with potential nova stars, along with brilliant nova artists. Indian novas are also extremely strongly influenced by their religion (as described in the ***Aberrant Storyteller's Screen***). Many Indian novas consider themselves avatars of various Hindu gods, and lead cults that worship them as such. What happens when two novas claiming to be avatars of the same god come into conflict? What about novas who deny their "divine" nature, despite the best efforts of normal people to worship them?

The tremendous number of Chinese novas may be one of the reasons why China is a dominant world power by the era of ***Aberrant's*** sister game ***Trinity***. Interestingly enough, China originally repressed and imprisoned its novas, leading many to flee to other parts of the world. What happens when a nova who's been treated badly -- and has the power to do something about it -- decides to retaliate against the Chinese government? How will player character novas react when they're called upon to protect China against a vengeful victim of nova persecution? What about when the Chinese democracy movement gets going again, but led this time by a Mega-Charismatic nova? Will it be Tiananmen Square all over again, only with nova powers instead of tanks?

North America

One in a Million

North America's distribution of novas fits the conventions of the comics fairly well, at least at first glance. America has some 272 novas based on population, concentrated around major cities like New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Houston, and Detroit. Novas are also likely to migrate to urban areas once they've erupted, seeking fame and fortune in the big city. Of course, that doesn't mean smaller cities and towns might not have their own native novas, and "home town heroes" may come back to visit (presenting enemies with an opportunity when the nova is away from the bright lights of the big city). Imagine being the only nova from, say, New Hampshire or Wyoming, and having the adulation of your entire state. Now imagine you haven't lived up to what "the folks back home" expect from you and imagine their ire.

Where things diverge from the comics is in applying the population statistics to the number of American novas. Of those 272 American novas, around 226 are Caucasian or Latino, 33 are black, 11 are Asian, and 2 are Native American. 138 of them are women, and around 27 of them are gay, cutting across the ethnic lines. Not exactly the typical makeup of a super hero team. Some are as young as in their teens, while others may be 60 or more years old. Most are in their 20s and 30s. What's it like to be one of the only Native American novas in the world? How do you handle the responsibility of representing your tribe and your people? What about being a gay nova? Do you join the Queer Nova Alliance or stay "in the closet" and risk being "outed" or, worse yet, blackmailed because of your secret?

Canada has around 24 novas of its own, six or seven of whom are of French ancestry. Canadian novas may stay at home, where there's considerably less competition, or join up with an international organization like Project Utopia. The Canadian viewpoint tends to be slanted more towards international cooperation than their American cousins, so Canadian novas probably make good agents for Utopia. On the other hand, Canadian novas might head south to the United States looking for better commercial endorsements and opportunities. That could lead to some resentment and accusations about the U.S.A. "stealing" Canada's nova population.

Things get really interesting when we get down to Mexico, which gets 100 novas based on population, four times as many as Canada and more than a third as many as the United States. Not only that, but the vast majority of Mexican novas come from poor families, making them eager to use their powers to earn fame and fortune for themselves and their families. The novox singer Alejandra from the ***Aberrant*** book is a prime example of a Mexican nova. It's little

wonder that Project Utopia chose Mexico City as home for Team Tomorrow North America rather than any city in the less-friendly United States. It seems like Alejandra handled her own rags-to-riches story well, but how will other novas react to going from poor and helpless to super-powerful and filthy rich?

South America

Heading south from Mexico, we see some interesting numbers in the nova populations of South America. Argentina qualifies for 36 novas of its own, and Columbia has 39 in an even smaller nation. Some Colombian novas may decide to take up with groups like Project Utopia, but just as many others might take the opportunity to seize control of the drug-business in their country, or simply work as high-paid enforcers from the Colombian drug-lords, earning millions using their abilities. They present a challenge for novas like Team Tomorrow looking to end the international drug trade.

Brazil, the largest nation in South America, has a whopping 172 novas by population, more than the rest of South America put together. Again, a great many of these novas are likely to come from poor families, and be eager to use their abilities to earn them fame and fortune. Brazilian novas might sign on with any of the factions in the ***Aberrant*** world, or they might stay at home, building technological and entertainment industries in Brazil that help lead to it becoming a world power in the 22nd century setting of ***Trinity***. Brazilian novas may become involved in struggles over the environment in Brazil, particularly the preservation of the Amazon Rain forest. Some of those 172 novas might come from either side of the conflict: businessmen and farmer on the one side, looking to make a living by clearing forest land, environmentalists and local tribes on the other side trying to prevent the clearing of the rainforest.

Overall, South American novas account for a significant fraction of the world nova population. That's likely to contribute to the growth of Latino culture in the United States and elsewhere. The political conflicts in South America are also fertile ground for nova "elites" -- super-powered mercenaries for hire. Nova soldiers can fight brush wars across South and Central America, conflicts much bloodier than the four-color battles from the comic books. Novas can also try and seize political power for themselves. One could build an entire ***Aberrant*** campaign around a small group of novas setting themselves up as the rulers of their own banana republic. Maybe they're just out for power, or maybe they really want to oust a corrupt government and change things for the better. Is that really so different from what Project Utopia does?

Europe

Most of the nations of Europe qualify for at least a few novas of their own, anywhere from Ireland's three or four to Germany's 82 novas, many of them from families that came to the country fleeing violence in Eastern Europe (giving them good reason to want to see such conflicts ended, or perhaps good reason to seek revenge). The United Kingdom has 59 novas, including five Scots, and possibly a Welsh nova and one or two from Northern Ireland. How do Northern Irish novas stand on independence for their homeland? Italy has 56 novas of its own, while France has 59. Most other nations have between 4-10 novas to call their own. The patchwork of European borders, culture, and politics makes it likely for European novas to both move freely across nations and also difficult for them to forget where they came from. European novas make up a significant portion of Project Utopia and other groups, but they're still a minority compared to the number of novas from other continents.

One "nation" in Europe that might be overlooked is Vatican City, which could have the largest per capita population of novas in the world. Not because of its size (the Holy See has less than a thousand permanent residents), but because so many novas are likely to be Roman Catholic. With a billion Catholics in the world, there should be around 1,000 Catholic novas worldwide, particularly from Europe and South and Central America. Although many of these may be non-practicing, a number of devout novas are likely to offer their services to the Mother Church, giving the Vatican its own force of novas to act as missionaries, bodyguards for the Pope, and so forth. It's quite likely there are at least a few nova priests and nuns, some of whom took their vows before they erupted. Setting up the player characters as members of a "God squad" of novas working for the Catholic Church can make for an interesting game, especially when the novas become embroiled in church politics and discover things are not quite as simple as their parish priest made it sound.

Middle East

The Middle East is a region of conflict today and it hasn't changed that much by 2008. Several Middle Eastern nations have significant nova populations, particularly Iran with 65 novas. Neighboring Iraq comes out with only 22 by comparison, leaving it well behind Iran in the nova "arms race." Iraqi and Irani novas might fight border wars alongside hired nova elites. On the other hand, the conservative Islamic bias against novas may drive many of them out of their homelands and into organizations like Utopia or the Teragen, or turn them into leaders of their own religious cults. More moderate Saudi Arabia, with its 21 local novas, may lure away other Islamic and Arabic novas with healthy salaries and more opportunities than they could find at home. Then there's always rumors (detailed in the ***Aberrant Storyteller's Screen***) about the fringe Islamic cult that believes novas are not only the chosen of Allah, but that one can gain the benefit of their blessing . . . by *eating* them.

A notable exception in the Middle East is Israel, which should have five or six novas of its own by population, but in fact has none that have appeared publicly. Given the tense conditions in Israel, surrounded on all sides by potential enemies with many of their own novas, it seems unlikely that no one there has erupted into a nova. Are there any Israeli novas? If so, where are they? It might be that the government is secretly recruiting Israeli novas for a secret special-ops force. Or perhaps they're doing something else with native novas, from imprisoning them as a "security risk" to dissecting them to learn more about how their powers work. What happens if a player character is the first public nova from Israel? How does it feel to have the hopes of a whole nation, a whole ethnic group, on your shoulders? (To say nothing of all the ready-made enemies you get as part of the bargain).

Africa

The Dark Continent has a *lot* of novas on the basis of population. It also has a lot of problems for novas to address, probably one of the reasons Project Utopia made it their worldwide headquarters. Ethiopia, terraformed into a tropical paradise, already has 59 novas of its own, almost half as many as nations like Japan and Russia. Nearly 60 Ethiopian super-beings with the power to change the world . . . how would they use it? Ethiopia is living proof of how the presence of novas has transformed the world of 2008. What will they do for an encore?

The sheer population of many African nations gives them the potential to be home to many novas. Egypt has 67 novas of its own, and Nigeria alone qualifies for 113 novas, more than Mexico, and nearly as many as Japan. The desert nations of Africa tend to have smaller populations, and correspondingly smaller numbers of novas, Libya is likely to have only four or five novas, while Niger has only 10. With Nigeria under the control of a ruthless dictator and neighboring Niger allied with Project Utopia, but having only a tiny handful of local novas, the potential for conflict is ripe. Africa is another place where novas might try setting themselves up as dictators (or elected officials), rulers of their own nations.

South Africa should have some 43 novas of its own, only six of whom are likely to be white. Still, if even only one of those white novas is a supremacist -- and happens to be powerful enough -- things in that nation could change overnight. How would the player characters react to a return to apartheid in South Africa? Would they react differently if the black majority (led by a Mega-Charismatic nova) began repressing the white minority?

Asia

We've already looked at the thousands of novas from China and India, but there are plenty more from the other nations of Asia and the Pacific. Japan alone qualifies for 126 novas, nearly half as many as the United States and more than Mexico. Japan's Nippontai team shouldn't be lacking for potential members, even counting the novas who hire on with major corporations, or leave Japan to join up with Project Utopia or some other organization. Japanese culture loves its novas, giving them very little reason to look outside their country for opportunities. Imagine the same fervor Japanese kids put into anime going towards novas. How do the player characters handle being the subjects of such fervent adoration?

Southeast Asia is home to plenty of novas. Thailand qualifies for 60 of them, Vietnam has 77, and Cambodia has 11.

These war-torn nations are fertile ground for spawning elites, and the wars for them to fight in. Little surprise that Hong Kong is home to Novelty Consulting, one of the largest elite agencies in the world. An elite campaign could easily be based around events going on in southeast Asia, perhaps with the player characters starting up their own elite agency, hiring out their services to the highest bidder.

Russia certainly shouldn't be overlooked and, with a nova population of 146, it probably won't be, although its number of novas certainly pales to those in neighboring China. Russian novas are most likely to gravitate towards Europe and the brighter lights and opportunities there, but there are still plenty of things novas can do in Russia. There are terraforming opportunities in Siberia, as well as a lot of land for novas looking to get away from it all. Russian industry and politics are ripe with opportunities for novas with the right abilities.

Australia has a mere 18 or so novas based on its population. Perhaps one of them might be an aborigine, but most are likely to be Caucasian, with one or two Asians. Australian novas may leave home for better opportunities in Africa or India (especially those who aspire to media stardom or want to become elites) or they might stay and try to make Australia a better place. A lone aborigine nova trying to save the culture and identity of his or her people is only one possibility. The Australian outback presents a great opportunity for terraforming, although nova terraformers might run into those trying to protect the aborigines, leading to a conflict.

One in a Million

Playing the Numbers

What does all this information mean for an ***Aberrant*** game? Players can use some of these ideas to look beyond the standard super hero stereotypes when building characters. Sure they could play a group of characters who are all from the United States (there are certainly enough American novas), but if the characters are part of an international organization like Project Utopia or the Teragen, then why not consider a character from another part of the world? Imagine a nova from Bosnia, Thailand, Argentina, or Nigeria. Imagine being the sole nova representative of a particular ethnic or social minority or nation. How would they react to being given the power to change the world? What would they do with it?

Since the circumstances of a nova's "eruption" often influences his or her powers, players should consider the kinds of stressful situations people from other nations might find themselves in, situations that could trigger an eruption into a nova. What about living in a nation with military death-squads or a totalitarian government? What about the crisis brought about by slowly starving to death or dying of a plague?

Consider the different religious and cultural experiences of characters and the influence that may have on their nova identity. Indian novas, for example, often have a religious dimension to their eruption and their powers. Some even consider themselves avatars of various Hindu gods. Chinese novas may incorporate Taoist symbolism and ideals. They may also face government persecution or control.

For Storytellers, an international scope opens up the true potential of the ***Aberrant*** setting. The actions of novas impact the entire world. They cannot afford to limit their views to one nation or culture. Stories can take nova characters to any nation, and the characters can encounter other novas from all over the world. Project Utopia novas might go to Macedonia to stop a war one week, to the Sahara Desert on a terraforming mission the next, to Japan on a diplomatic job after that, and so forth. Just a quick look at the "current problems" section of each nation in the CIA Fact Book can give Storyteller's almost endless story ideas.

The above ideas also work well for other "realistic" super hero settings Pinnacle's ***Brave New World*** or Pulsar Games' ***Blood of Heroes***, and GMs of more traditional comic book super hero RPGs can still use a visit to another nation or a

hero or villain from an unexpected place to liven up the game. The international flavor of Chris Claremont's ***X-Men*** from *Giant Size X-Men #1* is a fine example. Taking the rest of the world into account can help those "one in a million" characters to really stand out from the crowd.

William Maxwell Aitken, Lord Beverbrook, once observed, "Business is more exciting than any game." I have more sense than to take that position in this forum, but judging from the questions I have heard over the years from fans, business is certainly more confusing than any game. "Blue Sky - Red Herring" will endeavor each month to pull back the curtain a bit and expose some of the business thinking behind the actions game companies take to succeed, or sometimes, just to stay afloat. But before diving into this first column, I must step out from behind my own curtain and give a little background information.

Blue Sky

Companies in the world of gaming are famous for having an optimistic attitude. Press releases and marketing materials from any company in our industry are jam packed with statements like "the best" and "most innovative" and "unique." In the wider world of business these are called "blue sky statements," because they focus on the beautiful blue sky instead of the mud on the ground. Nevertheless, the blue sky is important, and this column will certainly focus on the good things that happen here. Still, it's important not to be caught in the glow and lose all perspective.

Red Herring

Hence the Red Herring. When a company goes public, it has to publish a prospectus, which is always accompanied by a federally mandated warning known to the financial world as the "red herring." This warning is always printed on the cover of the book, and in the brightest red ink the printer can manage. The wording ends, "investors who rely on [these] statements do so at their own risk." While we're looking up at the blue sky of the gaming business, we'll also be keeping our eyes on the red herring.

Your Humble Correspondent

I suppose that I should say a few words about my own experience in the business of gaming. I started working in the gaming industry in 1991. I worked for three years for the FASA spin-off Virtual World Entertainment. I was the manager of the ***BattleTech*** Center in Chicago, and I ended my time with them as the Director of Special Projects, which included a stint on a traveling VR carnival in Boston and a couple of months opening the ***BattleTech*** Outpost in Houston, TX. After leaving VWE, I became the Executive Producer of Entertainment Applications for VictorMaxx Technologies, a company that made consumer grade virtual reality helmets. My next job in the industry was Director of Licensing and New Media for Steve Jackson Games. Currently, I am a graduate student, which has returned my objectivity and given me the opportunity to do more freelancing, including this column. I am interested in hearing what you would like to learn about the business of gaming. I always monitor the .sjgames, .pyramid, and .gamebiz discussion boards. I also accept direct e-mail at micahj@io.com.

Publicity Stunts 101

Or, Pay No Attention to that Man Behind the Curtain

As if by providence, one big topic of water cooler conversation among gamers over the last two weeks has been about the business of gaming. Specifically, we've been thinking about the net-based publicity stunt which White Wolf executed to draw attention to its new game, Hunter: The Reckoning. The details are public knowledge, but in case you missed them, the two Industry News stories, White Wolf Sold . . . Maybe, and White Wolf Sold? Not., should catch you up. In addition, last week's Second Sight and the discussions on the boards should familiarize you with the popular threads of argument regarding the intentions of White Wolf management and the fan reaction.

Hunter: The Reckoning is the sixth game in the *World of Darkness* series, and it focuses on the mundane hunters who are bent on destroying the supernatural denizens of the WOD. The Hunters are suspicious of the supernatural creatures that manipulate the world from behind the scenes, and of the governmental influences that interfere with their work. The two points of the stunt were clear. One -- to generate a lot of interest in the company and the game, and two -- to

introduce a pair of in-character websites designed to be resources for players of the game. It certainly did both. In fact, lots of people did talk about White Wolf and its new game in the wake of the stunt, and anonymous-liberty.com and hunter-net.org got introduced to thousands of potential players. Representatives of White Wolf say that hits on their front page have increased over 5,000 a day, and the two new websites were visited, in only the first few days, by over 15,000 fans. By sheer numbers, this stunt was successful. However, because of the way the promotion was executed, it may have far-reaching unintended consequences. Nevertheless, I do not want to dwell on the perceived errors of our colleagues. I would rather look into the history of adventure gaming promotions to find examples of these goals being executed better and more cleanly. By looking at these excellent promotions, we will learn how to do them right. For in-character websites, the best work is being done for ***Delta Green.*** As far as promotions designed to get fans talking, the undisputed champion is FASA Corporation's UCAS Election stunt of 1996. Let us look at each in turn.

Delta-Green.com

When Pagan Publishing released ***Delta Green*** in 1997, the gaming world was very impressed. Many people described the modern-day setting for ***Call of Cthulhu*** as "*The X-Files* on steroids." The story of a rogue conspiracy within the government aware of the Mythos captured the imaginations of its fans. Within the game world, cells communicate with each other through e-mail and the World Wide Web. It seemed natural to have the players' official website, Delta-Green.com, appear to be the characters' official website as well. As is clear from the thousands of hits the site gets each month, it has worked beautifully.

The greeting on the home page is from Case Officer "Christopher," the webmaster, and the other members of Cell A, the leaders of the conspiracy. The site calls creator Tynes-Cowan Corporation a "front company." Scenarios are "case histories." Non-Player Characters appear in the form of prose descriptions of regular people as if in a corporate biography. Game statistics are clearly marked as being for use during "simulation exercises." Despite these nods to the game world, ***Delta Green's*** designers present the site in a tongue-in-cheek manner. In-character text appears in the center of the document. The margins of each page are filled with out of character information. It is unlikely that someone would truly be taken in by the website and believe that Delta Green exists. However, someone who is inclined to suspend disbelief for a while will find that it is easy to do. In fact, Christopher told me, "Our goal certainly is to make the tone and language of the site engrossing enough to provide the feel of Delta Green, but we've never set out to make anyone think it's the truth." Delta-Green.com makes it a simple matter to obtain information about the game in a manner and environment appropriate to the game-world.

Christopher describes the goal of Delta-Green.com as to be "an entertaining read for fans of conspiracy horror, as well as a vital resource for gamers in the genre." Therein hangs the first lesson of marketing stunts. They must clearly be stunts. Delta-Green's website is not designed to deceive, it is designed to mislead. The difference is crucial. Only those people who want to play will be able to do so. Others will not be affected.

The UCAS Election of 2057

In our world, the year was 1996. In ***Shadowrun's*** Sixth world, it was also election time. Suffering under a scandal that tore apart the United Canadian and American States and resulted in the impeachment of the president, six candidates presented themselves for the next election. Among the candidates, including a dwarf, a mage, a fanatical humanist, a retired General, and the sitting Vice-President, stood the grand dragon, Dunkelzahn. The popular host of the talk show Wyrm Talk, and very rich, Dunkelzahn was very popular with the electorate. The race was on.

FASA had released books that altered the game world before. The creative and strong hand of the line developer would regularly shake the ***BattleTech*** universe, for example. In an unusual twist, FASA left the presidency of the UCAS to the fans. Bound into each copy of the election sourcebook, ***Super Tuesday,*** was a postcard ballot. The ballot had space for your name and address (marketing information), your SIN (optional, of course), and your vote. I remember gleefully marking my ballot (Vogel/Grey - Democratic One World Party) and sending it off to the FASA offices. Election results would be announced, and the new president inaugurated, at that year's Gen Con. FASA had quite a history of excellent Gen Con promotions. It had not been that long since fans had been invited to the wedding of the popular Hanse Davion to the beautiful heiress, Melissa Steiner. Fans were expecting another such production. What

they got was far more involved.

FASA has a great history of giving premiums to the fans who purchase games at their booth. On Thursday and Friday, they were up to their old tricks. People who bought games received laminated badges proclaiming them as members of the Press Corps for one of the various candidates. The convention hall was dotted with people proclaiming their allegiance to one of the candidates in the latest election. Nevertheless, the announcement had been made, Dunkelzahn the dragon had captured the presidency. Friday night's party was also the inaugural ball for the new President. Some industry people and other well-known fans were wearing a seventh style of badge, giving them VIP access to Dunkelzahn's inauguration.

Marketing types at Gen Con were already impressed, but the best was yet to come. Running throughout the convention was the annual ***Shadowrun*** tournament. As always, it was a ladder arrangement wherein the winners of each round advanced to the next round. By the time the finals came around, only the best, most-dedicated ***Shadowrun*** players were still playing. Not surprisingly, the theme of the scenarios was the election of Dunkelzahn. As the players advanced through the tournament, they got closer in time and access to Dunkelzahn's inauguration. The final round ran in the last slot on Friday night. The characters had been hired as unofficial additional security for the inauguration. However, just after the ceremony, President Dunkelzahn's limousine exploded in a magically active fireball, and all inside were killed, including the Grand Dragon himself. Needless to say, the players took it personally. The news of Dunkelzahn's death spread quickly through the convention, largely due to the players who were there, complete with guilt-ridden explanations that there was nothing they could do.

The FASA team had been busy overnight. In the morning, the convention hall was plastered with flyers bearing a news story and a banner headline -- Dunkelzahn Assassinated! People were stunned. In addition, the FASA booth staff was wearing t-shirts bearing an image of Dunkelzahn on the front. On the back it said, "Due to unforeseen circumstances, Wyrm Talk has been canceled for the 2058 season." Also, a new badge was available. This one, granting admission to Dunkelzahn's memorial service, is still a prized possession of this author, and plenty of other people.

There was also a new product, ***Portrait of a Dragon: Dunkelzahn's Secrets.*** This book was in the form of the deceased's will. Outside the game world, it was pages and pages of adventure seeds and scenario ideas. The title is ambiguous, and might even have appeared on their release schedule. But nobody I talked to expected anything like this. The whole promotion was planned at least a year in advance and was masterfully executed at every step.

This story demonstrates the second through fourth principles of promotional stunts. This bit of brilliant marketing took place entirely within the game world. Nothing affected or threatened anything outside of the ***Shadowrun*** universe. Similarly, the entire project was acted out with plenty of forethought and planning. FASA developers and writers thought through the potential consequences completely. They knew what would and what might happen. They were prepared for every eventuality. Finally, it was fun. Even Dunkelzahn's fans thought so. There were many intense arguments at breakfast that day, but since they seemed to center on whether Dunkelzahn had been assassinated because he was too powerful, or because he was an idiot, it was clear that fans were energized, not alienated, by the death of a popular character.

The Payoff

To sum up: Marketing for games is vitally important. It is also extremely complicated. That said, special events can be excellent publicity. Still, planning a good promotion is best left to the professionals. Failing that, it should at least take into account these four principles. 1) It should clearly be a stunt, internally consistent to be sure, but clearly a stunt. 2) Its effects should exist entirely within the game world. No real person or institution should be affected or appear to be affected. 3) When allowing other people to take part in the activity, the possible reactions should be thought through, and planned for. 4) It should be as fun as possible for anyone involved.

Delta-Green.com and FASA's Election Campaign demonstrate all that can go right with game industry marketing events. Hey! Net Punks! Are you listening?

Faith-Based Magic

by Jeremy Seeley

Art by andi jones

GURPS adventuring parties are filled with characters that have a Magery of 3, with only the occasional PC having a Magery of 2, or much less often a 1. This is not realistic, as Magery should be an innate ability that naturally occurs (when it does) in varying degrees, and not automatically min-maxed for the power gamer's pleasure. Priests are usually nothing but a Mage-variant, and are not treated with the full respect that they deserve as devout followers of the divine. In this variant, all of the standard ***GURPS*** magic rules, as presented in the ***Basic Set, Magic,*** and ***Grimoire,*** are still in effect, except for changes noted below.

A spell may be attempted at a skill as low as 4, instead of the old minimum of 12. This allows a character to be truly inept at magic, and also lets a character learn and grow into a more powerful spellcaster, rather than being written up from the start as one. The fumbling wizard is a legitimate character, seen in the movies *Krull* and *Willow,* for example These wizards continually messed up their spells, and they often resulted in a critical failure. This rule change also allows a prerequisite spell to be learned at 4, making it possible to learn the bare minimum and slide on by.

In addition to the use of Fatigue and Health, this variant system allows characters to develop certain "spell point" thresholds as well. Mages have Mana Threshold and Priests have Faith Threshold. These are separate pools, and are explained below.

Faith and Magical Aptitude (also explained in detail below) are not mutually exclusive. A Mage may also be a Priest. In fact, a Priest may even have Magical Resistance, as it has no effect on Priest spells. Although the character can use Fatigue or Health for either, remember that the two Thresholds are separate. Also, knowing a spell as a Priest has no effect on spell requirements as a Mage.

Many GMs may want to put a cap on the level of Magical Aptitude or Faith that a character has, as well as determine which variants are available. It is suggested that a beginning character spend no more than 125 points on Magical Aptitude or Faith.

It is also suggested that all characters that expect to ever have Magical Aptitude begin play with a minimum level of one; additional levels can be developed through play at the usual double cost. Faith, on the other hand, can be developed at any time in the character's life. It may or may not have the double cost -- it is up to the GM to decide this, and it may be doubled at only specific times, or under certain circumstances, or always be at normal cost . . . all depending on the whims of the character's deity.

Increased Power

A mage or priest may cast a spell at an intensity that is not normally allowed by the rules. By using more time as well as power, the character can magnify the spell by up to ten times. Using this option, a Flame Jet may do up to 30d, provided the character concentrates for 10 seconds and spends 30 points of energy. For spells that inflict no damage, but are resisted instead, such as Enslavement, each additional multiple is worth a -2 penalty to the target's resistance roll. The cost for a -18 would be 10 times normal, as would the casting time.

Keep in mind that the usual effects of high skill apply to Increased Power as normal. So, a skill of 21 -- worth a -2 to

cost and the casting time halved -- would modify the 10 seconds of concentration and 30 energy for the 30d Flame Jet in the example above to 5 seconds of concentration and 28 points of energy.

Faster Spellcasting

A character may expend more energy in order to reduce the time necessary to cast a spell. The cost is 4 additional energy per second saved. This is applied after the effects of high skill are determined. Therefore, a spell that requires 1 second of concentration may be cast instantly by expending 4 more energy while casting it; this additional cost has no bearing on the cost to maintain a spell. For a spell that requires 10 seconds, the additional cost would be 40 in order to make it instant. This means that the 30d Flame Jet that takes 10 seconds of concentration would cost 70 points of energy if attempted instantly. If the character has a 21 skill in Flame Jet, then he would just need to reduce it by 5 seconds, costing him 20 additional energy, for a total cost of 48 points of energy.

The Cost of Magical Aptitude and Faith

The Faith and Magical Aptitude advantages have the Standard Point Cost, as shown in the table below. The variants of Magical Aptitude are detailed in ***GURPS Compendium I,*** on pages 39 and 40. The variants that cost 50% are Dance Magery, Dark-Aspected Magery, Moon-Aspected Magery, Musical Magery, Star-Aspected Magery, and Sun-Aspected Magery. The variants that cost 60% are College-Restricted Magery, Solitary Magery, and Song Magery.

Standard		**Variants**	
Level	**Point Cost**	**50% Cost**	**60% Cost**
1	1	0.5	0.5
2	2	1	1
3	3	1.5	2
4	4	2	2.5
5	5	2.5	3
6	6	3	3.5
7	7	3.5	4
8	8	4	5
9	9	4.5	5.5
10	10	5	6
11	15	7.5	9
12	25	12.5	15
13	35	17.5	21
14	45	22.5	27
15	60	30	36
16	80	40	48
17	100	50	60
18	125	62.5	75
19	150	75	90
20	175	87.5	105
21	200	100	120
22	225	112.5	135

23	250	125	150
24	275	137.5	165
25	300	150	180
26	325	162.5	195
27	350	175	210
28	375	187.5	225
29	400	200	240
30	425	212.5	255
+1	+25 each	+12.5 each	+15 each

Magical Aptitude

This advantage is based on the advantage of the same name on p. 21 of the ***GURPS Basic Set.*** The ability to cast spells, and to detect magic, is no longer based on the character's IQ. Instead, his Magical Aptitude level is the determining factor. So a Mage with a Magical Aptitude of 14 will roll against a 14 to detect magic, and base his spells as M/H or M/VH on 14. Magical Aptitude is an inborn talent, not a matter of intelligence (though IQ still plays a factor in the use of magic, see below).

Many spells require a specific level of Magical Aptitude. Spells that require a Magery of 1 can be used by a character with a Magical Aptitude of 5; spells that require a Magery of 2 can be used by a character with a Magical Aptitude of 10; and spells that require a Magery of 3 can be used by a character with a Magical Aptitude of 15.

Some races and special character types start with some level of Magery. To convert, the points for the advantage are merely transferred towards the development of the character's Magical Aptitude. For example, Magery 1 grants 15 points towards the new advantage, Magery 2 grants 25, and Magery 3 grants 35.

IQ and Magic

Above-average IQ gives a bonus to all spells a character knows. The bonus is +1 for an IQ of 11, +2 for an IQ of 13, +3 for IQ 15, +4 for IQ 17, +5 for IQ 19, etc. IQ still plays a central role in the development of a character's magical abilities.

An IQ check is required in order to learn a spell. The character point is spent, and then the IQ check is rolled. Success means that the character has successfully learned the spell, at the level as determined normally. A critical success results in the character getting a free character point in the spell as well, for a total of two. Failure means that the character has wasted a character point. A critical failure not only means that a point was wasted, but that the character actually has a spell ineptitude with that particular spell, and he may *never* learn it.

Mana Threshold

A character's Mana Threshold is equal to his Magical Aptitude multiplied by 10. For example, a Magical Aptitude of 12 fives a character a Mana Threshold of 120. This Mana Threshold refreshes itself at a rate of (Magical Aptitude) + (HT) per 24 hours, which may be given back to the character all at once, or spread out over the day, depending on the GM's wishes. For example, a character with Magical Aptitude 12 and HT 10 will regain 22 Mana per day, or almost 1 per hour.

Faith

Faith uses the same magic system as Magical Aptitude. However, given its different origin, it has many special differences. There are no variants to Faith, but most religions require certain vows or other disadvantages.

IQ has no effect on Priest magic, but neither does Magical Resistance. Priests may follow the basic magic rules, but the Mana level has no effect on their powers. Their powers are effects generated through prayers to their deity, not the channeling of Mana.

Faith provides the ability to cast spells, more appropriately termed prayers. These are M/H or M/VH skills that are based on the character's Faith advantage. A character's Faith Threshold is equal to his Faith advantage, added to 1/2 of any levels of Power Investiture that he has, multiplied by 10. Therefore, a character with a Faith of 14 (and now levels of Power Investiture) would have 140 points in his Faith Threshold. The Faith Threshold is recharged through prayer and meditation. The rate is equal to one half of the total of the character's Faith plus levels of Power Investiture per hour of worship. Our aforementioned Priest with a Faith of 14 will regain 7 points per hour of worship.

The Power Investiture advantage is described on p. 42 of ***GURPS Compendium I.*** It is usually reserved as a gift from an organized religion for great service. All characters must have Clerical Investment, as on p. 22 of the same book, to get any rank within the religion. However, it should be noted that Faith, Power Investiture, and the level of Clerical Investment do not necessarily affect one another. They usually do, but it is not always the case. And a remember, Power Investiture grants a +1 per level bonus to the character's priest spells. When creating a character's religion, the player and GM should work together. ***GURPS Religion*** can be a great asset here, obviously. Below are several advantages, their costs, and an example in their use in the definition of a Priest character.

Religion Template Elements

Clerical Investment. Cost: 5/level. Level 1 is a minimal requirement.
Danger Sense. Cost: 15. Treat as the advantage on p. 20 of the ***Basic Set,*** using Faith instead of IQ.
Divine Favor. Cost: Variable. Some deities choose favorites, for whatever reason.
Medium. Cost: 10. Some religions can see the spirit realm.
Oracle. Cost: 15. In many religions it is possible to receive signs.
Power Investiture. Cost: 10/level. If a character serves his religion well, he may be blessed with this advantage.
Recognize other members of the religion on sight. Cost: 5.
Spell Casting. Cost: 1/spell. The character may learn any of the prayers that are taught by his religion. Each spell learned is at the 1/2-point level, which may be developed further as normal. The other 1/2-point was "wasted." This is not all that bad, as the prayers ignore the spell requirements that govern the magic of Mages. Of course, the character's available spell pool is generally quite limited as compared to that of a Mage.
Spell Casting Bonus. Cost: 10/level All spells are at a skill bonus of +1 per level Usually the limit is +3.
-5 to -15 **Discipline of Faith.** Cost: -5 to -15. These are the fundamental rules of the religion, and are treated like a Vow.
Sense of Duty to followers of the religion. Cost: -15.

Sample Religion

Priest Template for a generic "Healing" deity:

Character Point Cost: 35

Advantages: Clerical Investment level 1 (5), Faith 10 (10), Literacy (10), and Spell Casting Bonus +3 (30).

Disadvantages: Cannot Harm Innocents (-10), Sense of Duty to the followers of the religion (-15).

Prayers: (Note that these all cost 1 point to get at the 1/2-point level, and are based on Faith +3, counting the Spell Bonus advantage): Awaken 10, Cleansing 10, Major Healing 9, Minor Healing 10, and Recover Strength 10. This is 5 prayers at the 1/2-point level for 5 character points.

Prayers Available: (These are prayers that the Priest may learn throughout his development): Awaken, Body-Reading, Cleansing, Cure Addiction, Cure Dehydration, Cure Disease, Cure Insanity, Cure Starvation, Detect Poison, Healing Slumber, Instant Neutralize Poison, Instant Regeneration, Instant Restoration, Lend Health, Lend Strength, Major Healing, Minor Healing, Neutralize Poison, Recover Strength, Regeneration, Relieve Addiction, Relieve Madness, Relieve Paralysis, Relieve Sickness, Resist Disease, Resist Poison, Restoration, Restore Hearing, Restore Memory, Restore Sight, Restore Speech, Resurrection, Share Health, Share Strength, Sterilize, Stop Bleeding, Stop Paralysis, and Stop Spasm.

With Friends Like These

by Rik Kershaw-Moore

Art by andi jones

Introduction

These rules were worked out a few years a go whilst at university. I've played them in a number of different houses with a number of different people, and in every case they proved not only popular but immensely fun. In one house I played in, it became common to see one housemate microwaving her letters before opening them just in case someone had planted something nasty in there. If you wish to try these "house" rules, you will of course need a copy of ***Killer*** from Steve Jackson Games.

Basic Rules and Aims

As with all other ***Killer*** games, the idea of ***House Killer*** is to kill everyone who is participating. The main difference is that all the targets live in the same house and all the kills must be accomplished within said house. The winner is the person who at the end of the game has gathered the most points.

Participation & Game Length

Before you begin you need to appoint one person as the Huntmaster. This person is then responsible for ensuring everything goes according to plan, that the rules (such as they are) are not infringed, that players are not being victimized, and to be an arbiter in any dispute over kills. Finally, and most unusually, the Huntmaster is positively encouraged to play.

Next, the Huntmaster needs to get the consent of everyone who wishes to play. This should be done in a face to face encounter and not via proxy.

The game length is variable and is totally up to the Huntmaster and participants. Games can last anytime from an entire semester down to just a few days. From experience, I've discovered that the ideal length is three to four weeks.

Once everyone has signed up, the Huntmaster should post on a notice board the list of players, the start and end date and time of the game, and the points list. Next to this the Huntmaster should also put the score card.

If people wish to drop out then they should not only inform the Huntmaster in person but should also post a written message to that effect on their door. Once a player has dropped out they cannot rejoin the game. There are two exceptions to this:

If the player is sick, he may temporarily withdraw from the game by putting a red cross on the outside of his door. This cross should stay there for the duration of the illness, or until the Huntmaster deems them fit to continue, since

malingering is positively discouraged.

Secondly, each player has three excuses given to them by the Huntmaster. These excuses are basically a sheet of paper with the word Excuse written on it in large letters. When a player wishes to put his excuse into action he simply hangs it on his door, and there it must stay for a full 24 hours. During this time no hunter can attempt to hit this person, and if any long-term cumulative-effect weapon is being used -- such as radiation poisoning -- then this day does not count toward its effects. At the end of the 24-hour period, the excuse must be surrendered to the Huntmaster.

At the end of the game the Huntmaster will add up all the points scored by all the players and will post the point totals for each. The winner is the person with the most points.

Off-Limits Areas

Since the game is going to be played where people live, there need to be off-limit areas. Such areas are defined as being anywhere where a person is inconvenienced. or somewhere where non-players may be regularly disturbed. The basic off limit areas are:

* The bathroom(s) of the house.
* Corridors and stairs.
* Non-player rooms.
* Living rooms.
* The kitchen -- although there are certain hits that can occur here (see below).
* The yard -- especially if it is barbecue season.
* Anywhere else outside the house.

Kills

There are several categories of weapons which may be used in ***House Killer,*** listed below. Once one successful method has been used to kill a particular victim, you cannot use that same method on the same victim.

Joint kills are allowed, but ganging up on a single player is not allowed, because it's just plain cruel. Victims and killers do not have to reveal the means of termination, especially if it was an exceptionally sneaky or devious method.

If you are caught in the act of setting up a hit by the intended victim, then you are not allowed to go after them again for 24 hours due to the shame and embarrassment of being found out.

Finally, in cases where the weapon used is going to make a mess, such as contact poison toothpaste on a door handle or a confetti bomb, the hunter must be prepared to help the victim tidy things up.

Point System

The following points are used in ***House Killer:***

* 2 points for each successful kill.
* 2 bonus points for any amusing or stylish kill (Huntmaster's option).
* For joint kills, the 2 points are divided among the killers.
* 1 point is awarded for disarming any bomb or device before it goes off, even if you weren't the intended victim. (Obviously, you get no points for disarming something you set up yourself.)

Allowed Weapons

The one category that is outright banned is guns of any kind. In play, they were simply too irritatingly easy to use, and

greatly reduced the sneak level of the game.

Only the following classes of weapons are allowed in ***House Killer:***

With Friends Like These

1. Bombs. All forms of bombs in the rulebook are allowed.

2. Animal Attacks. These are permitted, but please make sure that the person you are going to get with a plastic snake or spider isn't going to flip.

3. Fire. Allowable, but tricky, since in most cases it does mean wrapping the entire house in red crepe paper, and all the problems that entails -- such as finding enough paper in the first place, and then you've got the problem of what if you live in an apartment building.

4. Poison. All poisons, as defined in the ***Killer*** rules, are allowed. Poisons are the only weapons that may be used in the kitchen, since that is where most normal people keep their food. Please bear in mind that if you spoil any food, you must be willing to replace it; after all, no one likes eating mashed potatoes that have been dyed bright blue.

5. Futuristic Weapons. Most futuristic weapons, as defined by the ***Killer*** rules, can be used. However, in the case of posting exotic diseases or poisons to your victim in a letter, you should name the contents on a slip of paper inside the letter, as some methods of "decontamination" will work against some futuristic weapons but not others. For example, microwaving a letter (on high for one minute) will kill any exotic bacteria.

Hints and Tips

I'd like to end with a brief list of hints and tips that have occurred to me over the years.

The first is to be sensitive to your victim. You should not do anything that could potentially embarrass them, especially if they've got a date. No one wants to walk in to their room and get blown up by a confetti bomb, especially if the person they are with doesn't understand.

Secondly, be careful if you are in a relationship with someone else in the house, simply because it is too easy to be killed by your significant other. I've both killed and been killed by my partner in a number of interesting and highly embarrassing high-tech methods, most of which were not funny at the time.

Thirdly, whatever you do, don't become paranoid. Whilst being a little bit paranoid is of course an important point of the game, don't take it to the nth degree.

Finally and most importantly, have fun and don't take it all that seriously!

The Vigilance-Class Picket

A New Ship for GURPS Traveller

by Fred Wolke

Art by andi jones

The first command of any naval officer to make Captain was probably one of these ships. The small, quick, and eminently expendable type-SF Vigilance-class picket is arguably the most common jump-capable ship in the fleet. Their role is to form the outermost shell of ships surrounding a task force, and to detect the presence of hostile forces before they themselves are detected. While armed, they are not intended for full-scale battle, but rather for the cat-and-mouse of the initial contact with the enemy. Whenever the task force is moving, they range out from the main body to the limit of communication range, so that if hostiles are detected, the fleet can get the maximum possible warning.

The ship is equipped with a small jump drive, not for interstellar travel but to allow it to escape from difficult situations. When the task force moves from one star to another, the pickets usually travel either scattered among the individual fleet elements, or on specialized picket tenders than can bring many pickets through a long jump. Sometimes, the fleet tender will be hidden away in a gas giant atmosphere in a nearby star system, so that pickets will have a safe place to jump to if there is serious trouble.

The ship is a flattened ovoid shape, designed to present a minmum cross-section forward and to the sides. The drives and power plant take up most of the center and aft sections of the ship, with fuel and staterooms to port and starboard, and the bridge and missile tubes to fore.

The Vigilance-Class Picket

Crew: Captain (Leadership and Tactics), Navigator (Astrogation), two Sensor Operators (Electronics Operation [Sensors]), Communications Operator (Electronics Operation [Communication]), two Engineers (Engineering and Mechanic) and Gunner (Gunnery [Missile]). Very often the Captain, Navigator, and Communications Operator will also have Electronics Operation [Sensors] skill, to allow more rotation on the grueling work of watching the sensors in tense situations.

200-ton USL hull, DR 4,210, Command Bridge, Engineering, 120 Maneuver, 4 Jump, 40 Fuel, 5 Staterooms, Utility, Fuel Processor, 6 Missile Racks (in hull body, no turrets), 2 Hold.

Statistics: TL12, Emass: 1992.4, LMass 2002.4, Cost MCr 110.9076, HP 22,500. Hull Size Modifier: +8.

Performance: Accel 5.99 Gs, Jump 1, Air Speed 600.

Using the Vigilance-Class Picket

A game could be run around the crew of one of these pickets, especially if they misjumped deep behind enemy lines and needed to sneak their way back to friendly territory. Another possibility is to use a Vigilance-class as a kind of "super scout," penetrating behind enemy lines to accomplish some mission for the Navy.

There is more potential here, than that, however. The Vigilance-class picket is nearly invisible to TL10 basic sensors; one needs to get within 15 hexes to even have a chance of detecting it, and that at -10 to skill. The picket is therefore a terrific ship to use if someone wants to "shadow" a jump-1 ship like a Free Trader or Subsidized Merchant. Looking at "Detection of Jump" on ***GURPS Traveller,*** p.121, we see that the energy pulse emitted when a ship enters jump gives away the direction that the ship jumped, but not the distance; with a jump-1 ship, however, the distance should be easy to guess.

by Ryan Elias

Art by andi jones

Where the wave of moonlight glosses
The dim grey sands with light,
Far off by furthest Rosses
We foot it all the night,
Weaving olden dances,
Mingling hands and mingling glances
Till the moon has taken flight;
To and fro we leap
And chase the frothy bubbles,
While the world is full of troubles
And is anxious in its sleep.
Come away, O human child!
To the waters and the wild
With a faery, hand in hand,
For the world's more full of weeping than you can understand.
-- "The Stolen Child," W.B. Yeats

Disclaimer: This is not canon, nor is it based all that firmly in mythology or history. If you like it, use it, if you don't like it, don't. If you like it, but your GM doesn't, then you probably won't be able to use it. But you knew that already, right? Anyway, here it is.

Faeries are some of the most popular beings in mythology. They are certainly the most widely varied, and have a complex and interesting history. None of this matters much, though, since their ranks were decimated by crusading angels of Purity centuries ago. In the modern day of the ***In Nomine*** universe, the Faerie, while no less interesting, are severely reduced in stature and confined forever to the Marches, where they are expected to do the decent thing and die from lack of attention. That's the theory anyway. However, although Fae culture has changed somewhat since the good old days, they are still very much alive, and are, in fact, doing quite a bit better than most of the Ethereal spirits clinging to life in the Marches.

The Crusade

Unsurprisingly, Faeries were major targets during Purity's jihad. Classically, Fae spirits are, if not directly opposed to the Church, rather incompatible with Christianity, or, indeed, almost any other religion. This wasn't acceptable to Uriel, especially since the Fair Folk are traditionally both tied to the corporeal realm and enjoy involving themselves in human society, two things Uriel didn't approve of.

Whatever the reason, Faeries were hunted down and dealt with. While the Crusade didn't come as a complete surprise to some Fae (i.e., most of those who are still alive to day), most were caught completely off guard. Within a couple years the vast majority of Fae nobility had been wiped out, as had many of the nature spirits. Least affected were the

household spirits, primarily because the nice ones were more or less indistinguishable at first glance (which was all they ever seemed to get) from relievers, and therefore not targets. Most of the Brownies and Basilisks survived the apocalypse more or less unharmed. However, the same cannot be said for the rest of Fae. When Uriel was recalled to heaven, most of the survivors didn't even put up a fight as they were ushered quietly back into the Marches, where they were supposed to remain.

Not that all of them did go back. A huge number of household Faeries were left on Earth, since there was no-one in Heaven who felt up to finding all of them. As long as the pixies don't cause enough trouble to be noticed, the logic went, it's probably all right if they're allowed to stay.

Meanwhile, in the Marches, the surviving spirits regrouped. The Unseelie court now greatly outnumbered the Seelie, since they had been far more prepared to abandon their places on Earth to save their hides, or hide equivalents. However, with the Corporeal realm, and all their primary sources of Essence, cut off to them, all the Fae were in trouble. In a rare moment of cohesive thought and action, the twin courts formed a contract with Hell (which, coincidentally, had someone nearby to write up a quick contract). In exchange for their services, which Hell knew it could make use of, they would receive a yearly jolt of Essence.

Although at the time it seemed unimportant, another event vital to the future of Faekind was happening even as the contract was being signed. A pair of Daoine Sidhe, husband and wife, found on the Corporeal plane, were being escorted through the Marches to the Fae homeland by a pair of Malakim, members of the newly formed Border Guard. These two Sidhe were very attached to their homes on Earth, and didn't want to go. At the gates of Arcadia, the husband made a desperate attempt to break free. One of the Malakim reacted with what was perhaps a little bit too much force, and the Faerie was blasted out of the Marches. His name was Oberon. The woman was left to consider her losses in peace. Her name was Titania.

The Time Between

The courts split shortly after the contract was signed. Many Unseelie and malevolent nature Faeries went to work for Beleth, tormenting dreamers just like they'd done before. Most of the rest of the Fae passed the time grubbing Essence from dreams and dreamers that strayed into their area of the Marches, or indulging in petty politics. Sometimes household Faeries on Earth would be caught and sent back to Arcadia, and sometimes daring Fae tried to get back to Earth. Sometimes they even succeeded. Titania spent much of the time sulking in her Bower. Time passed. Several hundred years, in fact.

On Earth, a man named Jobe befriended a man named William. Jobe had met William in a pub, and William, who was a budding writer, took an immediate liking to Jobe, as people often did. They corresponded for several years, during which Jobe told William very strange stories, about dreams that he kept having and about a pair of men who appeared in his dreams, and who he saw regularly around and about Glasgow. William liked the dreams, and after he became relatively famous, wrote a play about them.

When Titania first felt the rush of Essence, she thought nothing of it. Her names were mentioned in certain grimoires and occasionally people decided to enact rituals in her honor. But when another Faerie, never stable at the best of times, who's name wasn't in any books, felt the same rush of Essence, he reacted. In fact, he created a vessel, a robin, and went to the Corporeal plane to find out what had happened, and, if he found it offensive or excessively obvious, to put a stop to it. What he found instead was his former master, Oberon, in a scruffy human vessel, sitting on a bench, watching the end of a play. "If we spirits have offended . . ."

Puck didn't kill Shakespeare, although he was tempted. However he did alert Titania, and Titania bargained with Lilith for a celestial force to return to her lost husband. A Malakite from Glasgow in the audience, tracking someone whom he suspected to be an infernal Remnant, found that his target had vanished entirely. Oberon returned to Faerie.

Time passed.

Oberon never recovered himself entirely, but he, along with Titania, who felt much better now that her husband had been returned to her, took control of the Seelie court almost without effort. Due to the constant stream of Essence coming through *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* even lobotomized Oberon was more powerful than anyone else in the Mists.

With the possible exception of Puck, who disappeared shortly after opening night.

More time passed.

The Modern Day

Today, Titania and Oberon are in firm (or as firm as possible) control of Faerie. Not that they rule directly, as any attempt to do so would be doomed to failure, but if one were to ask any but the most subversive, Unseelie boggart who the boss was, the reply would be Titania. In terms of relative power, Titania is slightly less powerful than a minor Demon Prince or Archangel, Oberon is a bit behind her, due to the beating he took during the crusade. Nobody has any idea how strong Puck is, although the fact that he is the almost universal favorite in one of Shakespeare's most famous plays (and arguably his most famous comedy), it's estimated that Robin Goodfellow, never a minor Faerie, is probably at least as tough as Titania. And much, much more aggressive. He hasn't been seen recently, but people who take his name in vain tend to disappear in messy ways. He never had much of a sense of humor, unless he was making the joke.

Otherwise, Faerie civilization rolls on, albeit much more quietly than before. Many Brownies, masquerading as Relievers, are back on Earth, keeping a low profile, and some of the Church Faeries never left. The Pact with Hell is still active, and many Fae, especially Unseelies, work for Nightmares. Also, quiet deals have been made by some of the nicer Fae with some of the nicer border guards, allowing them to nip into Blandine's side of the Marches for a quick, morally satisfying, Essence fix. Under stern supervision, of course. Titania also has a few agents on Earth, keeping an eye on things and making sure that the Fae aren't forgotten entirely (it is suspected that ***Changeling: The Dreaming*** is a Fae production, among other things).[*Editor's Note:* Including this article, perhaps?] Life goes on.

Society

Although there are two courts: Seelie and Unseelie, which dominate Fae politics, not all Faeries are one or the other. In fact, the vast majority of Fae are either nature oriented (Satyrs, Fauns, Nymphs, Dryads, Sirens, Skin-Changers, Merrow, Pooka, Asrai, Kelpies, Trolls, Spriggans Dwarfs and so on ad infinitum), or human- or household-oriented (Brownies, Basilisks, Goblins, etc.). Neither type are necessarily affiliated with any court, although they can be. However, the courts are important, and warrant some discussion.

The Seelie Fae are associated with Light, the Day and Life. There were once large amounts of Sidhe in this court, ruled over by the Tuatha de Danann, but now it is composed largely of Sprites. The surviving Seelie lords, apart from Titania and Oberon, are severely reduced in power, rarely having more than 7 or 8 forces, and usually much less. Of the Tuatha, never numerous, there are no more than a half dozen left. They are also severely

reduced in power, averaging about 9 forces. They have faded into the background, offering advice, but rarely holding any power.

The Unseelie Fae are associated with Darkness, the Night and Death (oddly enough). They have survived much better than the Seelie, as previously noted, and many have gained power working for Beleth. Even so, Unseelie Sidhe are still very rare, and the lords of the Unseelie, while less scarce than their Tuatha counterparts, are rarely seen, existing primarily in the depths of the Mists. Most common among the Unseelie are Imps, Hags, and associated minor beasties.

The courts are opposed, but are not in a state of open warfare. It's more akin to Democrats and Republicans, each side working more or less peacefully to screw the opposing side up, with perhaps a bit more animosity between the two (or perhaps not, it's hard to tell with some politicians).

The Realm

The Fae realm, known interchangeably as the Mists, Arcadia, the Dreaming, or any number of other names, is a confusing place. Varying in appearance depending on which Fae is in control of a given area, the Mists don't like non-Fae much. While celestials are generally powerful enough to be relatively safe, visiting ethereals, although there aren't many, have to be careful. Mortal dreamers who stray far enough to reach the Mists, though, tend to be relatively safe as well, although with some Fae, especially Unseelie Fae, it's hard to be sure.

Relations

Faeries are still quite friendly with certain celestials. Jordi is known to have sympathy with the nature Fae, and Novalis has sympathy with just about everyone. Eli remains in contact with certain Faeries, and Lilith has complete mobility within the Mists, a function of her bargain with Titania (who has yet to pay Lilith back in full . . .). Beleth, of course, uses Faeries much as she uses minor Servitors. Most odd, however, are sightings both in Hell and the Marches of a being that can be identified only as Puck, and a green eyed Impudite Demon Prince, deep in discussion. There is occasional laughter from Kobal. Those who know anything about either being hope to be elsewhere if any collaboration between the two comes to fruition . . .

Otherwise, most Superiors think little of the Fae (although, admittedly, even those who are friendly with the Fae don't think much about them. Even though Titania and Oberon are both extraordinarily powerful for ethereals, they're still small fries for any Celestial Superior worth his or her salt), seeing them as "just another group of dying Pagans." There are a few exceptions. Laurence dislikes the Fae, and Asmodeus would just as soon they all be wiped out. Belial would like to see them burn, and Saminga wants them dead, but that's normal.

Faeries as Player Characters

Faeries make good PCs. The important thing to remember when creating them, though, is that almost every Faerie is different, and in the Mists, almost anything goes, and character concepts should stretch the imagination. Most Faerie PCs should have between 3 or 7 forces, with 3 being your average Sprite or Brownie, and 7 being a Sidhe, or a suitably powerful nature spirit (some of the old tree or river gods might be fun to play). Being on Earth might be a problem, but the important thing to remember is that Heaven doesn't care much if you're on Earth if you don't make trouble, and if you do, it's only a problem if you get caught . . .

Resources

Fae can have any skill that can be justified, although there's a definite tendency towards archaic skills. Discord is possible, and some of the weirder ones are entirely appropriate. Vulnerability: Iron is very common. Unseelie fae in the service of Beleth might be given Attunements, Rites, or even Distinctions, but it would be very rare, and players should have to earn them, and shouldn't buy them at character creation. Faeries use their own rites like other ethereals; you tell them to humans, and whenever a human performs the rite, you get the Essence. More detail on that can be

found in ***The Marches*** sourcebook.

Fae can also buy vessels, but only at character creation. Ethereals create vessels using essence (See ***The Marches*** or ***Heaven and Hell*** for more details). They can buy Charisma, and often do, but not Toughness.

Fae have access to all three realms of Songs, but favor Ethereal songs. They can use any common Song, the Song of Beasts, the Song of Daydreams, and some unpleasant Fae can also use the Song of Blood. Some other often-used songs are the Songs of Affinity, Calling, Charm, Motion, and Dreams. Fae also have their own, unique Song, the Song of Glamour.

Song of Glamour (Restricted, Faeries)

Songs of Glamour affect the human mind, making use of fears, hopes and, most importantly, dreams. The Song works on all humans -- mundanes, undead, Saints, and Soldiers alike -- but only humans. All the Songs of Glamour can be resisted with a Will roll.

Corporeal: The Corporeal Song of Glamour is the fabled Faerie propensity for illusion. It creates illusions, lasting until the next sunrise, affecting a number of senses equal to the CD of a successful roll (a CD of 6 or more means that the illusion affects all five senses, and lasts until the next new moon). Illusions affecting touch have texture but no substance; they are capable of doing only temporary damage, which lasts until sunrise (even if the CD was 6) at which point wounds seal over, and anyone "killed" by an illusion rises again. The illusions can be up to the size of a large human per point of Essence spent, or 25 times that in the Marches!

Ethereal: The Ethereal Song of Glamour affects human minds, making the target of the Song, usually the caster, unbelievably beautiful. The target receives Charisma: Sex Appeal equal to the CD. At CD 3+ the Charisma affects everyone, regardless of sexual orientation, and at 5 or 6 the caster is almost painfully beautiful, and anyone seeing them must make a Will roll or be stunned for CD minutes. The song lasts for minutes equal to Essence spent times Ethereal forces times 10. Charisma granted by the Ethereal Song of Glamour is not cumulative with natural Charisma. Double the CD in the Marches.

Celestial: The Celestial Song of Glamour brings the target to a new level of perception. For the duration of the spell (CD times Ethereal Forces hours) the mortal affected will see aspects of the Mists, the Marches, and occasional snatches of Heaven and Hell, as well as things that don't actually exist, to the knowledge of the Fae, anyway. The target will hear the Symphony, intermixed with weird sounds from some other source entirely. Needless to say, the effect on normal mortals is very strong. Each hour the song lasts, the target, if a normal mortal, must make a Will roll or go insane. The exact effects of this are up to the GM. Soldiers get to add their Celestial Forces to their Will roll. Saints and Undead can too, and only have to make one roll every two hours. While under the influence of the Celestial Song of Glamour, action is more or less impossible. Perception rolls must be made to take any physical action, and there is a 6-(CD of successful Perception roll) penalty to any actions taken even then (e.g. A human, who has been enchanted by the Celestial Song of Glamour, tries to lash out at the Faerie who did it. He makes his perception roll, with a CD of 4, and must now subtract 2 (6-4) from his fighting TN). Soldiers, Saints and Undead get to add their Celestial Forces to this roll as well. The Celestial Song of Glamour only works on the Corporeal plane.

Bonus: Faeries
Essence Requirement: 2
Degree of Disturbance: CD (Targets of the Celestial Song emit this Disturbance constantly until it wears off, making it a very, very unsubtle song)

Other Traits

Faeries do not have celestial forms, and cannot ascend to Heaven or descend to Hell without powerful Superior intervention. They are not stunned by the celestial forms of Kyriotates or Shedim. They aren't affected by holy symbols, church bells, cold iron or any other rural myths, unless they take an appropriate Discord (e.g., Vulnerability). They are affected normally by Trauma.

Adventure Ideas

There are quite a few. An all-Faerie campaign could involve espionage into the forbidden corporeal realm, or perhaps celestial diplomacy, trying to earn favor with the Archangels without arousing the wrath of the Demon Princes. Perhaps the best, however, are adventures into the Faerie Realm itself, which, despite the current condition of its inhabitants, hasn't changed much since the Crusade.

Recommended Reading

Gaming Resources

"Faerie Glamours." An earlier *Pyramid* article by Ken & Jo Walton, authors of ***GURPS Celtic Myth.*** It has a bibliography of its own that is also worth checking out.
Changeling: The Dreaming. It deviates a bit from common myth, but is a very solid RPG about Faeries.
Ars Magica: Faeries. A primary resource for this article. Very mythically sound.
Dreams and Nightmares. A supplement for ***Changeling,*** but one that's useful in any campaign about the Faerie Realm. Has more adventure possibilities in it than you'll ever use.

Novels

Terry Brooks, *The Magic Kingdom of Landover* series, books 1-3. An interpretation I quite like.
Terry Pratchett, *Lords and Ladies.* My favorite book here. An . . . alternate view of Faeries.
Tad Williams, *Memory, Sorrow and Thorn.* Also quite good (the Norns make good villains).

Beneath the Sublime Porte

by Phil Masters

Art by andi jones

Being a further extract (following previous essays on the Djinn and on Arabia) from a certain long-delayed publication concerning adventures in the Ottoman East in the world of ***Castle Falkenstein****. This essay concerns itself with denizens of Ottoman territory, both natives and expatriates, and how they might serve as Dramatic Characters . . .*

A swift review of the nature of life in the Ottoman lands brings this author to the conclusion that Ottoman characters (and characters who have settled in the Empire) should not be too difficult to integrate into the Great Game. They could even be taken as Dramatic Characters by bold and flexible players.

One note; in this and other places, the words "Ottoman" and "Turk" are used almost interchangeably. That is slightly misleading; the Turks are a *nation*, whose royal family are the "Ottomans," and who run a multi-national Empire. But not every nation in that Empire is "Ottoman," and there are Arabs who would kill you for saying that they were. It is perhaps wisest to use "Turk" for the nation, and "Ottoman" for the Empire, and everyone within it who is not actually in open revolt at the present moment -- so one might even refer to, say, some Armenian characters as "Ottomans," despite the fact that they are Christians, quietly hate the Empire, and may even essay a revolt next year.

Also note that the local term for Europans (and Americans) is *Farangi*. This is a fairly neutral term, although its use for every such visitor does reflect the rather stereotyped local view of these "northerners."

Standard Abilities

Education: Schooling in the Ottoman Empire is erratic. Traditionally, the lower classes receive little, while the aristocracy and court slaves are taught a mixture of old-fashioned sentiments and practical government. Reformers have tried to update the system, with limited success -- especially as few Turks would trust a foreigner, especially a Christian, with their offspring. Some "progressive" Turks have traveled abroad, to Europan universities -- and are often distrusted as a result.

Exchequer: Wealth in the Empire varies vastly. The Sultan's court has fabulous riches, although courtiers are at the mercy of the Sultan himself, who can depose and dispossess them in an instant. Provincial officials claim to be impoverished, but gouge their subjects for every *piastre* they can extract, while peasants live from hand to mouth. "Average" wealth, by Europan standards, is limited to a few small-time merchants, honest officials, and minor functionaries.

Fencing: Rename this ability "Swordsmanship" for Ottoman characters, if you want to make the style of the character's biography just right.

Fisticuffs: Vulgar fist-fighting is something that Ottomans leave to street thugs and ruffians, and although one may see

a fair number of those curved daggers, skilled knife-fighting is also mostly left to the criminal class. *Wrestling*, on the other hand, is a sport that the Turks love, and there are a fair number of professional wrestlers around the Court and the households of wealthy sports devotees; they may come in useful if their master needs some uncomplicated muscle to execute his will.

Marksmanship: The Ottomans have some trouble persuading their armies to take modern firearms seriously. Conversely, they have always been adept with bows; Sultans have traditionally flaunted their archery skill.

Performance: There are several aspects to this Ability in the Ottoman Empire. High-grade harem slaves are taught as much singing, musicianship, and dancing as possible, and every bazaar has entertainers who have mastered all manner of arts. Story-telling, on street corners or in coffee houses, is an ancient occupation. For the ordinary, respectable Turk, however, entertainment skills are something that other people display. Oh, and the mystical Dervish orders study exotic "meditation aids" in their quest for transcendence, including sometimes music and dance.

Physician: As in other areas of modern science, the Ottomans can be a little hazy on advanced surgery. However, they are no worse than any other nation at basic first aid.

Social Graces: This is replaced by Ottoman Way (see below). An Ottoman transplanted to Europan society starts with, in effect, Poor Social Graces, although polite Europans will usually make allowances for ignorance; a cultured Ottoman who is willing to make the attempt can usually manage a fair level of Europan-style politeness, often embellished by some "charming," flowery, Eastern-style courtesies.

Sorcery: Mastery of Magick his has traditionally been one way to advance in the Ottoman Empire; at the very least, you can become a respected independent professional, and at best, you can attain the rank of Vizier. So, should you encounter a sorcerous Ottoman, he or she is like to be making a good living out of it, or to be a crazed Dervish with other priorities.

Tinkering: The Ottoman Empire has never really comprehended the Industrial Revolution; a combination of magic, widespread poverty, a shortage of Dwarves, and most of all, innate conservatism, has stifled that idea. Even publishing is still left to a large and comfortable class of scribes and copyists.

Conversely, some Ottomans (and not just the small local dwarf community) are surprisingly adept tinkerers. Some of those wizards are mechanicians, fond of clever hand-built gadgets; Haroun al-Rashid was using a sophisticated water-clock while, in Europa, Charlemagne's paladins were rising with the sun and going to bed when they fell down drunk. There is even evidence of truly *ancient* gadgets; it is certainly unwise to explore an Egyptian tomb without keeping a sharp eye out for traps. And there is after all a railway running to Constantinople these days, and the merchants of Pera carry Swiss pocket-watches.

New Abilities for Ottoman Characters

Ottoman Way (heart): This is the Ottoman equivalent of Social Graces. Ottoman society is very formal; one needs to know even more rules and mannerisms to fit in there than in the New Europan aristocracy. On the other hand, it is strangely open, in just one way; if you do master these rules, and if you show that you are prepared to live in *their* way, they do not worry about where you were *born*. Forget those rules, or insist on retaining your own ideas, and you will never be more than an outsider. Birth is not important; showing that you are a devoted Ottoman is everything.

Poor Ottoman Way Ability does not necessarily make you a barbarian; you could simply be an ignorant peasant. You do not know the correct forms of address and salutation for other members of society, or the dress rules that apply in Istanbul or other cities -- and if anyone prompts you, you probably make errors anyway. Average Ability means that you can pass in the bazaar, and sneer at peasants; you do not break any major rules, and you know enough to bow to more important folk. Good Ottoman Way lets you start up the social ladder; you can dine with local Pashas and officials without embarrassment, your turban is exactly the right size for your social standing, you know the full range of correct salutes, and you can drop the occasional flowery compliment. Great Ability is the least you need to attend the Sublime Porte as anything better than a cringing petitioner; you know the subtle rules of court etiquette, your

costume denotes your status with precision, and you can read others' mannerisms with a glance. At the Excellent level, you can pass for a Vizier; everything you do or say conveys *class* to Ottomans, and while you always dress perfectly, you could probably establish your rank without it. Extraordinary Ottoman Way Ability is the sort of thing you expect from the Vizier in charge of Court Protocols; you know *all* the rules, even the defunct and forgotten ones, and you live and breathe them.

Note: With the Host's permission, characters who are going to spending most of their time in Ottoman lands may take this as one of their required *Poor* Abilities. Of course, this means that they are either a peasant, an oaf, or a crass foreigner.

Trader (heart): *(Note; this ability was detailed in a previous article on Arabia; it is repeated here for ease of reference.)* This is the skill of buying, selling, bargaining, and thus making a more-or-less honest profit. It includes a working knowledge of the values of goods, but mostly, it is a question of persuading someone to give you the best price for something, and judging when they will shift further and when they are really going to stick.

Most people are capable of haggling a little, if only over the price of a horse, but in the Middle East, it is raised to an art form. The talented Trader is regarded with admiration and caution rather than dislike, unless he or she gets a reputation for excessive or unfair greed.

As a Poor Trader, you are continually being swindled and tricked; you either lose track of true values, or become too quickly flustered and distracted in the bargaining process. Average Ability means that you can get by from day to day in the bazaar, provided that you remember not to try buying from the most *enthusiastic* merchants. With Good Trader Ability, you could *be* a merchant, although you would need other advantages as well; you enjoy a lengthy haggle, and stall-holders who know you do not try any tricks. Great Ability means that you can make a good living as a merchant or broker, or terrorize minor stall-holders when buying your groceries; you usually pay less than an item's value, while selling at a premium. Excellent Ability means that you are a legend of the trade-routes; if you are not a wealthy professional merchant, you have missed your vocation, and you certainly hold a complete set of prices and exchange rates in your head. An Extraordinary Trader *is* a wealthy merchant, if only in your spare time; people only haggle with you so that they can learn technique and for the pleasure of your company, and spend hours afterwards trying to work out how you convinced them.

Note: With the Host's permission, characters who are going to spending most of their time in an area where prices are not generally fixed can take Trader as one of their required *Poor* Abilities. It is a serious disadvantage in such cases, as the character will find their money swiftly running out, and the bazaar regarding them with a mixture of disdain, amusement, and avarice.

New Character Roles

The following are Roles particularly suited to Dramatic Characters. Obviously, games in this setting will involve many other "types" -- Guards, Viziers, Eunuchs, Harem Girls, Sultans, Pashas, and so on -- but these will usually be Host Characters.

Bazaar Entertainer

You make the world a better place. The streets of the city are hot and hectic, and most people live lives of worry. You make them forget that. Whatever your chosen art -- singing, acrobatic dancing, story-telling, juggling, even petty magic -- you bring a little color into their lives. In return, all you ask is a few coins.

Of course, your own life isn't all amusement. There's rivalry for the best spots, and petty officials who keep thinking of new licenses and taxes. Sometimes, the only way you can make a living is to keep moving. But you're no rogue; your skills are genuine. In fact, you preserve an ancient tradition -- and you are very good at what you do.

Strong Suits: Athletics, Charisma, Performance.

Possessions: The tools of your art (musical instrument, juggler's props, etc.); a plain knife; slightly shabby clothes.

In Your Diary: Reminders of good pitches and bad officials; new jokes, stories, and lines of patter; names of patrons who might pay for private performances.

Why You're Here: Times are hard, and the local officials have been finding extra excuses to make trouble -- which has cost you a fortune in bribes. On the other hand, these *Farangi* seem taken with your charm. You can provide them with useful assistance -- you know every bazaar and back-street from here to Samarkand -- and if things start getting complicated, your skills might come in useful. Actually, an adventure might be fun, as well as profitable.

Expatriate ("White Man Gone Native")

You've been Out East for more years than you care to count, now, and you claim to have forgotten why you left Europa. There's various ways that you may be making your living; as a small-time trader; as a guide or interpreter for Europan visitors; or perhaps by sea-going trade, keeping some run-down steam-boat that's even older than you are going by sheer willpower. Or perhaps you are a little higher class than that, and have a steady income from investments or other mysterious sources back home.

No, this is home now, and the locals have taken to you. You've taken to them, do not offend them, except sometimes, when they realize that you've got a steady source of whisky from somewhere. But what the . . . You ain't a Moslem. You ain't turned Turk. Never mind what the high 'n' mighty visitors may think.

Strong Suits: Marksmanship, Perception, Tinkering.

Possessions: Shabby western clothes; an aged bolt-action rifle and a little ammunition; at the Host's option, a small steam-launch.

In Your Diary: Practical notes about business contacts and deals; financial accounts of recent transactions; cryptic ramblings about your past.

Why You're Here: These other folk are newcomers to this part of the world, and although you've sworn to forget your old loyalties, you can't let them walk into trouble. They seem polite enough, after all, if a bit naive. You'd never admit to yourself that you might be hoping to redeem yourself for whatever it was made you abandon Europa.

(Note: A variant "White Man Turned Native" type is one who has developed an interest in Eastern Mysticism, and perhaps even attained membership of a local Dervish Order or the like. Such a character should have Good Sorcery rating -- and a very complicated and dangerous life, being caught between several worlds, and fully trusted by no-one. Another type again is the Expatriate who has spent so long with the Bedouin that he is effectively equivalent to a member of the tribes -- albeit one who can suddenly surprise a Europan visitor by "unmasking"; see Lands of the Bedouin for ideas on Arab tribal characters.)

Noble Adventurer

You are the offspring of a provincial official, or one of the old, disregarded, feudal nobility. As such, you have learned the basics of etiquette and the running of the Empire; you also received weapons training, for which you displayed a talent.

Now, you find that you have a Goal. Perhaps your family has been disgraced by the machinations of an evil foe, or maybe one of your old friends has sent you a letter, asking help. Or perhaps you have fallen out with your family over your dreams of a glorious career, and you are seeking to prove yourself.

In any case, you have taken up your sword and gone out into the world. You do not like it when people call you a dreamer, but you *do* have a taste for legends of

noble heroism; you could enjoy living out such tales.

You are equally at home in the court or the bazaar, and you can think your way out of troubles as well as fight -- but if you must give battle, then you are something of a swashbuckler. You may know somewhat of missile weapons, but the sword is the more honorable form of combat. And yours is ready to your hand!

Strong Suits: Athletics, Ottoman Way, Swordsmanship.

Possessions: A fine sword; a good horse; plain but high-quality clothes.

In Your Diary: Notes on your current adventure; names of distant relatives and family allies who might or might not assist you; some amateurish attempts at heroic poetry.

Why You're Here: Whatever your reasons, you are an adventurer -- and these *Farangi* seem like a good place to start adventuring, and everyone knows that heroes travel with strange companions. Perhaps they are pursuing some cause that you think is just, even if they are infidels. Perhaps they share your own great goal, for their own reasons. Perhaps you are taken with their crazy spirit. Or perhaps this is a way to win fame and fortune, and prove to your family that you aren't just a dreamer.

Old-Fashioned Adventurer

You are, some would say, a throwback to the days of Haroun al-Rashid and Sinbad. Is this a bad thing? When all around you are sunk in the complacent decadence of the Ottoman Way, you have decided that you want Action and Adventure. And so, after somehow obtaining a little suitable training, you have taken up the sword, and set out to find fame and fortune.

Perhaps you have become a sailor, boldly navigating through the Isles of Greece or along the coast of the Indian Ocean; even the *Farangi*'s steam-ships have not destroyed all of that ancient trade. Or perhaps you are a Soldier of Fortune, guarding trade caravans in the desert or rich men's houses in town. Perhaps you have been obliged to engage in a little adventurous roguery, separating valuables from their unappreciative owners. The chances are, you've tried a bit of everything. Whatever you've done, though, you've always done it with panache -- and truth to tell, you've always made sure that you enjoyed it.

Strong Suits: Athletics, Charisma, Swordsmanship.

Possessions: A decent sword; plain but functional clothes.

In Your Diary: Snippets of poetry; some ideas as to possibilities for adventure and fortune; sketch-maps of places visited.

Why You're Here: They may be crazy -- and foreign -- but you can be sure that these *Farangi* are adventurous;

otherwise, they wouldn't be here. Perhaps they've offered to pay for the aid of your sword-arm or other skills; you see no disgrace in mercenary service. Or perhaps one of them is an attractive lady, who appeals to your romantic heart *and* your love of the exotic. Or perhaps you've agreed to share some profitable quest with them. Who cares, really? Adventuring is what you all *do*!

Ottoman Dwarf

Beneath the Sublime Porte

You are a rarity, and proud of it; a Dwarf who also happens to be a citizen of the Ottoman Empire. With your shaven head, magnificent mustache, colorful clothes, and massive gold earrings, you know you present an imposing sight to the world; anyone who smiles at the sight of you should be politely asked why. Your skill with metals and gadgets makes you invaluable in the bazaar, and your Turkish neighbors know you for a Good Moslem and an Honest Fellow, whatever your birth.

As to how you came to live in this part of the world, where your kind is rare -- well, either you are a member of a small local Dwarf-Clan, quite likely dating back to the days when the Dwarves brought bronze-work to Babylon, or you wandered out this way from Europa many years ago, in search of a fortune and a way to gain a Name, and somehow settled down.

Strong Suits: Fisticuffs, Tinkering, Trader.

Faerie Power: *Love of Metal* (see the *Castle Falkenstein* rule-book).

Possessions: A collection of eccentric but effective craftsman's tools; stout but colorful Eastern-style clothing; huge, reinforced leather slippers; massive and ornate gold earrings.

In Your Diary: Designs for simple but extremely elegant devices; current bazaar prices for precious metals; contact addresses for Dwarves in distant lands.

Why You're Here: For all your local status, there are problems for a Dwarf in the Ottoman Empire; the chances are that this group of Europans may represent a way to resolve some of them. To begin with, you need to establish your fame *among Dwarves* to qualify for a Name, and there are precious few other Dwarves in this area; perhaps there's one such visiting with this group, who you can impress with your ingenuity, or perhaps the humans could convey word of your accomplishments back to the Dwarf-holds of the North -- or perhaps you might even consider traveling back there with them in person.

Secondly, there are even fewer female Faerie in this region than there are Dwarves, which is inconvenient if you have any hopes of marrying and starting a family. Even if there's no Elf-maids among these Europans, you could again consider traveling back to their homelands with them.

And lastly -- it's well known that these days, the most fascinating machines in the world come from Europa, thanks to all the Dwarves there (and the human "Industrial Revolution," perhaps). Associating with Europans might get you some chance of a glimpse of some of these steam devices and calculating machines, which you've no doubt you could work with and improve on. Perhaps some of these folk know something of this subject? You should ask. You know that your human Ottoman neighbors regard such foreigners as less than respectable, but what's disreputable about machinery? It's one of the finest forms of intelligent endeavor.

Oh, and come to think of it -- you've heard tales about Europan Beer, too. Not that you, as a good Moslem, have any interest in such substance. Obviously.

Renegade Europan Soldier

You started your Europan military career with ideals, and achieved some success as a drill-sergeant or staff lieutenant. But something didn't work out. Perhaps you were passed over for promotion in favor of men with better social contacts; perhaps you met some kind of disgrace through no fault of your own; perhaps you just became bored.

Then you thought of the Turks, who are trying to modernize their army. For decades now, they've been recruiting advisors from Europa, looking to hammer some sense into their farm-boy soldiers and useless commanders. So you made some contacts, confirmed that the pay was good, and moved out East.

But *that* didn't work out. Perhaps you annoyed some idiot Pasha with no military knowledge but too much influence. Perhaps your contact was disgraced in some game of Ottoman politics. Perhaps you were sickened by the corruption and the way that the army's biggest job seems to be massacring civilians. Or perhaps you got squeezed out by all these stiff-necked Prussians who've breezed into Stamboul lately.

So you're out on your ear. But you haven't headed home yet. You came out here to make your fortune, blast it, and you're not running home with your tail between your legs at the first setback. You'd be embarrassed. Besides, it's an interesting country, in its way.

Strong Suits: Courage, Marksmanship, Physique.

Possessions: Sabre, revolver, and swagger-stick; your old uniform (out of sentiment); plain, military-style, garb, suited for the weather and impressing the natives.

In Your Diary: Notes on drill and tactics; unrestrained opinions of the local troops; addresses of old comrades back home.

Why You're Here: If the Ottoman Army doesn't want your skills, there are still uses for them here -- and working with Europan visitors gives you the chance to hear a familiar language and discuss familiar topics. Perhaps they can pay well, or perhaps one of them served in the same regiment as you. You can certainly help them; you've managed to get a feel for Turkish society, which does need a little careful handling at times.

Runaway Slave

Some people say that slavery is in decline among the Ottomans, what with Europans lecturing them on its evils at every diplomatic conference and Europan navies patrolling the coasts of Africa. On the other hand, some people say that the Ottomans' slaves have it better than many a Europan servant; they are part of the household, are often helped to set up in business on their own after a few years, and have plenty of protection in law.

That's the general theory. It may work most of the time. The rest of the time . . .

You do not remember much about that African village or Caucasian farm; you were kidnapped as a young child. The slavers decided that you looked like a promising specimen, and fed you well -- while working you mercilessly. The man they sold you to followed the same plan; whatever work you were given, and there was plenty, was always the toughest and most strenuous.

Well, that built up your physical strength. Meanwhile, in your heart, you had another strength, that also grew. When you eventually made your getaway, you broke locks and shrugged aside restraints.

Now, you are on the run. You think you've shaken off pursuit, but you have to live on the fringes of Ottoman society, fearful that you'll be noticed. But perhaps you occasionally dream of finding a way home.

Strong Suits: Fisticuffs, Physique, Stealth.

Possessions: The rags you stand up in; an improvised weapon (axe, heavy club, etc.; does damage as a Blow with your Physique, plus one).

In Your Memory: The names and faces of your former owner and his friends; some vague ideas about your home.

Why You're Here: You are a hunted man; you need shelter and allies. Anyway, these mad *Farangi* do not treat you the way that Ottomans do. They do not understand how this land works -- which you learned the hard way. They say they do not have slaves back where they come from, which sounds foolish; who does the housework? Perhaps their current task means that they are fighting your old, cruel owner; that could be dangerous, but you'd like the chance of revenge. Or perhaps they are prepared t o *pay* you to help them with some adventure; they might even help you get away to other lands, later.

Local Spy

Some people would consider you a skulking professional gossip; you prefer to think of yourself as a dealer in that rarest and most precious of all commodities -- The Truth. You are paid a retainer by the Sublime Porte to keep them informed of events in your home district, but that is barely enough to live on, and in any case, you do not think anyone ever reads your reports. So you obtain additional income by selling other news to whoever might find it interesting; merchants can learn of bandit activity from you, and bandits might learn of caravan movements. But you prefer to avoid that latter sort of business. It is not legal, or moral. You might get caught.

No, you are not lacking in honor. You would never betray a friend or a host, and your official work lets you bring local corruption and official misbehavior to light (if you can get anyone in authority to listen). Besides, you are completely honest in your business. You sell only The Truth, and not even that, sometimes. You know when to keep silent as well as who to talk to. And your prices -- for silence or for talk -- are always reasonable.

Strong Suits: Perception, Stealth, Trader.

Possessions: Smart but unobtrusive clothes; a small pistol (for extreme emergencies); a notebook, and a Europan pocket-watch and pen.

In Your Diary: Cryptic (possibly coded) notes on events and personalities; financial accounts; speculations on motivations and possibilities.

Why You're Here: You deal in information -- and that is something that Europan adventurers certainly need. Furthermore, their activities may unearth more interesting facts, for which you could find a market in future. They may pay well for guidance and advice; they are certainly unusual company, and years of spying have made you wearily familiar with the local folk, with their petty failings and rivalries. You'll have to be careful; you have become dangerously interested in personal danger.

Street Kid

You are the child of the city streets. If your parents are still alive, they despair of you, and may even be thinking of disowning you -- just because you aren't interested in breaking your back working all day and all night in some pointless job!

But you're convinced that you have a Greater Destiny. You just have to find it. You enjoy the bazaar tales of Aladdin and Ali Baba, and you feel that you could accomplish just as much as them, given half their luck -- which you're convinced will come. In the meantime, why shouldn't you enjoy yourself? Your friends aren't as bad as people like to say, and they are a lot more fun to be around than "respectable" folk.

And you're not without honor. You're quite prepared to respect the laws of hospitality, if anyone ever gives you the chance. You're *certainly* not a thief. Oh, you like to play the odd joke, but why should the bazaar fruit-seller begrudge you one of his peaches? You've done him enough favors. You're sure you have.

And you'll certainly be generous to him, when you find your Destiny.

Strong Suits: Athletics, Stealth, Trader.

Possessions: Ragged clothes; a hidden knife; a few cheap trinkets, "accidentally" acquired.

In Your Memory: Details of the layout of your home town, especially back-alleys and hiding places; dozens of bazaar stories and heroic legends.

Why You're Here: These *Farangi* visitors need a guide, and they pay well; perhaps you've even found yourself in their debt. You heard somebody warn them that you're untrustworthy, and you're determined to prove otherwise. Anyway, this is an *adventure*, just like in the stories. Perhaps it's even your Destiny!

Young Turk

A simple fact; you are a loyal servant of the Ottoman Empire, for which you would fight and die. Those who say otherwise, lie.

You probably sought to serve the Empire in the *Tanzimat* Civil Service, or perhaps the Army. In order to perform your duties properly, you studied both the state of the Empire and the rest of the world. This brought home to you a terrible truth; Turkey has fallen far behind in every essential area. The Empire is ruled by a Sultan who is out of touch and possibly even mad, and a Court full of blind, greedy, Viziers. Your country is the laughing-stock of Europa.

There is some debate as to how much reform is needed. Some hold that a little more democracy, and the rooting-out of corruption, would suffice; others say that Turkey should abandon its ungrateful Empire, and transform itself into a modern republic. Perhaps you are still making up your mind.

As a patriot, you could not help but speak out, and join a group of like-minded reformers. Unfortunately, yours is not a *safe* opinion. You have either been forced to go into hiding, or you traveled abroad to Paris, the meeting-place of the "Young Turks," and now you have returned in secret. The agents of tradition would doubtless knife or strangle you in a dark alley, given the chance -- but you will give them a run for their blood.

Strong Suits: Courage, Education, Ottoman Way.

Possessions: "Westernized" clothes; revolver; a secret bundle of assorted foreign currencies for emergencies; a couple of Europan books of political theory.

In Your Diary: Notes on schemes for Reform; coded addresses of friendly contacts and safe hiding-places; drafts of essays on your Cause; lists of possible enemies.

Why You're Here: Associating with Europans is dangerous -- you do not want your enemies calling you a traitorous Christian-lover -- but you must take your allies where you find them, and after all, you *are* prepared to learn from the West. Furthermore, you feel that there is merit in convincing these people that not all Turks are superstitious and backward. For now, you and they may both be on the trail of some villain who is no friend to Turkey *or* the West; or perhaps they are potential or current sympathizers, and you feel the need to cultivate them. Certainly, the adventure they are undertaking could teach you something new about the world.

by Greg DeAngelo

Art by andi jones

The Multi-Classed Thief

Settlers of Catan, the German game of resource management, expansive growth, and high-stakes commodity trading, has spread across American table-tops in rapid fashion. As J. Hunter Johnson noted in his article adapting ***FUDGE Dice*** to the game, ***Settlers of Catan*** is a game of building things to get points. In a nutshell, the more you build, the more resources you obtain to build more things and get more points.

But the chaos of land clearing and road building that accompanies the settlers as they claim their manifest destiny on the continent of Catan has evidently left some feeling betrayed. The disenfranchised and impoverished have turned to a life of crime. The Robber and Pirate are detailed in the rules, but why must the thieves be confined to the wilderness and the docks? Surely there are more riches to be won and treasures to be had on the roads and in the cities! And what of the desert nomad and deceptive spy? Four quick variants of the Robber follow; use some or all to spice up your next settlement of Catan.

All of the robber variants use the same general rules for movement that the basic robber uses. If a "7" is rolled, then the "robber" is moved, no matter what it's current role is or where it's currently located -- the robber token *has* to be moved. The robber can also be moved at any time by playing a knight (soldier) card. Note that you can play a knight before you roll the dice on your turn. Also, a played knight joins your army face up in front of you; a discarded knight (see below) is placed on the development card discard pile.

The Pirate

(Reprinted from the "Alternate Rules for Experienced Players" section of the rulebook for reference.)

"In addition to the normal rules for the robber, the robber can be placed on any port hex. While the robber is there, no trades may be conducted using that port. The player who moved the robber can still steal a card from a neighboring player as normal."

The Highwayman

This robber can be placed on any section of road. The player who moved the robber can steal a card from the owner of

the road. No further construction (roads or new settlements) can be built at either end of a road with a Highwayman on it. The Highwayman has no impact on existing construction.

The Nomad

The Nomad is master of the desert wastes! Whenever the robber is not in the desert hex, roads can be built for free around the entire circumference of the desert. (One free road per turn, and following the normal rules of road placement.) But, if the robber is placed in the desert, the player who moved the robber can steal a card from any player with a road or settlement along the circumference of the desert. In addition, before you roll the dice on your turn, if you have a road located on the desert's circumference and the Nomad is in the desert, you must either pay a wood card or a brick card, or sacrifice one of the roads.

The Spy

This robber can be placed on (next to) a city. You do not get to steal a card from the player who owns the city; doing so would blow the spy's cover. But while the Spy is in a city, the city earns resources as if it was only a settlement (one resource from each land hex instead of two), and the city also counts for one victory point, not two.

The Marauder

This robber can be placed on one of your own roads. Then, you can sacrifice the robber (by placing it to the side of the board) and sacrifice some number of knights (soldiers) to tear down adjoining construction built by other players. If your Marauder's road connects to an opponent's road, force the player to discard that section of road by sacrificing two knights (i.e., by discarding them to the discovery card discard pile). Sacrifice four knights to tear down a settlement, and sacrifice seven knights to tear down a city. Sacrificed knights can come from your army (face up in play) or from your hand.

Closing Thoughts

It's a good idea to use the optional "no robber for two turns" rule with these variants. Just leave the robber off the board for the first two series of turns, and reroll any results of "7". Otherwise the crucial initial progress can be unfairly curtailed by an untimely visit from this most unwelcome intruder.

Another idea is to have each player start with one knight card in addition to the resource cards obtained upon placing your second settlement. With more than four players, use two robbers to shake things up even further.

by Andrew Moffatt-Vallance

Art by andi jones

Photographs by Andrew Moffatt-Vallance

An Introduction to Tabletop Gaming

One of the oldest branches of the adventure gaming hobby is tabletop wargaming with miniatures. It has its origins way back in ***Kreigsspiel,*** a very detailed set of rules first used by the Prussian military last century. Recreational tabletop gaming is almost as old. H.G. Wells' ***Little Wars*** dates from the turn of the century, and that redoubtable publication, *Jane's Fighting Ships,* began life as a technical annex to Fred T. Jane's naval wargame rules.

The novice to tabletop gaming is faced with a vast range of periods and forms to choose from. They can find rules and figures (or models) to cover virtually any period and form of warfare. From the battles of First Dynasty Egypt, to Nelson's struggles against Napoleon's navy, to conflicts on distant worlds in a galaxy far, far away, all have been covered. However, the hobby is usually divided into several broad "periods." These are: Ancients (3000 BC to 1500 AD), Pike and Shot (1500 to 1700), Horse and Musket (1700 to 1900), First World War (1900 to 1930), Second World War (1930 to 1960), and Modern (1960 onwards). Then there is the division between land, naval and aerial gaming. Naval and aerial wargaming are usually very much the "junior" branches of the hobby (especially true for aerial wargaming), but they have their own distinctive feel and challenges.

For the beginner I would recommend starting with either Horse and Musket period land-based warfare, or its equivalent naval period (Age of Sail). Both of these periods have a wide range of figures and rules available, and one can usually be sure of finding an opponent. Naturally, since the period is very broad, it is usually divided up into many sub-categories. As many as there are wars, in fact. The most popular are probably Napoleonic, American Civil War, and the Seven Years' War. My own personal favorite period for the beginner is the American Civil War: well documented, relatively few troop types to deal with, and a good range of inexpensive plastic figures available.

The first order of business is to assemble an army or fleet. Most wargamers use either 25mm or 15mm lead figures, or 1/1200th-scale ships, though many other scales are available. However, the beginner is often on a tight budget and the cost of a lead army can be quite daunting. Fortunately, there is an alternative. A number of manufacturers produce a wide range of quality plastic 25mm figures that can be purchased at very reasonable prices.

Here in New Zealand, I recently built up a respectable ACW army of 150 infantry, 30 cavalry, and 2 artillery pieces, all for the price of a single ***GURPS*** worldbook. These plastic figures are also great for roleplaying; a box each of Italeri Knights and Esci Barbarians has

given me more fantasy figures than I know what to do with. The American Civil War is particularly well-covered in plastic figures, with all major troop types being available, but Napoleonics, the First and Second World Wars, and Moderns are also well served. The down side of plastic figures is that paint tends to flake off them. However, this can be overcome with proper preparation. First, wash your figures in detergent to remove any grease, then undercoat them using an acrylic varnish or diluted PVA glue, then finally paint them (using reasonable quality acrylics). It is most important to use acrylic paints, as these shrink slightly when dry.

For naval gaming, the choices are rather more limited. However, a respectable ship-of-the-line can be constructed using balsa hulls, drinking straw masts, toothpick yardarms, and paper sails. The get the dimensions (available in numerous reference books), draw a rough scale outline on some heavy cardboard, add a foc's'l and a quarter deck, then cut out the ship. Stick them together, add three masts, paint and you've got a Ship-of-the-Line for less than the cost of a softdrink. Alternatively, Airfix produces a useful *HMS Victory* kitset that, with the aid of a hot craft knife, can be cut down to produce a respectable Two- or Three-Decker.

So, having assembled one's army (or fleet), where next? Very few battles are fought on featureless flat battlefields, so the next requirement is terrain (this is much less of a problem for naval wargamers!). Again, there is a wide selection of commercially manufactured terrain available, but the cost can prove daunting to the beginner. In fact, many wargamers are quite willing to spend a small fortune on figures but are penny-pinchers when it comes to scenery. This is rather curious, given that one of the biggest attractions to tabletop gaming is its visual impact. However, there are alternatives. With a little bit of ingenuity, most terrain features can easily be constructed from readily available materials.

An Introduction to Tabletop Gaming

Hills can be manufactured from fiberboard ceiling tiles, cut into various shapes to represent contour lines. For the more adventurous, truly spectacular results can be achieved with customwood and a jigsaw. Raiding your garden for twigs (make sure to ask partners or parents first!) can produce trees. Varnish the twigs, decorate with tufts of green or brown cottonwool, and stick them in a plasticene base. The same twigs can also be glued together to make simple fences. More substantial fences and walls call for either balsa or heavy cardboard. Roads and streams can be produced from colored strips of cardboard. Odd squares of carpet and linoleum can be pressed into service as fields, etc. Buildings probably present the greatest challenge. My first buildings were simple card constructions, adorned with felt marker windows and doors; and these were perfectly serviceable. With the advent of computer drawing packages and cheap color printers however, life has become much easier for the economy minded gamer. Simply draw your building, use the preset fills to decorate it, print it out, stick it onto cardboard and cut along the dotted lines. Make sure not to glue the roof of your building on to the walls, that way you can remove it to place figures inside it.

So having gathered your army and constructed your terrain, all you require to do battle are some rules and an opponent. While some gamers (myself included) write their own rules, it is probably advisable to start with one of the commercially available sets. You can sometimes find rulesets in your local library, or if there is a wargames club nearby, this can be another source. A local wargames club is also an excellent place to find that other vital ingredient, an opponent.

So now you have your army, terrain, rules and opponent. How do you win battles? First read up on your period. Most military commanders are not fools and there are usually very good reasons for historical tactics. As in real life, it is advisable to start small and progressively work your way up to larger commands. Begin with say a brigade or a handful of battalions before you attempt to recreate Waterloo or Gettysburg. There is a great deal of enjoyment to be had in such small scale actions, and they give you a good grounding in the tactics and methods of your chosen period. You'll see how the troops of your army (or navy) work together, figure out the strengths and weakness of each element; and before you know it, your forces will be sweeping all before them (well at least sometimes).

Further Reading

Bath, T., *Setting up a Wargames Campaign*, Wargames Research Group.
Featherstone, D., *War Games*, Arms and Armour Press.
Featherstone, D., *Wargaming through the Ages* (4 vols.), Stanley Paul.
Hague, P., *Sea Battles in Miniature*, Patrick Stephens Ltd.
Quarie, B. (editor), *PSL Guide to Wargaming*, Patrick Stephens Ltd.
Quarie, B., *Airfix Magazine Guide 4, Napoleonic Wargaming*, Patrick Stephens Ltd.
Spick, M., *Air Battles in Miniature*, Patrick Stephens Ltd.
Various, *Campaigns in Miniature* (series), Patrick Stephens Ltd.
Wise, T., *Airfix Magazine Guide 24, American Civil Wargaming*, Patrick Stephens Ltd.
Wisencraft, C., *With Pike and Shot*, The Emfield Press.

Useful Files

House.PDF is a building you can print out and use for your table top skirmishes.

74.pdf is a Napoleonic 74 gun ship and 32 gun frigate in 1:600 scale.

by Phil Masters

Art by andi jones

Early on in discussions of the ***GURPS Who's Who*** project, Steve Jackson Games and I realized that it was likely to *demand* more than 128 pages. There were just too many candidates from across all of history to boil it down to one book. Fortunately, the powers that be agreed that this was a good excuse to get two good books out of the idea. Volume 1 was produced fairly briskly, to slip into the schedules early this year, and we had no trouble finding 52 good submissions; then, after a short pause in which I drew breath, we fired up again for volume 2.

And -- surprise, surprise -- by the time I'd finished taking submissions from all the smart, versatile ***GURPS***-and-history fans out there, it was clear that the second volume wasn't going to suffer from a shortage of good material either. In fact, in the end I dropped most of the ideas that I'd been playing with for "supporting structure," trimmed what I kept to a lean, mean minimum, and crammed in no less than **56** historical figures this time around -- from, no kidding, Sargon of Assyria to Sid Vicious. It was worth it. Once again, people had impressed the heck out of me with a display of research and writing, from the famous to the weird.

And no, I didn't get *just* those 56 good submissions, either. To my frustration, I had to slam the brakes on while I knew that people were still developing ideas, and then to exclude a heap of good ideas. Future publishing plans are up to Steve Jackson Games, not me, but if these first two books sell as well as I think they deserve, then I think that *someone* ought to be talking about a third, some time. Meanwhile, we've got some cool stuff lurking in limbo . . .

One figure that might be interesting for such a treatment in a future book is the, umm, ever-controversial Karl Marx. Actually, I did a brief treatment of Marx for the "short entries" appendix that I subsequently had to trim (though not delete altogether); he was one of the names that was eliminated in that process. Since then, I've read a little more about the man, and come to the conclusion that I should have written more about him anyway. But here's some basic notes for the moment:

Karl Marx

Karl Marx was born in 1818, in Prussia, the son of a Jewish lawyer of liberal sympathies. He went to university at Bonn and Berlin, living the life of a German student of the day -- getting drunk, even fighting a duel on one occasion -- but also developing radical interests. He studied Hegel's philosophy, which claims that everything progresses through the clash of opposites, but took a more materialistic approach than Hegel himself. In 1842, he became a journalist, and

soon the editor of a liberal Berlin newspaper, which was highly successful before it was banned for being too outspoken.

In 1843, Marx married and moved to Paris. In 1845, the Prussians caused him to be deported from France; he moved to Belgium, where, in collaboration with Friedrich Engels, he wrote a series of books and *The Communist Manifesto*, with its climactic call, "The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Workers of all countries, unite!"

In 1848, revolutions and uprisings spread across Europe, and Marx worked for the cause in France and Germany. But the radicals were suppressed, and in 1849, Marx moved to London. (Britain, standing aloof from events in Europe, was relatively tolerant of radical activists.) There, he fell into poverty, and several of his children died; Engels gave him a little money, and he also wrote for *The New York Tribune*, but he ironically proved unable to budget below the comfortable bourgeois level at which he had been raised, which was more than he could afford; only more money from Engels, who was rising in his family's manufacturing firm, saved him from disaster. Prussian spies, who had been watching him, wrote him off.

Marx took to the British Museum library, developing his masterwork, *Capital* ("Das Kapital"), a lengthy discussion of society, history and economics, and the way he expected capitalist society to disintegrate into revolution. In 1864, he joined the "International Working Men's Association," which eventually made him famous across Europe as one of its leaders, but which also embroiled him in arguments with anarchist members, who he despised. He died in 1883; Only one volume of *Capital* had been published by then, but Engels edited and published the remaining two.

Despite his membership of radical movements, Marx was a very poor orator; he worked best in small groups, or alone, as an "ideas man," and it was his ideas that survived, to be picked up and adapted for very different circumstances by Lenin and Mao. The face of the German philosopher eventually looked down on military parades in Moscow and collective farms in China; what he would have thought of this is uncertain, but he would probably have been pleased to know just how much of an ogre he became to the political right.

Today, with the fall of all but a couple of die-hard Marxist states, Marx might seem completely discredited. However, some of his ideas -- about the decline of social relationships, or on the way that systems carry the seeds of their own destruction -- still strike a chord, even with some on the right, and he still represents one alternative for those who turn against modern capitalism; they can argue that, like other beliefs, Marxism has not so much failed as never been tried. Perhaps, in future centuries, there will still be Marxist revolutionaries -- or perhaps academics will borrow fragments of his theories without having to worry about their reputations.

Removing Marx from history might make a vast or a limited difference to the 20th century. The revolutionary movements that used his name and ideas might well have found some other ideology; history is hardly short of anarchist, socialist, and revolutionary thinkers. Certainly, many of the governments that fell to "Marxist" revolt were ramshackle empires, decaying kingdoms, or corrupt plutocracies ripe for *some* kind of revolution. On the other hand, Marx's densely-argued theories, with their "scientific" analysis and suggestions that revolutionary victory was historically inevitable, provided an especially handy rallying-point, and also inspired numerous attempts to organize economies and societies on specifically "Marxist" lines. Ironically, Marx's own logic would seem to suggest that no single individual is crucial to the grand sweep of history.

Another cut; the biography-devouring Bill Stoddard came through on this volume as on the first, and perhaps as a matter of statistical inevitability, some of his submissions were squeezed out of the final plan. One of these was a treatment of classic '50s rocker and tragic death-too-young Buddy Holly. Actually, though, I took the excuse to read up on Holly a little myself, and -- with Bill's permission -- I revised his entry in accord with what I found. Here it goes:

Buddy Holly

Total Points: 64

Born 1936; Died 1959.
Age 22; 5'11"; 145 lbs.; a wiry young man with dark-rimmed glasses.

ST: 10 [-] **DX:** 12 [20] **Speed:** 5.5
IQ: 12 [20] **HT:** 10 [-] **Move:** 5
Dodge: 5

Advantages

Manual Dexterity +1 [3]; Musical Ability +3 [3]; Reputation +1 (as a recording star, among rock and roll fans) [3].

Disadvantages

Bad Sight (nearsighted) [-10]; Sense of Duty (family and close friends) [-5].

Quirks

Goes driving to think; Impatient with others' horseplay; Prone to snap decisions; Racially tolerant, with a taste for black music; Religious believer (but prone to moral lapses); Shy and moody. [-5]

Skills

Area Knowledge (Texas)-12 [1]; Artist (specialized as Draftsman)-8/14 [1/2]; Carpentry-11 [1/2]; Dancing-11 [1]; Driving (Car)-11 [1]; Electronics Operation (Recording Equipment)-10 [1/2]; Fishing-11 [1/2]; Gambling-10 [1/2]; Guns (Pistol)-13 [1/2]; Guns (Rifle)-13 [1/2]; Leatherworking-11 [1/2]; Masonry-11 [1/2]; Mechanic (Gasoline Engines)-10 [1/2]; Motorcycle-11 [1/2]; Musical Composition-17 [6]; Musical Instrument (Bass Guitar)-13* [0]; Musical Instrument (Drums)-13 [1]; Musical Instrument (Guitar)-16 [6]; Musical Instrument (Piano)-13 [1]; Performance-10 [1/2]; Poetry-12 [2]; Powerboat-10 [1/2]; Singing-16 [8]; Sports (Water-Skiing)-10 [1/2]; Survival (Desert)-10 [1/2].

*Default from Guitar.
All skills are at TL7 where relevant.

Languages

English (native)-12 [0]; Spanish-10 [1/2].

Equipment

Holly owns various guitars, notably a Fender Stratocaster. He drives a Cadillac sedan or rides an Ariel motorcycle (although touring requires him to go by bus or plane). When on tour, he carries a .22 "vest pocket" pistol in his shaving kit, for protection when carrying cash payments. (When dealing with especially shady-seeming promoters, he *may* sometimes mention this.)

On his 22nd birthday, Holly has been married for three weeks, and he is starting to think about breaking off his contract with his manager. He has begun exploring new types of music, from flamenco to contemporary pop, and is thinking about doing a gospel album. His health would be good were it not for a persistent stomach ulcer, which goes badly with his taste for rich food and the occasional drink.

Not How it Used to Be

The obvious change in Buddy Holly's life would be not to end it early, but to prolong it. When he died, he was starting to develop a more complex sound; rock could have matured more

Holly was considered good-looking in high school, but acne scars and a light build later diminished his attractiveness. However, the scars have now been medically treated, and he has worked out in the gym enough to put on some muscle; with the grooming appropriate to a successful stage performer, this could justify Attractive Appearance. His music makes a fair amount of money, but his manager is difficult about releasing it; although he can sometimes afford a new car or generous gifts, he often has to live off others, to his embarrassment.

Incidentally, Holly never learned to read music, although late in his career he took a few lessons in stagecraft with a view to his career options. He may have driven his brother's 18-wheeler truck a few times, and he apparently took *one* flying lesson, but neither would be enough to raise the relevant skills above default.

Biography

Charles Hardin Holley was born in 1936 in Lubbock, Texas, the youngest child of a working-class family who nicknamed him "Buddy." His parents emphasized hard work and Baptist church values; they were also musical, and supported their son's career. He was an average student, bright enough to get acceptable grades without working too hard; he also raised a little hell while growing up (there are persistent though unreliable stories of an illegitimate child), but he took his religion seriously. He did develop a taste for black music, which led him to reject the racism prevalent in his environment.

In junior high school, he and his friend Bob Montgomery began performing rock and roll. A local radio announcer, Hi Pockets Duncan, encouraged them, and agreed to act as their manager. One of their performances attracted the attention of Eddie Crandall, a Nashville agent, who offered Holley a contract with Decca in 1956 -- on which his last name was spelled "Holly," a change he accepted as easier for people to remember.

The contract did not include Montgomery, who dropped out gracefully; likewise, Duncan was unable to travel. Holly recruited a new band, borrowed $1,000 from his brother for his first Stratocaster, and went on tour, not very successfully. He started recording in Clovis, New Mexico, at a studio owned by Norman Petty. Despite Duncan's warnings about Petty's business reputation, Holly's band signed him as their new manager.

Following some turnover in membership, the new line-up chose the name "the Crickets" and released "That'll Be the Day," their first hit. This led to a national tour (on which some promoters who had heard Holly's music, assuming he was black, booked him into black venues). Their initial show at the Apollo in Harlem had an unfriendly audience, but the band's energetic performances won the crowd over. In December, they appeared on the Ed Sullivan show.

In June 1958, in New York, Holly fell into conversation with Maria Elena Santiago, a Puerto Rican receptionist at Peer-Southern Music. He asked her to go out with him that night, and (according to legend) asked her to marry him over dinner. The marriage was not publicized, because of Holly's sense of privacy and because of concern about public reaction to his marrying a

quickly through his contributions. His willingness to write for other performers would have helped this. He had also started to think about getting involved in the business side, as a producer; a chain of studios which he ran could have given greater emphasis to the performer's ideas and hastened the emergence of rock as a vehicle for personal statements. Perhaps a group of musician PCs could sign with one of the great independent labels of the 1960s and 1970s -- run by Buddy Holly.

How would he have dealt with the social crises of the 1960s? It seems likely that he would have supported the civil rights movement. Perhaps the decade would have been remembered more for idealism and less for nihilism, had he lived to see it.

On the other hand, PCs in an alternate 1980s might meet an embittered middle-aged man who looks back on a music scene that left him behind and a hasty youthful marriage that fell apart. This could make a great "nothing to lose" character. (See ***GURPS Wild Cards*** for a somewhat similar What If.) And for a different variation, note that the promoter "Colonel" Tom Parker took a brief interest in the young Buddy Holly, but decided to focus entirely on his greatest discovery, Elvis Presley. If Parker had taken control of Holly's career, the clash of temperaments would have been interesting; Holly might not have been as manipulable as Presley.

The Day the Music Died

There were some unconvincing fringe theories about Holly's last flight -- suggestions that the musicians had been taking drugs, or that Holly's pistol, which turned up in the wreckage, had been fired. In an

Hispanic woman. However, she became a partner in his business decisions and encouraged him to break with Petty, who was at best possessive, at worst obsessively manipulative (and not terribly useful in dealings with the New York-based music industry); however, the Crickets stayed with Petty. (Maria Elena probably had rather better business sense than her husband; in ***GURPS*** terms, she could rate as a useful Ally or Contact.)

From late 1958, Holly lived in New York, for business reasons and because he disliked Texan racial attitudes. He wrote new songs and started producing records for other artists. Early in 1959, short of money, he agreed to go on a tour of the Midwest. The tour was poorly run, with freezing, antiquated buses, and Holly, Richie Valens, and J.P. Richardson, "The Big Bopper," decided to charter a small plane to get them from Mason City to Fargo. Their pilot, a rock fan who was probably under-qualified to fly in the winter weather, became disoriented not long after take-off and crashed, killing everyone aboard.

Holly in History

Buddy Holly was a pioneer in bringing rock and roll, formerly marketed as "race records," to a white audience. His songs inspired later performers, not least the Beatles, while one of the Rolling Stones' first recordings was one of Holly's songs -- and, of course, there was Don McLean's tribute, "American Pie." After Holly recorded "Peggy Sue," the name turned up in other songs; it still evokes 1950s rock and roll.

Encountered

On stage, Holly is dynamic; elsewhere, he remains somewhat shy and moody, though highly determined. His marriage has made him more self-confident, and he dresses more professionally than previously. He strikes many people as a "thinking man," who takes everything from his music to his religion seriously (as demonstrated by a string of innovative touches in his recordings). Non-white characters will find him unusually free of bias, and he is capable of both straightforward courtesy and spectacular generosity.

He enjoys a party as much as most people, and sometimes displays a somewhat juvenile sense of humor, but his ulcer limits his drinking, and his increasing impatience with violent horseplay was one cause of stress between himself and his band. He will accept the offer of a game of cards or (especially) dice when bored. He sometimes makes snap decisions when he is tired (a habit which verges on ***GURPS*** Impulsiveness); early in his career, this caused him to sign away rights to some of his work, and it later showed up in his marriage proposal; it may also be why he chose to take his last flight.

--William H. Stoddard and Phil Masters

Further Reading:

Amburn, Ellis: *Buddy Holly: The real Story*.
Goldrosen, John, and Beecher, John: *Remembering Buddy*.
"The Buddy Holly Collection" (MCA Records -- all 50 songs that Holly ever

Atomic Horror or Illuminated campaign, that flight might end much more mysteriously -- not with a crash, but with a disappearance. Holly and his companions might still be alive as prisoners of aliens, in a hidden base on Earth or in space. PCs might meet Holly after being taken prisoner themselves, or might have the chance to rescue him.

Of course, the fact that a body was found need not be decisive; sufficiently advanced biotechnology could easily produce a fake corpse. PCs with sophisticated laboratories might uncover something not quite right about the bodies, if they were allowed to look.

recorded.)
The movie *The Buddy Holly Story* is inaccurate in many details; it catches some of his character, but is not a reliable factual source.

by Stephen Dedman

Art by andi jones

For this adventure, the GM will need the ***GURPS Basic Set, GURPS Compendium I,*** and ***GURPS Martial Arts.*** It is designed for 250-point Martial Arts characters, but is also suitable for cinematic Espionage or realistic Supers PCs. It is set in the present in a generic large city, and can easily be adapted for any period from Cliffhangers to Cyberpunk.

The city should be large enough to support a number of medium-sized criminal organizations, including the Jinzhi Shisan (Forbidden Thirteen) triad, and Terranova's gang. The Jinzhi Shisan, ruled by the proud and slightly paranoid Soong, will not deal in guns, a specialty of Terranova's; ex-addict Terranova hates the drug trade, a big earner for the triad. Both have always been careful to restrict their activities to their own territory. . . until now.

First Contact

The adventure begins with the PCs walking, as a group, in a low-rent area near the outskirts of Chinatown late at night. The first hint that anything is wrong is a soft thud, -8 to Hearing rolls, from a nearby alley. PCs who hear this should roll IQ to identify the sound as a silenced pistol shot (at -2 if they have no Guns skill), and to locate the source. The next hint, two turns later, is a muffled scream, at -3 to hearing. All of the surrounding businesses are shut for the night, and the nearest public phone is 150 yards away.

Fisher, Terranova, Jorge and one of Terranova's thugs have cornered Dan Jian and Linda Soong in the alley. Jian has already been fatally shot in the head, and lies face-down near Terranova's feet. If the PCs run into the alley on hearing the first shot, they will see Terranova about to shoot Linda, who is handcuffed to the dumpster handle; their arrival will distract him enough so that he shoots Linda through the torso rather than the vitals. If the PCs move when they hear the scream, Linda will be shot through the heart once for 15 points of damage, but they will be in time to prevent a second shot being fired and possibly save her life.

PCs will recognize Terranova on a roll on Streetwise at -3, or Area Knowledge (City) at -5; they will not recognize the others. The four villains are armed but scared of making too much noise; unless the PCs fire first, only Terranova will shoot, and only with the .22 (6 shots remaining). Fisher, a crooked vice cop, will not stick around to fight at all; he'll immediately sprint to the gate, climb over it, and head for his car (parked around a corner 60 yards away), dodging any attacks and eluding any pursuit. It is dark in the alley (-7 to Vision rolls), and improvised weapons (see p.B101) can be found with a Vision roll. Defeating the three remaining villains should be fairly easy; deciding what to do next may be more difficult. (If the villains win, they will place the .22 in the hand of one of the PCs who hasn't been shot and escape, leaving Linda to bleed to death; the PCs will revive in hospital with a police guard and be charged with Jian's and Linda's murders. See "Trial by Ordeal," below.)

If the PCs report the incident to the police and indicate a willingness to testify, this will enable Terranova to trace them quickly and easily, but it will also improve the odds of Terranova being found guilty of Linda's murder. If they don't report it, or report it anonymously, it will take Terranova 1d+1 days to find them (GM may modify for reputation, distinctive appearance, etc.), but the chances of making the murder charge stick will be greatly reduced.

If any of the PCs stay in the alley long enough to attempt first aid (not just bandaging, which may be enough to save Linda's life), the police will arrive before they've finished and demand a statement.

If caught, Terranova, Jorge and the thug will be jointly charged with Jian's murder; Terranova and Jorge will be released on bail two days later, and turn their attention to silencing any witnesses.

If the PCs don't make a statement to the police, go to "An Offer You Can't Refuse."

The Old Curiosity Shop

If the PCs have made a statement, one of them will receive a phone call from Soong three days after the fight. Soong wishes to meet the people who came to his granddaughter's rescue and express his gratitude. If none of the PCs accept this invitation, Soong will try appealing to any well-known weaknesses they may have (he is well-placed to exploit Lecherousness, Greed, Gluttony and most Addictions; he may also try the ruse of inviting the PCs to a martial arts tournament with a $5000 purse). If none of the PCs can be persuaded to meet with him, Soong will assume that this is a deliberate insult or that the PCs are involved in one of many plots against him, and send Ho and two students to fetch one of them for interrogation (see "The Death of a Thousand Cuts," below). If neither carrot nor stick works, go to "An Offer You Can't Refuse."

PCs who roll on Area Knowledge (Chinatown) at -2 will have heard that Soong, owner of Soong's Oriental Imports Emporium, is the secretary of one of Chinatown's largest tongs, a fraternal society of peaceful and mostly law-abiding shopkeepers and restauranteurs. A successful roll on Streetwise at -5 will reveal that Soong also deals extensively in stolen goods. A critical success on either will reveal that Soong is secretly the brains behind the Jinzhi Shisan (Forbidden Thirteen) triad, one of the city's major dealers in heroin, prostitution and illegal gambling.

Soong's Oriental Imports Emporium is a Chinatown junk shop adorned with strange stuffed animals and assorted weapons, as well as Chinese cookware and groceries, imitation Ming vases and terra-cotta warriors, happi coats, kites, cheap toys, costume jewelry, postcards, etc. Weapons available for sale include 1d+1 of every Chinese Weapon and knife listed in the weapons table (p.MA89-92), and a large selection of combat fans, shuriken and tetsubishi. Most are cheap quality, at 75% of list price, though some of the knives are fine or very fine and hideously expensive.

When the PCs visit the Emporium, Soong and Little Ho will be behind the counter. Soong will ask the PCs to tell him what happened and to describe the people who killed Jian. A good description (Bard -3, or Artist -1) will enable Soong to recognize Terranova and Jorge, but not Fisher or the thug. If the PCs speak Mandarin or Cantonese, add +1 to reaction rolls (+2 for a skill of 10+).

If Soong has a Good or better reaction to any of the PCs, he will give them each a gold ingot worth $500 in gratitude for saving his granddaughter, and offer them $10,000 if they can identify the man who ran from the alley. On a Poor to Neutral reaction, he will give only one gold ingot for the party, but the offer will be the same. On a Bad or worse reaction to most of the group, Soong will suspect that the PCs may have been involved in the murder, or are at least holding something back, and will summon the students from the kwoon (2 for every PC). Ho will draw his butterfly swords from beneath the counter, and the PCs Soong dislikes will be firmly discouraged from leaving. If the group decides to stick together, they will *all* be attacked, unless one defuses the situation with an Influence roll.

If the PCs escape, Soong will order Ho and the students to follow them and try to bring them back. As they probably know the alleys and short-cuts of Chinatown far better than most PCs, the GM may allow them to ambush the PCs in a less restricted area (contest of Area Knowledge skill).

Note: the sidewalk outside Soong's is usually crowded (1d-3 obstructions per hex) and the students will only be able to rush in one or two at a time. The interior of the shop is also filled with shelves, display cases and often fragile merchandise; anyone being thrown might land on a soft stack of T-shirts, or on a glass case full of tetsubishi (DR 2; if it breaks, multiply falling damage by 1.5), and a wild swing with a Heavy Horse-Cutter is more likely to bring down a half-dozen paper lanterns than an opponent. Use lots of onomatopoeias.

The Death of a Thousand Cuts

If Soong and Co. capture any PCs alive, they will tend to their wounds (preventing any bleeding but not restoring any hit points) then carry them through a labyrinth of tunnels to a small, damp space where no-one can hear them scream. Soong will then strip-search them.

If/when the PCs wake up, they will find themselves bound hand and foot (-2 to Escape rolls). The students who've helped carry them down are on their way back to the surface (Soong doesn't want anyone overhearing what the PCs have to say), leaving the PCs alone with Soong and Little Ho.

The only light in the chamber comes from an electric lantern, absentmindedly placed within reach of one PC's feet. If it is turned off or broken (DR 2, HP 1), the chamber will be plunged into absolute darkness, giving an advantage to characters with blind fighting. The light is also the only thing scaring away the rats; if it is turned off or taken away, 1d+1 swarms will creep into the chamber within a minute. Soong will not hesitate to use this as a threat.

Soong will interrogate the PCs for about an hour or until he is satisfied that the PCs have told him everything they know (whichever comes first). He and Ho will then leave the PCs to the mercy of the rats.

If the PCs escape from their bonds and try to blunder through the tunnels in the dark (Absolute Direction will only work for a character who was conscious when being carried down), they will eventually encounter Terranova and two thugs. If they have a light (or some super-sense that works in absolute darkness) they will find a ladder leading to a Chinese laundry where they can buy, borrow or steal some clothes before returning to the streets.

If the PCs can't escape Soong and/or the rats, Terranova and two thugs will arrive in time to save them (having been tipped off by one of the students). Armed with silenced H&K MP5s, and equipped with infrared goggles (as well as heavy flashlights), they will mow down Soong and Ho if they're still present, then loot their bodies. Rather than carry the PCs, however, they will free their legs and have them walk at gunpoint back through the maze of tunnels. Terranova will walk six feet behind the others, a flashlight in his left hand to point the way and deter the rats, an MP5 in his right. Fighting or running in these circumstances will be risky, but not necessarily suicidal; Terranova also wants the PCs alive long enough to question. Go to "Getting Away From It All."

An Offer You Can't Refuse

A week after his arrest, Terranova will attempt to use his one of his contacts in the movie business, Zen Cowan, to lure the PCs into a trap. Cowan started his career importing and dubbing cheap chop-sockey movies from Asia, and became a producer of ridiculously successful action movies, known for big budgets, spectacular fight scenes, attractive starlets, thin skimpy plots, and thinner skimpier costumes. All of the PCs will have heard of him, but none will know that he is deeply in debt to Terranova.

Cowan's secretary (Voice advantage; Diplomacy-14, Savoir-Faire-16, Sex-Appeal-15) will invite all the PCs to a charity premiere of Cowan's new film, *Age of the Sword,* followed by a lavish party. Cowan, she explains, has signed a contract for a $50m martial arts film, *Dark Arena,* and wants practitioners of many different styles to perform stunts, train actors, act as consultants, etc. Apart from the possible financial rewards and the chance to rub shoulders with celebrities and other martial arts champions, Cowan's parties are famous for catering to a variety of tastes and addictions. This really is an offer that only paranoid and demophobic PCs should be able to refuse.

Roleplay the party long enough to put the group off their guard. Possible incidents include tournament combat with the PCs' heroes or rivals; demonstrations of karate art or cinematic skills; arm-wrestling contests with Hollywood hunks (or mud-wrestling with starlets, if that's more to the characters' taste); admiring Cowan's collection of weapons; answering stupid questions from journalists and PR flacks; rescuing wannabe actresses from predators with stealthy knee-strikes and finger locks; etc. Meanwhile, Terranova will be watching through hidden cameras, and after an hour or so, will have the caterers dope the PCs' food and/or drinks with knockout drops (treat as a dose of masuizaki powder, p.MA121; IQ -10 to taste, roll HT -3 to stay conscious for another 1d minutes). Any PCs who resist the

knockout drugs will be enticed into the gymnasium and knocked unconscious by as many of Terranova's thugs as it takes.

The unconscious PCs will then be driven to Terranova's safe house. Go to "Getting Away From It All," below.

Getting Away From It All

GURPS Silencer

Terranova's safe house is a two hour drive from town, on a badly-lit minor road, with no other buildings for half a mile in any direction. If any of the PCs revive before reaching it, they will find themselves in the back of a van with their hands cuffed behind them. The cargo container is completely enclosed (though not airtight), without windows or access to the cabin; -9 to vision rolls for anyone without Night Vision. The only doors are at the back; they are not locked. The handcuffs are -5 to Escape skill, and the chain between them has DR 4 and 8 hit points; Karate/Boxing bonuses do not apply, but Breaking Blow and Power Blow may be used. Failure means thrust damage to each arm; critical failure automatically means two crippled arms.

Also in the back of the van is one Thug for every two PCs (round up), a 50-yard coil of 3/8" rope, and a small green canvas backpack containing 10 US Mk 67 grenades. The Thugs are armed with silenced H&K MP5s (Damage 2d) and wearing infrared goggles. The back of the van is slightly less than 6' wide and 9' long (2 hexes by 3), and footing is bad (-3 to any DX roll or DX-based skill, -1 for Pentjak Silat practitioners). If the PCs manage to surprise or overpower the guards and escape from the van, treat jumping onto the road as an 8-yard fall (for 8d-16). Worse still, the van is being followed by Jorge and another Thug in the Mustang convertible.

Jorge will concentrate on driving, but the Thug will open fire on anyone who opens the back doors of the van. If anyone falls or jumps from the van, Jorge will swerve to try to hit them, doing 12d damage. The only effective defense is a dodge; failing that, Roll with Blow would be extremely useful. The Mustang will stay 20 to 25 yards behind the van, and both are moving at between 40 and 50 mph, so anything dropped from the van will be underneath the Mustang one turn later, 20 yards behind it a turn after that. Throwing a grenade under the car won't work, but throwing one *in* might; -8 to Throwing skill with Night Vision, -14 without. If successful, roll 1d; on a 1, the grenade has landed in Jorge's lap; on a 3, in the Thug's; on a 2, between them; on a 4-6, in the back seat. If it lands in the front seat, either character may make one DX roll to grab it and throw it out; if it lands in the back, neither will be able to reach it in time. Either way, the blast will wreck the car and kill or K.O. both of its occupants. Shooting at Jorge or the thug is at -13 to skill with Night Vision (range, speed, and partial cover), -19 without.

If the van stops suddenly, characters in the back of the van will have to roll DX -3 to keep their feet. If the van accelerates while the doors are open, characters will have to roll DX +2 to stay standing; on a critical failure, they will be thrown out onto the road.

Climbing on top of the moving van and crawling over the roof (a la *Raiders of the Lost Ark*) will require two rolls on Climbing -6 or Acrobatics -3. Once on top of the cabin, a variety of attacks are possible. Note: the van has no hood to stand on, and standing on the fender without Immovable Stance or a good grip is extremely hazardous.

If Terranova (sitting in the passenger seat) hears anyone on the roof, he will fire his IMI Eagle through the ceiling (firing blind, -10 to hit; 3d-5 damage). Also in the cabin is a heavy flashlight, a first aid kit, a Remington M870 shotgun, a spare clip for the Eagle, and a large knife.

If the PCs decide to pretend to be unconscious until the van has stopped, they will have to make a contest of Acting or

Body Control against the Thugs' IQ. If this succeeds, they will be conscious when they are carried into the safe house and their handcuffs are removed. Go to "Hell House," below.

Hell House

If the heroes don't escape from the van, they will be revived with ammonia inhalant capsules (roll vs. HT to wake up), to find themselves hanging naked from the ceiling in the washroom of the safe house, their hands cuffed around a pipe, their feet tied. The house (use the "indoor" side of the game map from ***GURPS Basic Set***) has been utterly stripped of furniture, and the windows have been boarded up. There is no electricity or running water, though the thugs have a few canteens of water and thermos flasks of terrible coffee, and lighting is provided by an electric lantern and a few heavy flashlights (one for every two thugs). There will be 1.5 thugs (round up) for every PC, plus Terranova and Jorge; one will be armed with an AK-47, another with a Remington M870, Jorge and Terranova carry IMI Eagles and large knives, and the others will have silenced H&K MP5s. Terranova will interrogate his captives thoroughly, beating their feet with a baton if he suspects they're not cooperating; PCs can Dodge, but not Parry.

PCs who are less than 7' tall will not be able to touch the floor with their feet; this turns ordinary breathing into hard work (roll on Breath Control, or take 1 point of fatigue every HT minutes or after every strenuous action). The only attack possible in this position is a kick, and the Thugs will be careful not to come within kicking range unnecessarily (though they may be tricked into it with Sex Appeal, Psychology, or other methods).

After interrogating the prisoners until he is satisfied that he has learned everything they know about the identities of the people they saw in the alley, Terranova will leave them hanging while he returns to the city to follow up any leads. Two Thugs, armed with the shotgun, AK-47, knife, and flashlight will be left on guard, but both will soon fall asleep, giving the PCs a chance to escape before the others return. The front door is unlocked, the boarded-up windows are DR 2 and 5 hit points, and the van is parked behind the building. If the PCs are still there when Terranova returns, their fate will depend on his reaction to them individually; a Good or better reaction will mean a job offer, a poor or worse reaction will mean continued torture or a bullet to the brain.

Trial by Ordeal

If the PCs are charged with the murders of Jian and Linda, they will be imprisoned unless they can raise bail. PCs with comfortable wealth, a Patron or a large Ally group may be able to raise their own bail; a Wealthy character can bail one more party member out; a Very Wealthy character might bail the entire party. Any one left in prison faces the risk of being attacked by 1d-3 other inmates on a bad or worse reaction roll. This attack should be painful, but not fatal. If any party members are in jail when Fisher is captured (see "Runaway"), they will be cornered and attacked by 1d-1 of Terranova's thugs, armed with cheap knives.

A trial by jury is a contest of Law skills. Court-appointed lawyers have a skill of 1d+10, while the prosecution lawyer has Law-16. Better lawyers will be available to characters who can afford to pay them (Terranova's has Law-19). If the PCs are charged with Jian's and Linda's murders, individual characters may be encouraged to give evidence against other PCs in exchange for immunity, a difficult test of group loyalty.

After the trial, the jury will make a reaction roll towards the defendant(s) to determine the verdict, +/- the difference in the contest of Law skills. Modifiers include defendants' status, and possible intolerance or xenophobia on the part of the jury. If Terranova is tried, every PC who testifies against him gives a -1 modifier. If Fisher testifies, that gives another -3.

The jury's reaction is the verdict; a negative reaction means guilty, a positive reaction means not guilty. Neutral reactions go to the side which won the contest of Law, above.

Runaway

Two weeks after the fight in the alley, a PC will see Fisher, alone, in some innocent but crowded setting (a restaurant, a shop, etc.) and recognize him as the man who ran from the scene. Fisher will not notice or recognize the player character unless the PC draws attention to himself. The character will then have to decide whether to confront Fisher in public, or shadow him. Fisher will fight if confronted, and draw his gun if the PC seems to be the better fighter.

If Fisher is shadowed successfully for 30 minutes, he will lead the PC to one of Terranova's seedier nightclubs. Terranova, Jorge (if still alive), and several thugs (including the bouncer and barman) will be inside. The hero can then decide whether to call for back-up and take on the whole gang, or whether to wait in ambush for Fisher and haul him off to the nearest police station, where he can easily be persuaded to testify. A bar brawl is not obligatory, but it might be fun.

If the PCs *do* take on Terranova in the club, there will be enough Thugs to keep the numbers even. The Thugs will be as heavily armed as the PCs (if the group goes in empty-handed, the Thugs will also be unarmed; otherwise, shotguns, SMGs, etc., will be hidden behind the bar). The lighting inside is poor, -5 without Night Vision. The dancers and any other clients will vanish as soon as a fight starts.

Aftermath

In a best case scenario, the PCs will have rid the city of two crimelords and assorted henchmen, including a corrupt cop. Of course, other crimelords will arise to take their place, so this is only a temporary victory.

In a worst case scenario, some or all of the PCs may spend a few harrowing months in jail before Internal Affairs catches up with Fisher and their convictions are reversed, so this is only a temporary disaster. If this happens, Terranova may escape to another city, where the PCs may encounter him in another adventure.

Cast

Fisher

Late 30s; bushy red-brown hair and moustache, blue eyes; 5'9", 130 lbs.

ST 10, **DX** 13, **IQ** 11, **HT** 11. **Move** 5

Advantages: Double-Jointed; Law Enforcement Powers (Detective, 10 points); Night Vision; Wealth (Comfortable).

Disadvantages: Greed; Lecherousness; Weak Will/2.

Martial Arts: Police Hand-to-hand; Streetfighting.

Skills: Brawling-14; Climbing-15; Criminology-12; Demolition-11; Driving (Car)-14; Electronics Operation/TL7 (Security Systems)-13; Fast-Draw (Pistol)-13; Fast-Talk-14; First Aid/TL7-12; Guns/TL7 (Pistol)-16, (Shotgun)-15; Holdout-13; Interrogation-12; Judo-14; Law-12; Lockpicking/TL7-13; Mechanic/TL7 (Gasoline engine)-15; Pickpocket-12; Running-14; Sex-Appeal-12; Shadowing-12; Shortsword-14; Stealth-13; Streetwise-14.

Maneuvers: Arm Lock-16; Choke Hold-15; Face Attacks-10; Feint (Brawling)-15; Head Butt-10; Hit Location (Brawling)-12; Kicking-14; Knee Strike-15; Rabbit Punch-12; Retain Weapon (Pistol)-17; Roundhouse Punch-12; Stamp Kick-14.

Equipment: S&W M10 in custom concealed holster; spring-action Tokushu keibo; Swiss army knife; Second Chance Kevlar vest; Leather jacket. Car contains Remington M870, heavy flashlight, first aid kit, police radio, and gun cleaning kit.

Michael Fisher has worked his way up from crooked beat cop to detective. Though a very useful member of

Terranova's racket, he has no loyalty to anyone but himself, and will squeal to avoid prison.

Jorge

Mid 20s; prematurely bald, brown skin, black eyes, big ears with 2d rings; 7'8", 258 lbs. Wears black chinos, black muscle shirt, and black cowboy boots.

ST 17, **DX** 12, **IQ** 11, **HT** 14. **Move** 6

Advantages: Charisma/1; Combat Reflexes; Musical Ability/2; Very Fit.

Disadvantages: Appearance (Unattractive); Dyslexia; Gigantism; Gluttony; Pirate's Code of Honor.

Martial Arts Styles: Capoeira.

Skills: Acrobatics-14; Brawling-15; Carousing-15; Climbing-13; Dancing (Brazilian)-13; Driving (Car)-12; First Aid/TL7-12; Garotte-12; Guns/TL7 (Pistol)-17, (other)-13; Intimidation-13; Judo-16; Jumping-14; Karate-14; Knife-15; Languages (English, Portuguese, Spanish)-11; Leadership-12; Musical Instrument (Drums)-15; Shortsword-13; Singing-15; Spear-13; Stealth-13; Streetwise-14; Survival (Jungle)-12; Throwing-13.

Maneuvers: Feint (Karate)-16; Ground Fighting (Karate)-12; Spin Kick-12; Sweeping Kick-12.

Weapons: Large Knife in boot; Colt .45 ACP Officers' Model in custom concealed holster (Holdout +3).

Jorge Obregon, Terranova's chief enforcer, was born in poverty on a cassava farm in Brazil, and occasionally wishes he'd stayed there. He's fairly even-tempered and prefers using his fists and feet to a gun or knife -- but he's not stupid; if shot at, he'll either shoot back or run.

Little Ho

Late 20s; light golden complexion, black hair, hazel eyes, tough-looking; 6'1", 180 lbs. Wears leather jacket and jeans.

ST 15; **DX** 13; **IQ** 10; **HT** 12. **Move** 6

Advantages: Fit; High Pain Threshold.

Disadvantages: Bad Temper; Bloodlust; Tong Code of Honor.

Martial Arts Styles: Wing Chun Kung Fu (Cinematic).

Skills: Area Knowledge (Chinatown)-13; Guns (Pistol)-14; Judo-16; Karate-16; Knife-14; Languages (Cantonese, English)-10; Shortsword-17; Two-Handed Sword-13; Philosophy (Zen Buddhism)-13.

Maneuvers: Arm Lock-18; Back Kick-14; Close Combat (Shortsword)-17; Elbow Strike-15; Feint (Shortsword)-18; Knee Strike-16; Off-Hand Weapon (Shortsword)-17; Riposte (Karate)-13; Spin Kick-14; Stamp Kick-14.

Cinematic Skills: Immovable Stance-12; Power Blow-10; Pressure Points-9. Cinematic Maneuvers: Dual-Weapon attack (Shortswords)-17; Enhanced Parry (all weapons); Sticking-15.

Weapons: Butterfly swords.

Little Ho is Soong's great-nephew and chief enforcer, and absolutely loyal. He likes decapitating the Triad's enemies, especially those who irritate him by being taller than he is.

Soong

Looks ancient but spry (actually 77 years old); weather-beaten golden complexion; long white hair, moustache and beard; black eyes; 5'2", 165 lbs. Wears old greenish-black suit over Second Chance Standard vest.

ST 8, **DX** 15, **IQ** 13, **HT** 9. **Move** 3

Advantages: Charisma/1; Combat Reflexes; Longevity; Reputation (+2 to Chinatown community, always recognized); Wealth (Wealthy); Weapon Master (Knife).

Disadvantages: Appearance (Ugly); Bad Temper; Bully; Eunuch; Fat (-10); Self-Centered; Sense of Duty (Extended Family); Tong Code of Honor.

Quirks: Hates guns; Intolerance (Japanese); Occasional paranoid tendencies.

Martial Arts Styles: An Ch'i; Chin Na.

Skills: Administration-16; Area Knowledge (Chinatown)-17; Armoury/TL4 (Thrown Weapons)-16; Blowpipe-16; Breath Control-13; Detect Lies-14; Fast-Draw (Knife)-18; Fast-Draw (Shuriken)-17; Fast-Talk-16; First Aid/TL7-13; Guns (Pistol)-16; Holdout-17; Interrogation-15; Judo-16; Karate-15; Knife-20; Languages (Cantonese, English, Mandarin, Korean)-13; Meditation-15; Merchant-18; Philosophy (Taoism)-15; Politics-14; Streetwise-16; Throwing-18; Traps-17.

Maneuvers: Arm Lock-19; Choke Hold-15; Feint (Throwing)-19; Finger Lock-17; Head Lock-13; Hit Location (Karate)-15, (Throwing)-17; Spinning Punch-14.

Cinematic Skills: Blind Fighting (Knife)-14; Pressure Points (Knife)-16; Throwing Art (knives only)-18.

Weapons: Large Knife; 2d shuriken and small switchblade knives.

Soong is the brains behind the Jinzhi Shisan (Forbidden Thirteen) triad, the city's main source of heroin. The triad also profits from gambling, protection, loan-sharking, prostitution, and the black market. Soong has hated guns ever since being shot in the groin with a 12-gauge by a business rival, and will not allow his hirelings to use them. He is not unusually greedy, but he is concerned that his family live comfortably -- as long as they obey him. He is as tyrannical and capricious as King Lear with his descendants and underlings, and can hold a grudge for decades.

Students

ST 11; **DX** 12; **IQ** 10; **HT** 11. **Move** 5.

Advantages: High Pain Threshold.

Disadvantages: Tong Code of Honor.

Martial Arts Styles: Wing Chun Kung Fu.

Skills: Area Knowledge (Chinatown)-13; Languages (Cantonese)-10, (English)-9; Judo-15; Karate-15; Knife-12; Shortsword-14; Two-Handed Sword-12; Philosophy (Zen Buddhism)-11.

Maneuvers: Arm Lock-16; Back Kick-12; Close Combat (Shortsword)-13; Elbow Strike-13; Feint (Karate)-16; Knee Strike-14; Off-Hand Weapon Training (Shortsword)-11; Riposte (Karate)-12; Spin Kick-12; Stamp Kick-13.

Weapons: None (but may use weapons from the Emporium).

Terranova

Early 50s; dark gray hair, blue eyes; 6'1", 190 lbs. Wears dark business suit, sap gloves (treat as brass knuckles), hard-toed shoes (+1 to kicking damage), Second Chance Standard kevlar vest.

ST 13; **DX** 13; **IQ** 13; **HT** 13. **Move** 6.

Advantages: Attractive Appearance; Charisma/2; Combat Reflexes; High Pain Threshold; Language Talent/1; Wealth (Wealthy); Voice.

Disadvantages: Bad Temper; Greed; Overconfidence; Reputation (-2, cops and underworld, recognized on 10 or less); Sadism; Vow (Has nothing to do with narcotics).

Quirks: Dislikes loud noises; Treats all sex as business.

Martial Arts Styles: Bando (realistic), Military Hand-to-Hand.

Skills: Administration-14; Area Knowledge (City)-14; Armoury/TL7 (Rifles and Handguns)-14; Body Language-13; Boxing-15; Brawling-15; Climbing-14; Detect Lies-12; Diplomacy-12; Driving (Car)-15; Fast-Talk-13; First Aid/TL7-13; Garotte-13; Guns/TL7 (Rifle, Pistol, SMG)-17; Holdout-15; Interrogation-14; Intimidation-15; Judo-15; Karate-16; Knife-16; Languages (English)-14, (Cantonese, Burmese, Italian, Malay, Russian, Spanish, Thai, Vietnamese)-12; Law-11; Leadership-15; Merchant-14; Philosophy (Buddhism)-14; Politics-13; Savoir-Faire (Dojo, Military)-15; Scrounging-10; Sex-Appeal-16; Shortsword-14; Short Staff-13; Spear-12; Stealth-14; Streetwise-16; Tactics-12; Throwing-13; Whip-13.

Maneuvers: Aggressive Parry-7; Arm Lock-17; Disarming-17; Elbow Strike-15; Head Butt-12; Head Lock-12; Jab-15; Knee Strike-17; Retain Weapon (Rifle)-17; Riposte (Karate)-13; Shin Kick-15; Stamp Kick-14.

Weapons: Small knife in belt buckle; Wire garotte. Owns a large collection of guns, but rarely carries one. Silenced .22 is -8 to hear from 2 blocks away, RoF 1; otherwise, treat as Ruger Standard Model.

After a profitable career as a supply sergeant in Vietnam, Gene "The Silencer" Terranova stayed in Bangkok operating a nightclub-cum-brothel, and is rumored to have trafficked in guns, heroin, and stolen military hardware. He became a heroin addict, but kicked the habit, and returned home in 1991 as a wealthy man. Terranova then used a mix of muscle and money to take over much of the city's sex industry. He's also the mastermind behind the city's largest car theft ring, and still deals in weapons and other black market goods -- but not drugs. He murdered Dan Jian for repeatedly selling heroin in one of his night clubs, not realizing his date was one of Soong's granddaughters.

Terranova's nick-name comes from his preference for silent methods of killing, plus the fact that no-one has ever testified against him.

Thugs

ST 12; **DX** 11; **IQ** 9; **HT** 11. **Move** 5.

Advantages: Toughness (DR 1).

Disadvantages: Choose one or more from Bad Temper, Bloodlust, Bully, Callous, Greed, or Sadism.

Martial Arts Styles: Jujutsu, Streetfighting.

Skills: Area Knowledge (City)-13; Brawling-14; Climbing-11; Detect Lies-9; Driving (Car)-13; Fast-Talk-10; Guns (Pistol, Shotgun)-14, (Rifle, SMG)-13; Holdout-11; Intimidation-13; Judo-12; Jumping-12; Karate-13; Knife-13; Merchant-11; Running-12; Scrounging-11; Shortsword-14; Stealth-13; Streetwise-13; Survival (Urban)-11.

Maneuvers: Arm Lock-14; Back Kick-13; Disarming-14; Eye-Gouging-6; Feint (Brawling)-15; Head Butt-9; Kicking-14; Knee Strike-15; Neck Snap-9; Rabbit Punch-13; Roundhouse Punch-13; Spin Kick-13; Stamp Kick-14.

Weapons: Brass knuckles. Wear leather jackets and hard-toed boots (+1 to kicking damage). Other weapons as described in adventure.

A Journey Of A Thousand Miles . . .

by Genevieve R. Cogman

Art by Dan Smith

Designer's Notes: You Are Here

When I was first thinking about this ***In Nomine*** project, I had visions of all sorts of *exotic* places. Remote monasteries in India, Antarctic bases for Servitors of Vapula, old ruined castles in Germany where the sworn remnants of Teutonic knights still maintained guard over *something* . . .

Then I began looking a little more closely at what was being asked for, and realized that what was wanted wasn't a *Tour Guide To The World*. What was wanted was a group of locations that could easily be slotted into a campaign without requiring the characters to go halfway across the world to get there. (Locations in Heaven, and Hell, and the Marches, were slightly different -- distance and travel became less important, and I could put interesting areas anywhere that I wanted.)

I therefore had to start thinking -- for Earth, at any rate -- about locations which weren't geographically tied down (such as the Antarctic base) but with interesting twists or secrets. I also began thinking about locations in terms of the people there. Geography, in the end, was a fairly minor part of it; it was the *inhabitants* who made a location interesting. The history of an area was also a factor. Innocent-looking places could have the most fascinating secrets. A kindergarten playground might have been the site of a Satanic altar, or a lighthouse might be built over an Ethereal Tether . . .

In the celestial and ethereal realms, the locations I designed were more to do with *theme*. A place within an Archangel's Cathedral or a Prince's Principality must by necessity have some connection to its master's Word, whether that was Stone, or the Game, or anything else. And as the Ethereal Domains were shaped by collective dreams and ideas, those even moreso would have some central concept.

This was a main difference between the corporeal locations and the others. Places on Earth usually had some sort of conflict included in their nature, to do with the inhabitants or the purpose of the area -- to make them more interesting to characters.

. . . Begins With A Single Step

My first step was to panic.

Then again, that hardly sounds professional. My second step was to work out an outline for the book, where I divided it roughly into Celestial, Ethereal, and Corporeal sections, and listed some ideas for locations in each section. In the end, a number of ideas got thrown out, and some new ones (inspired during the writing process and during everyday life) made their way in. I tried to keep to a daily schedule, in order to meet my deadline, and planned to do a set number of pages every day. Fortunately, the locations were very modular (with each one being a set number of pages) and so they could easily be marked out in chunks "to be done."

As I managed to finish chapters, I sent them off to my editor (Bob Schroeck) and the Line Editor (Elizabeth McCoy) to be checked over. To both of these, my sincere thanks for all their help and input. In a couple of cases, where a single location was particularly awkward or had details which needed urgent input, I sent the single section to be checked before the chapter was finished. A lot of email got sent both ways, and multiple versions of single locations began to swarm (and breed) on my computer hard drive.

Naturally, some locations that I'd considered didn't make it into the final draft. They either displayed problems that would require a *lot* of work to become feasible, or they just didn't have enough going on at first glance to make the cut.

However, nothing stops me listing a few of the rejected ideas here. And nothing stops *you* from taking these ideas and incorporating them into your ***In Nomine*** campaign.

The Ones That Fell Off The Map

Cliffs In Darkness

This was to be a section of David's Caverns in Heaven, totally pitch-dark, which were all wind tunnels, cliffs, and caverns. The concept was that of an area where the Servitors of Stone could fly in the midst of their element.

Messengers' Hall

An area in Gabriel's Volcano where messages could be sent to and from her Servitors, and where Soldekai often coordinated matters. While a workable concept, I ended up writing the Vanishing Rooms first (parts of the Volcano that were going missing) and simply liked it better.

Avernus

A bar, run by a human proprietor who claimed to be no less than Lucifer himself. I hadn't decided whether he had been convinced of this by demons, or was insane on his own account, or was acting for some other motive. In the end I decided that the idea was probably more trouble than it was worth, and was getting uncomfortably close to Neil Gaiman's *Sandman.*

Community Arts Center

A location on Earth, and contrary to obvious expectations, not full of Servitors of Creation. However, one of the playleaders was sexually abusing the children, and a potential pawn for blackmailing demons. This one was left out

because I had ideas that I liked better, not because it was really deficient.

The Morgue

A morgue attached to a police station, currently being used by a Shedite of Death as a convenient source of corpses. This location was in the end subsumed by the two separate locations of the police station and the graveyard, and was unnecessary.

Parish Publishing

A small parish newspaper, run (or edited) by a Servitor of Factions who used the editorials and articles to set the community at odds. However, I ended up writing a newspaper company in Hell, and decided that another one on Earth was redundant.

Toy Shop

A location on Earth which was going to be run by a Servitor of Technology, who would have been inserting brainwashing devices in the soft toys. However, I had already written a chemist with a Servitor of Technology, and had another Vapulan hanging around the cinema, and I decided that I didn't want the Earth overrun by Vapulans.

Ironica

A cinema in Hell, run by a Servitor of Dark Humor, that showed films of ironic happenings on Earth. The special feature was that the owner rented out rooms guaranteed free from any eavesdropping -- at a high price, of course. This one got dropped because I decided it probably wasn't *that* hard to find a private place to talk in Hell.

The Room Of Hours

A room in Kronos' Archives, full of clocks of various types, where Servitors of Fate could go to relax. This seemed, in the end, to be lacking in interest. (It was inspired by a room full of clocks in the British Museum.)

Getting There Is Half The Fun

The process of accepting criticism and working on it is very rarely actively *pleasant.* It is, however, necessary, and I incorporated comments from both the Editor and the Line Editor into the work. The first draft then went up for playtest . . .

And I realized that I had forgotten to write an Introduction. Back to the drawing board -- at least now I had most of the book, so I knew what it was an introduction *to*.

Not Very Big, Is It?

I suppose that it is normal for one's own work to seem less than satisfactory, once done. After all, I had written most of it, edited it, had it complained about -- I of all people should know how meager it was.

But, as Galileo is supposed to have said about the Earth, after being forced to publicly recant his views, *"But it **does** move."* And it is my work. In the end, the best way to compensate for complaints about it or problems that it may raise is simply to write more . . .

by Sean Punch

Designer's Notes: GURPS Y2K

Before I write another word, I want to make clear that I *am* the designer of ***GURPS Y2K***, but not the author – well, not the *only* author. This book would not have happened without the creative talents and cooperation of Mike Ford, Scott Haring, Ken Hite, Steve Jackson, Jeff Koke, Phil Masters, Dave Pulver, and Bob Schroeck. They wrote 90% of the book, and they were all good sports for going along with me: I contacted them in late March, signed them in early April, and asked for manuscripts by early June for a book that absolutely had to be out for the last quarter of 1999. For those of you who don't write for a living, let's just say that "give me something well-researched *and* creative in two months, and no slipping" is a tall order on a week's notice. But I'm getting ahead of myself . . .

Why did we choose to handle this as an anthology at all? Originally, we didn't. Plan A was for one writer to take this project, and we initially sought a freelance author by posting a call for proposals to our wish list. But as 1998 gave way to 1999, and as January became March seemingly overnight, we realized that we weren't going to get The Proposal – the one that would make us sit up and say "Oh, yeah!" There were *lots* of good proposals, but none of them portrayed ***Y2K*** as we saw it: a long look at millennial disasters in general. Maybe it was our title (we got lots of proposals to write books about computer bugs), maybe is was a deep-seated need to see ***GURPS Survivors*** (we got even more proposals for post-apocalyptic settings), but The Proposal never arrived.

Time for Plan B.

Suppose you're a line developer, it's March, you have to get a book out by autumn, and you don't have an author. To make it more of a challenge, let's add two caveats: First, the book requires a lot of research because it will cover a popular topic that people will nitpick. Second, the book has to be fresh and creative despite the subject being, well, a cliché. The honest developer will admit that he'd try to weasel out of it. ("Steve! I have this idea for ***GURPS Dustbunnies*** you just have to see! It's way cooler than ***Y2K***!") But this is one deadline you can't weasel out of, because it isn't set by the managing editor or the editor-in-chief, but by the inevitable forward march of time. (And if I had managed to weasel out of *that*, I'd be immortal and writing grimoires of dark necromancy in Lost Tongues.) So what do you do? You contact a good writer. And what's faster than a good writer? *Lots* of good writers.

Come March, then, I embarked upon my first massively parallel writing venture. The first thing I learned was that choosing writers for an "all-star" anthology is tough. Our publicity mentions "favorite ***GURPS*** authors," but who's kidding who? Far more than nine authors have earned the right to that title, and a lot of them are my friends. Luckily, editorial procedure came to the rescue. All good books require an outline, and I set about creating one for ***Y2K***. Suddenly, it became clear to me who would have to do the writing:

Chapter 1: An overview of millennial disaster. Who better to handle that than the creator of ***GURPS***, the man with The Vision, Steve Jackson? (And yes, I did figure that some of the folks who have been dying to see Steve write ***Survivors*** might be mollified by this choice.)

Chapter 2: A humorous look at millennial idiocy. The natural choice was Scott Haring. Scott's ability to handle dark humor shone through in ***Horror*** . . . and anyone who knows Scott knows that he needs no instructions on how to plant his tongue firmly in cheek.

Chapter 3: A treatment of millennial woes as one big, deliberate conspiracy. I read *Suppressed Transmission* and concluded immediately that Ken Hite had to write this, even if I had to go to Chicago and kidnap him. (Luckily, I just had to make a Ken moppet and float it in a bottle of vodka.)

Chapter 4: A realistic look at global geopolitics at the turn of the millennium. This called for someone who had shown a good grasp of world geography and history in his writing, preferably someone who wasn't Yet Another North American. ***Places of Mystery*** and ***Who's Who*** creator Phil Masters, hailing from the U.K., was the logical choice.

Chapter 5: A piece on the *American* take on millennial disaster; i.e., an article on late-20th-century survivalism. My first choice was ***High-Tech*** author and survivalist Mike Hurst, but Mike's day job (all 60 hours a week of it) prevented this. Then I remembered the Steve Jackson-***Survivors*** connection and whined enough to get Steve to write a *second* chapter for me.

Chapter 6: A look at the dark side of disaster: anarchy, opportunism, violence, social decay, and cannibals. Who writes about dark, evil stuff? Who has a grasp of attitude and angst? ***Black Ops*** coauthor and ***Vampire: The Masquerade*** adapter Jeff Koke came immediately to mind.

Chapter 7: An article on rebuilding – rebuilding in the image of the past, not just recreating what was lost. I needed someone with a strong grasp of settings twisted in time . . . and my mind settled on ***Time Travel*** coauthor John M. Ford.

Chapter 8: A science-fiction approach to the end of the millennium, showing how recent technology can cause new and wonderful kinds of disasters. A quick glance at the "tech books" (***Bio-Tech***, ***Ultra-Tech***, and ***Ultra-Tech 2***, not to mention ***Mecha***, ***Robots***, and ***Vehicles***) was all it took to get me on the phone to David Pulver.

Chapter 9: A superheroic look at disasters and rebuilding. It was a foregone conclusion that Robert Schroeck, creator of ***IST***, *had* to write this. I even titled this chapter "IST-2000" in my earliest outline. (I confess to an ulterior motive: More IST stuff! Yay!)

Chapter 10: A supernatural take on millennial disasters – Armageddon and zombies and other good things. I was nominated for the role by other folks at SJ Games simply because I had written ***Undead*** (plus it was generally agreed that I would be a zombie by the time this project was finished).

Designer's Notes: GURPS Y2K

. . . and that's how it happened. Of course, I had to draft contracts, write product specs, write my own chapter, write ad copy, *and* edit the book, but although that was a lot of hours, it was easy next to the planning stages. I mean, it's a joy to edit good writers, and I *like* to write about zombies. Once that was done, all that remained was the introduction, which almost wrote itself. With the all-star author lineup and the millennial theme of the book, a "where ***GURPS*** has been and where it's going" piece was required – and it's one of those things that a ***GURPS*** geek like me can do in his sleep.

After *that*, Jeremy Zauder took over and did the layout, dealing with last-minute corrections from nine writers and an editor at the same time. Anyone who knows layout is probably crying tears of empathy at this point. Thanks, Jeremy!

Naturally, there were hitches here and there. How do you coordinate nine authors on a tight deadline? The answer is "You don't." Everyone had his section, everyone had the outline, and being professionals, everyone did his part without stepping on anyone else's toes. Don't try this at home. There was actually surprisingly little overlap or disagreement for me to edit out, despite the collaborative nature of the book. I'm almost looking forward to my next anthology.

The title was another problem. It started out as ***Y2K***, was changed to the slightly less cliché ***Y2Krash***, and stayed there until the last minute . . . when we realized that it might be read "Y2K rash," which sounds catching, not catchy. Quickly, all the web pages and cover layouts were changed back to ***Y2K***. Whew – disaster averted.

Then there was the question of playtesting, as in "Do we?" Realizing that a playtest would push us into November or later, we decided not to test the book, counting on the combined experience of the authors and the rules geek at the helm (Yours Truly) to get things right the first time. Besides, we wanted the book to be a surprise! You can be the judge, but I'm rather proud of the book.

In the end, we negotiated the speed bumps and got a book to print. It was an exhilarating experience. I hope we managed to convey the fun we had to you, the reader.

Oh, and in case the Net dies on 01-01-2000: Happy New Year!

Building to Spec

by Kenneth Hite, Craig Neumeier, and Michael S. Schiffer

Art by Ed Northcott

In addition to providing a dozen alternate Earths to enthrall players and assist GMs, ***GURPS Alternate Earths*** and ***GURPS Alternate Earths 2*** give the would-be parallel designer a dozen finished examples to inspire and inform her own work. On pp. AE8-10, we discuss some general principles and elements of world design; in the two sourcebooks we display a dozen finished products. Between those two steps lies the hard work of design and decision; in this article we go behind the curtain and show how we did it the second time around.

Designer's Notes: GURPS Alternate Earths 2

Three of the worlds (Cornwallis, Aeolus, and Ming-3) spring from the Reality Seeds on pp. AE9-10, which themselves spring either from chapters left out of the first book for space reasons or from worlds cut from our first proposal. (We cannibalized one of them, Aphrika, into the African geopolitics of Ezcalli in ***GURPS Alternate Earths*** and then added it as a Reality Seed on p. AET10. Waste not, want not.) Given the positive reception to the first volume, we decided to replicate its structure. We already had the "repressive world" (Reich-5 in ***AE***, Cornwallis in ***AET***), "Romantic world" (Dixie in ***AE***, Aeolus in ***AET***), and "ancient empire world" (Roma Aeterna in ***AE***, Ming-3 in ***AET***). Centrum (from ***GURPS Time Travel***) became our "harsh scientific utopia" replacing Gernsback, leaving us needing analogues for Shikaku-Mon (the "SF" world) and Ezcalli (the "fantasy" world).

Caliph comes from our desire to include a genuinely advanced, but not incomprehensible, science-fiction setting. This meant finding an earlier scientific-industrial revolution -- we rejected the Greeks because we'd done classicism in Roma Aeterna. The Islamic Golden Age offers a rather better chance at science and industry, and the Arabian Nights is a convenient source for imagery that blends with SF's "sense of wonder." Displacing our history created Caliph's, though their modern era was less stressful. Later events were built by progressing society through ***GURPS*** Tech Levels at nearly 20th-century speed. A basically decent if self- satisfied culture fits the tone of the Arabian Nights -- no social criticism there -- and introducing wrenching change into such a world is an SF staple. The war is the (sample) disruption built into the setting, and keeps the focus on Earth as page limits require. It also makes the timeline difficult for outtimers to loot.

Midgard became the swords-and-sorcery world, which meant, of course, Vikings and lots of 'em. This was a straightforward Strengthening the Marginal exercise; supercharge the Vikings enough at the start, and the destruction

of the West is relatively easy and plausible. Buy the premise, and you buy the bit. The only decision lay in where to stop. Simple population extrapolation for Vinland, the anti-gun prejudices of the genre, and the coolness factor of having Vikings vs. Cheng Ho all led us to the early 15th century. The rest of the world we built by thinking like Robert E. Howard: what's the most exciting, weird, pulse-pounding thing we can plausibly stick in here? So you get Apaches, human-sacrificing Mixtecs, Moorish Spain, Mamelukes, and the Golden Road to Samarkand. All of which actually existed in our history in 1412, making things even easier. The hardest part became advancing history past Tamerlane, but the "strong Mongol" parallel with Ezcalli seemed distracting.

Designer's Notes: GURPS Alternate Earths 2

Especially since we designed Aeolus and Cornwallis as sort of a Greek Chorus, parallel revolutions against the same corrupt *ancien regime.* Aeolus grew out of the first complete alternate history the authors did together, and was thus arguably the seed for both ***GURPS Alternate Earths*** supplements. The changepoint was a happy confluence of an incident amenable to weather control (Aeolus began as a ***Champions*** setting) and two authors' then-recent completion of a course on 17th century England. As all alternate historians -- and other writers -- know, you take your inspiration where you find it. We developed the world's history in a more organic manner than many of our other worlds, asking "What happens next?" after each event rather than aiming at a particular theme or goal. Regardless, since we designed it in the heady days of fall, 1989, a liberated Eastern Europe seemed predestined. (One touch we tried in Aeolus: repeatedly reminding ourselves "It's been too long since something unlikely happened. What's a plausible surprise?") Cornwallis, meanwhile, took the French Revolution rather than the American as its parallel. We designed Cornwallis first as an alternate intellectual history where the reactionaries won, "progress" became identified with the state anyway, and toadies like Hegel justified it as inevitable. This world unfolded easily, if depressingly, from the assumptions of Malthus and his contemporaries. Then we added a revolution even worse than its opponents; if Aeolus is Tom Paine, Cornwallis is Edmund Burke.

Ming-3 began with our imagining China's place in East Asian civilization being replicated on a global scale. The voyages of Cheng Ho are familiar to many fans of history and alternate history, and served as an obvious point of departure. (Though one discovery we made is how difficult it is to extend Chinese maritime interest beyond the Indian Ocean.) Ming-3 let us look at different cultural assumptions about industry: why, we wondered, would the Chinese invent labor-saving devices? As a counterpoint to Roma Aeterna's confident "upswing," we put Ming-3 on the downswing as the Mandate of Heaven frays. A globe-spanning realm in decline, perhaps a knife's edge away from its final crisis, seemed a natural setting for (paralleling Cornwallis) the struggle to protect even a corrupt civilization (when the alternative is barbarism), or of course pulpish *wuxia* adventure in the weak, divided, ineffectual dying empire.

Centrum was a challenge to design organically from the few hints given in ***GURPS Time Travel.*** As a kind of Dark Gernsback campaign villain, players who begin with just those hints can grow to understand Centrum's viewpoint, and perhaps even find some of their qualities admirable, without ever doubting that they are the enemy. (We'd built Pure Evil in Reich-5, for fans of more Manichean gaming.) Centrum's history gives them both a motive for imperialism and an exaggerated respect for its potential. It also gives them cultural blind spots that canny agents of Infinity, Inc. should be able to exploit. Centrum's perspective on paratime activity, without a Prime Directive or even much concern for secrecy, could also be adapted for a campaign based around a more sympathetic group.

by Owen S. Kerr

Art by andi jones

Linear vs. Non-Linear, or

Euclid Who?

Webster Online defines linear as: Of or pertaining to a line; consisting of lines; in a straight direction; lineal; like a line; narrow. Many RPG games and campaigns follow a linear pattern. The plot requires that the players perform certain actions in certain ways, sometimes even in a certain sequence, in order to complete the mission or achieve the goal. There is very little in the way of sub-or side-plots, and few if any changes in the immediate environment. Most of us are used to this narrowly-defined type of game, from long years of reading and playing prepackaged scenarios, and by creating our own campaigns in the same vein. We're conditioned, very subtly, to think in a step-by-step process, a process that may carry over into our attempts to create interesting campaign worlds for our gaming buddies to explore.

A non-linear campaign, then, has got a lot more going on. The PCs are not "along for the ride," passively accepting a chain of events that head unwaveringly toward the inevitable ending. In a non-linear campaign, the PCs live in a vibrant, dynamic world, a world that breathes, a world where anything can (and usually does) happen.

Which game would you rather play?

Of course, a non-linear style of gaming requires more work on the part of the game master. One needs to be open to player actions, able to have a Plan B when the party changes the direction in which the campaign is going, and well-prepared with fleshed-out NPCs, dramatic situations, and hazardous encounters. Most importantly, all of this has to be done in a way that will make sense to the players. This article is designed to help with the planning and execution of a non-linear campaign.

A Dynamic Process, or

No Plan Of Battle Ever Survives Contact With The Enemy

One of the best things about paper-and-pencil RPGs is that they allow you to interact with a group of people that you know and (it is to be hoped) like. Every PC is a collaborative construct of two people: the player and the game master. A good gaming session or campaign is a vigorous, mutable creature composed of one or more PCs in the game master's universe. This beast is the result of active communication between several co-creators, and can be, as a result, orders of magnitude more complicated than any character. If you think of your campaign as this type of organism, then

a non-linear style of play makes much more sense.

One of the greatest joys in gaming is when your character changes. You gain a level, learn a new spell, or acquire new hardware. The characters change and grow; why should the campaign stay the same? In the Real World, the most successful organisms are ones that can adapt to change in the environment. This is true for a game, as well. If your campaign can adapt to changes in the PCs, then the game as a whole grows and thrives.

Planning for campaign changes may be difficult. In most game systems, there are game mechanics that will indicate when and how a character will change. Experience points (by whatever name) or other development statistics tell the GM and the player that Skill X improves by Factor Y when the character achieves Experience Z. There is no set formula for the growth of a campaign, no way of knowing when the campaign is going to turn, or when the attention of the party will be focused in another direction. Due to the nature of the non-linear environment, the storyline changes when the players decide it is going to change. The job of the GM is to attempt to keep the plot shifts seamless and organic.

Play To Their Fears, or

PCs Say The Darndest Things

So, where can you find story ideas that let the campaign develop organically? Many game masters ignore the fertile ground of player paranoia. Your players can be the richest source of plot twists, and the best part is that they'll never know it. Any time you give your PCs information about their current state of affairs, invariably one will burst out with something like, "I knew it! The Prince has been setting us up! The half-orcs were probably guardsmen in disguise, and the Queen knew about it all along! We're dead!" At this point, you'll want to smile slowly at the player, say, "No theoretical bias against it," and start taking notes. On paper, if you can. Be discreet, but use the player's perceptions as background information or plot seeds for the campaign.

If you're playing with the average gaming group, your players will tend to have active imaginations and high IQs. Players with this combination will certainly come up with notions that never once crossed your mind. Run with them! Take the time between gaming sessions to change the plot idea a bit, add your own take on the existing global situation, polish lightly, and you have the basis for an entirely new section of the campaign. Take the basic questions of Who, What, Where, Why and How, and change one of the answers. Expanding on the previous conspiracy-theory: yes, the Prince did set the party up for a fall; yes, the Prince sent his personal guard to silence the group; and yes, the Queen is aware of the situation; but, she's only allowing the situation to continue in order to gather evidence that the Prince is plotting against her! Take their ideas, twist them until they work in your campaign, and throw them back into the plot.

Running with player preconceptions (to a point) has the side benefit of making the heroes feel like heroes. Many people enjoy figuring out the mystery ten minutes before Sherlock Holmes or Mike Hammer tidies things up. On a related note, it's child's-play to come up with plot-twists when the party thinks they already know what's going to happen. Lead them along by their predisposition, and when the situation gets ugly, turn it on its ear. This, paradoxically, also preserves the players' sense of "I wonder what's going to happen next," a valuable commodity in any campaign.

Don't Be Hidebound, or

The Whole Of The Law Shall Be Do As Thou Wilt

Another source of mix-and-match material is prepackaged scenarios that you may have lying around. Go ahead and use that module that you've been saving for a special occasion, but don't feel bound to play it exactly as it's written. Just as no two people are exactly alike, every

gaming group is going to have its own identity. This can depend upon variant rules that your group uses, non-canon character classes, spells, and hardware, or something as mundane as which players make it to a particular session. Not every ***GURPS Technomancer*** scenario was designed with your buddy's misanthropic technomage in mind, but every game that you run with that PC in the party has got to take him into account. Good players seem to have a knack for innocently (or not-so-innocently) designing characters that easily make a hash of the most intricate plots of a typical prepackaged scenario.

In these cases feel free to wing it. Throw out or change anything that doesn't work for you. This is especially true for items or abilities that will disrupt the balance of the rest of your campaign. A fantasy murder-mystery is an open-and-shut case if the party can speak with the deceased. Keep in mind that the best route is changing the module, not changing the party. One should avoid creating situations that pump up the power levels of the opposition, and avoid deus ex machina. The first situation either kills the characters or rewards them too much; the second leaves the players with the feeling like they didn't have to bother. ("If Zeus was watching us the whole time, why did we have to rescue the Archon's daughter? Why didn't he do it?") Be subtle. Take a good look at the module well before game night, and tweak it with as few changes as necessary. If you just have to have a powerful item/ally/program to complete the current scenario, have a well-thought-out and graceful means of removing it from the party.

Make The More Interesting Choice, or

The Lady Or the Tiger . . . Or Both!

Several times in an ongoing campaign, the game master is called on to make choices. This can be a simple matter of "does the next thorp have an inn where the party can sleep," or as complex as a question about whether a PC is distantly related to local royalty. Allowing yourself a very few exceptions, make the more interesting choice. Illuminated and High-Weirdness campaigns have this idea as a basic tenet; it's a much more interesting game for the players if every other person that the PCs encounter is part of some global conspiracy, government plot, or secret society. Any gamer who has ever played ***Paranoia*** knows this one, too; all Paranoiacs have no doubt that everyone else is out to get them. Makes for a calm, relaxed gaming session, dunnit?

To paraphrase Aristotle's Poetics, without conflict, there is no drama. Without drama, there's no interest. Take this into account when you're planning your next step (or steps) in the campaign. The more-interesting choices are always going to lead to conflict, whether it's a simple melee between the Good Guys and the Forces of Darkness, or something subtler. (Personally, I go for the subtle approach, with the occasional burst of violence to keep the hack-and-slashers happy. Go with what works for you and your group.)

Recurring NPCs, or

Snake Plissken! I Heard You Were Dead!

Your enemy is never a villain in his own eyes. Keep this in mind; it may offer a way to make him your friend. If not, you can kill him without hate -- and quickly.
-- Robert Heinlein

Use NPCs and Bad Guys as the major focus of the PCs' attention. Dungeon-crawls and treasure hunts are all well and good, but the Bad Guy that pops up every now and again, twirling his mustache and sneering, can put more "oomph" into a party than any amount of treasure or potential reward. Nominally rational PCs get really exercised at the prospect of putting it to a long-time enemy. To this end, use the PCs' basic beliefs against them. Is there a peaceable druid in the party, content to talk with the animals and hurt no living thing? Have the Wicked Baron kill his dog. In front of him. Slowly. I guarantee that your humble druid will go through Hades and high water to get revenge on your thrice-cursed and doubly-damned NPC. Don't be offensive or cruel to the player, but hit the character where he lives.

Feel free to make use of unusual antagonists. After all, there are only so many corporate thugs, master necromancers, and Mafia enforcers to go around. The local tax collector may not be the toughest guy in town, but he can visit pain and suffering on the party like few others. If the group kills him, or even roughs him up a bit, expect the full weight of the law to descend, in the person of town guardsmen or local nobles.

Let NPCs Learn From Their Mistakes, or

Pain Is A Talented Instructor

One of the hardest things that a game master is called on to do, on a fairly regular basis, is to be dumb. It's very difficult for many people to play a major NPC in a way that does not take undue advantage of the game master's awareness of the Grand Scheme of Things. The GM must work at responding as the character, and not as the omniscient Ruler of the Universe. The inherent slow-wittedness of an NPC is most prevalent in that it seems to mentally tax any GM-run character to learn from past errors. Many GMs have the NPC try the same bad strategy over and over, rationalizing it as "well, Lothar Elfbane doesn't know the party is going to do that."

While this idea is rationally true, it ignores the fact that people (and intelligent non-people) learn from bad experiences. If your ***In Nomine*** campaign features a diabolic whipping-boy for the angelic characters to kick around, be certain that your little Diablo will remember his experiences and learn from them. (Maybe he sees one of those old Charles Atlas ads . . .) Use this logic when the party goes back to the haunted dungeon, infiltrates the corporate mainframe again, or sneaks up on Billy the Kid's new hideout. Nothing focuses the mind so tightly as the memory of a thorough butt-whuppin'.

The Law Of The Onion, or

Six Degrees Of Separation May Not Be Enough

Statisticians will tell you that the average person has about 500 friends and/or acquaintances. Imagine this theoretical Average Joe standing in the middle of a large field, surrounded by the crowd of people that he knows. Place his closest friends nearest to him, and his nodding acquaintances at the fringes. From the air, an observer would see rings of people around a central point -- similar to an onion, cut in half.

Taking the analogy further, try to imagine your campaign plot as this split onion. Visualize the center of the onion: a goal, an antagonist, or a McGuffin, surrounded by different plot elements. More complex or far-reaching campaigns may have multiple "centers." Each of these subdivisions relates to all of the others in some way. The relationship may not be profound, but any major changes may cause ripples -- changes in the surrounding plot hooks and NPCs. For example, the party wants to depose an unjust king. But the king knows a noble, who knows a servant, who has a cousin, who has a job in the bar where the PCs are plotting. Imagine the surprise when the Royal Guard kicks in the door at midnight!

So, when the party (lands at the spaceport/rides into town/meets at the tavern) be aware that none of the NPCs that they are dealing with exists in a vacuum. They all have friends, enemies, lovers, and family. If you have in mind which friends the innkeeper might talk to, or which family member the gang-banger might confide in, then the web of events becomes much easier to shape. Rumor has a way of spreading rapidly, and the secret that the PCs share with the

wrong person will quickly become common knowledge.

Don't Make Everything Happen At Once, or

Three Crises At A Time, Please

So, you've got your plans made, a few buddies have been lured into playing the game, characters are polished, and the game is underway. You have four major plotlines for the party to explore, and the PCs have the necessary information to take a stab at any or all of them. At some point during the campaign, you'll hear a little voice in the back of your head. The voice tells you that this is a great campaign, you're a wonderful GM, and that you might think about combining all four mini-adventures into one epic campaign. The voice urges you to have this mega-campaign come together at some preordained location, with all of the antagonists against all of the protagonists in a winner-takes-all slugfest.

Ignore it.

In a non-linear campaign, an easy mistake to make is to try to have every situation culminate at the same point. The Plains of Darkthorne hold all of the Answers to your Life's Quest, that sort of thing. Please try not to do this, unless you're planning on taking the melodrama route. At best, you'll give the players a few interesting hours of confrontation, realization, and blossoming knowledge; at worst, you've given them nowhere to go from here. What do they do for an encore, so to speak?

A corollary to this is Don't Plan Too Far Ahead. Have a good idea of what is going to happen next, within the framework of possibility that you have set in motion. No matter which way the characters jump, have something planned for the occasion. After that, set nothing in stone. The PCs are going to amaze, mystify and frustrate you by doing everything except what you want them to do. Be patient. This is a learning experience for most gamers unfamiliar with an "open" game. Once they find out that they can try anything, they'll do just that. Let them. Reward clever approaches to classic problems. Punish abject stupidity, but only in the mildest ways. Let the players know that you're writing the story around them, and they'll reward you with good roleplaying, memorable characters, and hours of fun.

Comics vs. Other Media, or

Where Does He Get All Those Wonderful Ideas?

The bulk of modern media has always given the impression that events proceed in a linear fashion. Every film has a beginning, middle, and end, with the occasional sub-plot to keep the audience from being bored. Books and plays also follow this pattern. Computer games have commonly fallen into this trap, as well, with linear plot lines: first go to Castle Anthrax, then save the maiden, now get the gold before you use the Cadmium Sword of the Ancients, and finally return home, or the equivalent. This linear progression of events is understandable, given the limitations of two hours of film, several hundred pages of text, or the memory storage of the average computer. One must also consider that the production of film, literature, and software is, after all, a moneymaking proposition.

Not so with the creation of a campaign. Here, the creator of the story is an equal participant with his audience and co-authors. Gaming groups aren't trying to make a buck; they just want to have some fun over the next few hours. Imagination has no budgetary restraints. In most cases, gamers demand some level of realism in their games, or at least consistency. They want to move their characters in an environment that grows and changes according to the basic rules of the system, fleshed-out by the game master and, in many cases, by the players themselves. Plots should be character-driven, with perils and rewards commensurate to what the PCs want to accomplish. With the possible exception of a session run within the confines of a convention, where the object may be to "get there first with the most," gamers want a world that makes sense, or at least one that consistently doesn't make sense in an entertaining manner.

Comic books, on the other hand, are a form of modern media that parallels this kind of campaign ideal. In this medium, the protagonists act and react within a framework of understood realities: i.e. magic works, or certain people have super-powers, or any number of similar principles. The actions of the protagonists have some effect on the world as a whole, and character development is an important aspect of the various storylines. Characters grow and change in interesting ways, and not always for the better. Most importantly for the purpose of this article, the average comic has three stories running concurrently: the end of the last "adventure" or "campaign," the middle of the current situation, and the beginning of the newest wrinkle.

It is this "never-ending story" aspect of comic books which delights the typical gamer. We get to watch the heroes (one or more of which we may or may not relate to strongly) go through situation after harrowing situation, sometimes only succeeding by the skin of their respective teeth, sometimes failing in a valiant and heroic manner, and never, never giving up. Wouldn't you like to play in a campaign that runs as effectively as the average Marvel or Darkhorse comic?

Another idea a game master can pick up from the comic world is continuity. Continuity is a must if a campaign is to flow smoothly and believably. The melding of one plotline into another must be as seamless as possible, to facilitate the organic growth of the PCs and the campaign.

Yet another correlation between comics and RPGs is the subject matter. One can find titles dedicated to almost any genre represented in the gaming world, notably super-hero, fantasy, western, horror, and cyberpunk. So don't be afraid to lift plot elements and NPCs from a comic that you like, especially if you're sure none of your players read it. To paraphrase Picasso, good artists borrow good ideas; great artists steal them outright. If you take from multiple sources, no one will ever know the difference. You save time by not having to come up with the idea from scratch, and your players will think you're the most creative game master that they've ever had. Everybody wins.

A Patron Encounter for GURPS Traveller

by Hans Rancke-Madsen

Art by andi jones

The PCs are approached by a young woman in her early twenties. She is quaintly dressed, in the fashion of some back-country province, and seems unused to the hustle and bustle of a startown. She presents herself as Katharina Alderon May and explains that she is the last surviving descendant of a well-know hero of the Civil War, Lord Kevin Alderon. She has inherited a chestful of his belongings, including his medals, his dress sword, his gauss pistol, and his diary. She has been told that there is a lot of interest in Civil War memorabilia and is sure that these items must be worth a lot of money. She is unsure of how to go about selling them, however, and is willing to let the PCs have half of whatever the stuff will bring if they will help her sell it and make sure she is not cheated.

Referee's information

Kevin Alderon is indeed well-known. He was Arbellatra's flag captain at the end of the 2nd Frontier War and followed her to the Imperial Core where he eventually became Grand Admiral of the Fleets and 1st Space Lord. Upon Arbellatra's death in 666 he retired to Kinorb where he lived out his remaining years in obscurity. About 50 years ago he was immortalized by an author named D.T. Woodsman who wrote a semi-biographical bestseller about him and followed up with a dozen sequels (All of which have since been turned into smash holo-dramas).

There are lots of stories about Kevin Alderon and his exploits. One, mentioned in Enli Iddukagan's *Lost Treasure Ships of the Abyss Rift*, tells of how he was stationed on Asmodeus at the outbreak of the 2nd Frontier War and sent off with the planetary treasury when the Zhodani approached. While jumping from Denotam to Phlume, his ship, the *Muskrat*, misjumped and emerged deep inside the Abyss Rift (the near-empty area of space in Lanth subsector) with thrashed jump engines. By an astounding piece of luck he wound up within detection range of a misjumped merchant ship with functioning jump drives but empty tanks and managed to get his whole crew away on that. The *Muskrat* has never been recovered and still floats around somewhere, with an entire planetary treasury in its hold.

The story is quite implausible, especially the bit about finding the drifting merchant ship, but according to Enli Iddukagan it is not impossible, especially in the Abyss where jumpspace seems to play havoc with the laws of chance. It is a matter of record that the *Muskrat* departed Asmodeus under the command of Kevin Alderon and that it was subsequently declared missing. It is also a matter of record that Alderon was assigned to another ship two months later. Iddukagan's own theory is that *Muskrat*, a 20,000 T fleet repair ship, was carrying a smaller jump-capable ship along and repairing it en route.

At least one person passionately believes in the story. It is Ser Vitus Dromon, a descendant of the *Muskrat's* marine

officer. The story of the vast treasure has been handed down in his family from generation to generation, growing ever bigger in the process. He is a wealthy man with enough money to hire a lot of thugs and to finance an expedition into the Abyss. At some point he will hear of the diary and resolve to get his hands on it any way he can. Since the diary is likely to fetch six digit offers from some big publishing firms, he may be unable or unwilling to outbid these rivals. His other options are to steal the diary or to go into partnership with the PCs (In the latter case, his intentions are to cheat then at some future time. He wants *all* the money and is quite irrational about it).

Adventure Seeds

The Alderon Diary

1. All the items are fake, and so is Katharina May's wide-eyed innocence. She is using the PCs as cover and will attempt to abscond with all the money gained whenever she judges that further gains are unlikely or too risky. The diary does not mention the ship.

2. As 1, but the diary does mention the ship. All astrographical data are vague and refer to a randomly selected spot in the Abyss.

3. Katharina is genuine and so are the items. The diary mentions the ship, but carefully avoids giving useful astrographical data.

4. As 3, but the diary does mention that Alderon reported the location of the ship to his superiors and that the treasure has been recovered. This can be verified by digging through declassified naval files, but it's not easy (Enli Iddukagan missed it).

5. As 3, but the location is mentioned. Unfortunately Alderon did report the location (without noting it in his diary) and the navy sent a ship to recover the treasure. There may or may not be some minor items of value left in the derelict.

6. As 5, but in the confusion of the war the report was lost in the files and never followed up upon. The ship is still floating around deep inside the Abyss Rift. The Referee must decide for himself how big a part of the Asmodeus treasury was in still-useful precious metals and Imperial credits and how much in now-useless Asmodean currency. Also, the serial numbers of the Imperial bills may be on record somewhere, in which case Imperial naval agents may show up about a year after the PCs start spending the money and demand most of it back.

When in Doubt, Use the Grenades

by Gene Seabolt

Blame it all on Jack Elmy.

Jack -- the Steve Jackson Games staffer behind all those design improvements of the last few years and the www.comicbooklife.com site -- holds a diehard loyalty to the Mac. (Me, personally, I swing either way, but have been going steady with a G3 for a while now.)

That means that for every 50 computer games that the Wintel-enabled fan looks over, Jack looks over one. *Very* carefully. In the middle of last year, Jack mentioned Bungie's hotly anticipated ***Myth II: Soulblighter***, reeling off a long list of technical features that its advertising promised.

I added my own brand of computer savviness to the conversation. "The box for the first one looked cool," said I. He already had hooked me with "head-to-head network play," so come the holiday season and ***Myth II***'s release I picked up two copies as gifts (Merry Christmas to me).

Each of us found it very impressive, for substantially different reasons. While Jack mastered the intricacies of the game play, I tinkered through the first four or five adventures, then fired up the "tag editor" program, *Fear*.

Wow. No loathing here. Spread out in front of me was the most complex and potential-laden character-generation, adventure-gaming, and physics-altering engine this side of ***GURPS***. While Jack was mastering how to flambé scores of Thralls with one arrow-riddled Dwarf, I crawled around in the guts of the game engine and figured out exactly how much damage that Dwarf's grenades did over just how wide an area.

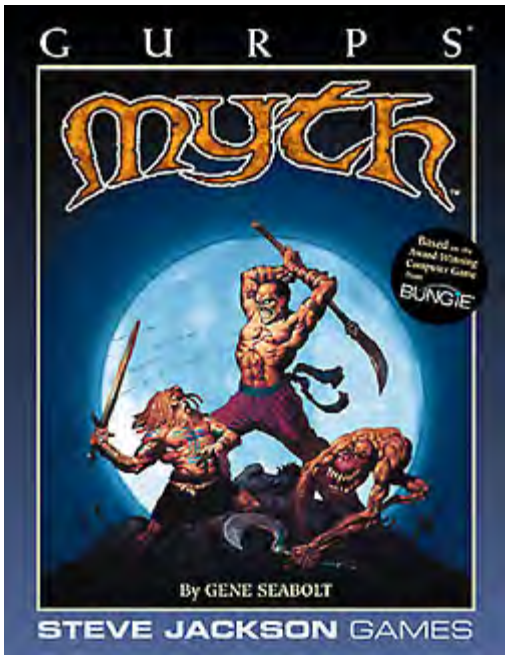
After a while, we each came up for air and compared notes. This game was cool for a variety of reasons, not the least of which was something ***Myth II*** didn't really mean to be: a sort of gateway between ***GURPS***-like tabletop roleplaying and the faster, louder computer version.

At the time I handled licensing for Steve Jackson Games. "You should talk to Bungie," said Jack. So I did. They were open-minded, interested, and fast-moving, so in short order we had a license.

Now the trick would be to publish quickly. Computer games don't spend a long time in the public eye; the next big thing always lurks *just* around the corner. We wanted to have ***GURPS Myth*** out in time for this Christmas, which meant finding a writer who knew ***GURPS***, knew ***Myth***, and works incredibly quickly.

I knew a guy who fit the bill.

Mr. Mom Fires Up the Spreadsheets



The beginning of the 1999-2000 school year changed my personal circumstances a few months after I finished up the Bungie license. My wife had received a promotion, my son was beginning kindergarten, and these circumstances forced me out of day-to-day administration in the SJ Games office and into editing from the house. Editing, and one writing project: ***GURPS Myth***.

The first step was a doozy. Not a lot of writing could get done until I figured out a conversion formula from ***Myth*** to ***GURPS***. That was the meat of my concept for the book; the racial templates in ***GURPS Myth*** wouldn't just be conceptually identical to their ***Myth*** origins, they would be nearly precise conversions, at least relative to all the other writeups in the book.

Now, "nearly precise" can mean "anything short of just making it up" in some minds, but I did come up with a not-*too*-complicated conversion formula that produced viable ***GURPS*** characters. In doing so, I had to mix lots of apples and oranges, which I enjoyed a whole lot more than did Grandmaster of the ***GURPS*** Editors Guild Sean Punch when he looked them over. Many of the conversion statistics mix elements that are unrelated at first glance; the most similar ***GURPS*** example might be the mass-combat system, which mixes defensive, offensive, and maneuver capability into a single TS value. This pretty much guarantees that traditional ***GURPS*** dynamics will fly out the window in a conversion to the ***Myth*** game, but that's OK. All those DX-pumped, cheating-on-HT warriors were getting a little cookie-cutterish, anyway.

Speaking of the Herr Dr. Kromm himself, you can blame him for the book making its deadline with room to spare. When I asked him to give the first draft a conceptual once-over, he instead sent back minutely detailed corrections (partly because I worded my request too vaguely, partly because I asked the tiger to eat *half* the steak). This shaved untold hours off my own work, so he didn't hear me complaining, nor will you. When it comes to debugging ***GURPS*** mechanics -- and this book is chock full of detailed, get-out-both-the-***Compendia*** mechanics -- it's a lot more fun to sit back and watch the master work.

Arching One's Eyebrows and Mages

Every large project features at least one curveball, some problem from out of the blue that no one involved foresaw. ***GURPS*** Writer-Without-Peer David Pulver had the honor of throwing out the pitch for ***GURPS Myth***. A few days after SJ Games announced the license, he nonchalantly commented on a *Pyramid* message board to the effect of, "At least we'll have to deal with archmagery now."

Ouch. I hadn't thought of that. ***Myth*** features a variety of wizards popping off monstrous fireballs for as long as it takes to cauterize all comers. The ***GURPS*** magic system would have to rev it up.

When one thinks ***GURPS*** and archmagery, those with any taste immediately think of S. John Ross' excellent umana system. So did I, of course, but in consultation with Sean he pointed out that he already had introduced one element of what I needed in ***GURPS Wizards***: the extended Magery rules. Really, the only thing lacking was some advantage to do an end-run around the fatigue rules, and a backstory to tie it all together. Those parts I added; you can judge for yourselves the results.

The Missing Writeup

Designer's Notes articles traditionally feature some outtake from the book that they represent. I didn't want to disappoint here, even though ***GURPS Myth*** didn't leave out anything worth featuring. One thing it didn't address,

though, was game statistics for specific major NPCs, respecting Sean's preference that these characters remain vague and therefore menacing to player characters. That makes the following very much unofficial, but no less threatening for it . . .

Soulblighter 450 points

A towering Dark Lord who appears to have once been human, with the lower half of his face peeled off and a large, crooked scar over where his heart should be.

ST: 23 [140] **IQ:** 13 [30] **Fatigue:** 23/29
DX: 17 [100] **HT:** 15/17 [60] **Senses:** 13
Speed: 8 **Move:** 9 **Will:** 18

Advantages: DR 8 [24]; Extra Fatigue (Magery only) +6 [12]; Extra Hit Points +2 [10]; Increased Density [5]; Literacy [10]; PD 6 [150]; Solitary Magery 3 [22]; Status 7 [35]; Strong Will +5 [20]; and Unfazeable [15].

Disadvantages: Appearance [-30]; Destiny [-15]; Fanaticism (Self) [-15]; Megalomania [-10]; Murder Addiction [-60]; Reputation -4 (Bad to the marrow if he still has any in his bones, always recognized) [-20]; Unhealing [-20]; and Unliving [-50].

Skills: Climbing (P/A) DX-1 [1/2]-16*; Intimidation (M/A) IQ+3 [2]-16*; Leadership (M/A) IQ+3 [2]-16*; Polearm (P/A) DX+1 [4]-18; Running (P/H - HT) HT-3 [1/2]-12; Tactics (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-12; and Thaumatology (M/VH) IQ+5 [2]-19.

* Defaults from ST 20.

Rune Skills: Rune-Lore (type unknown) (M/VH) IQ-2 [2]-11 and all standard runes per p. M91 at effective skill 11 [18].

Languages: Bruig (M/A) IQ [0]-13, probably more.

Spells: Activate Runes (M/VH) IQ+2 [4]-15.

Equipment: Soulblighter carries a fine glaive in combat, doing damage of 5d+1 cutting or 3d+1 impaling. He needs no time to ready it between strokes. Presumably he carries a set of runestones concealed on his person. He usually will do just as well with mock runestones as the genuine articles, since the penalty to his Activate Runes skill using two mock stones will lower it only to the effective skill of 11 already mandated by his Rune-Lore skill.

One Last Note

Jack and I did, finally, play ***Myth II*** head to head on precisely one occasion, addressing the original reason I became interested in the game. He waxed me thoroughly.

``. . . And I Feel Fine."

by Thomas Devine

Art by andi jones

One Spring Day At the U.N. 2009
2:10 PM April 1st

Anton Sanddingham (a minor yet useful U.N. official) is eating his lunch outside. An alien spaceship lands. A giant hot-pink cockroach with electric blue markings and sour-apple green mandibles, eyes, and antennae (see note 1), walked right up to Mr. Sanddingham and introduced itself:

Alien: *Hello, we hacked your computer and found out that you'd be a good person to contact.*

A.S.: *Really?* (Gasping for air)

Alien: *Yes. You see we made a serious mistake a while back.*

A.S.: *When?* (Still stunned)

Alien: *372 B.C. But it's not just ancient history yet. An experimental starship of ours went bad.*

A.S.: *Really?*

Alien: *Yes, a bug in the programing. This starship, called the **Starfly** in your language, has a mass close to that of large asteroid and it is racing toward your sun at a very high percentage of C. It will hit your sun in 2049.*

A.S.: *Asteroid sized objects must fall into the sun all the time. What is the problem?*

Alien: *Objects moving at nearly the speed of light get more massive as they get closer to Lightspeed, which is C. The spaceship will have a mass of about 0.87 of your sun when it hits. But don't worry too much. Your sun will be all right in about 15,000 years.*

A.S.: *What about the Earth?!?*

Alien: *Ahem. Well that's why we're here. Would you folks like a lift?*

Most Space Operas have humanity embracing all kinds of complex new technologies but never any of the logical social changes that would go with them (see note 2). Princesses, warlords, decadent aristocrats, loyal peasants, corporate raiders with shocktroops on the payroll, all rub shoulders with heroes or heroines who are either a) 1950s beat drifters in spacesuits; b) Wise-cracking dames right off the old MGM lot; or c) a group of Prince Valiants and Lady Pendragons in spacesuits; little of which makes sense in a starfaring society developed out of 20th century Earth. Still, many of these things are fun. I've got a way to realistically have your fun, high-tech, princesses (and princes for

the ladies) whose hand in marriage really gets you the kingdom, superspies, knights in armor, corporate baddies, and lost kingdoms, Oh My. The only thing you need to do is destroy the Earth. A small thing that.

The Setting

The Aliens didn't leave everything to the last minute. They had terraformed nearly 300 worlds in 200 star systems and even built cities and roads, began agriculture, and did everything they could to make the planets ready for instant habitation. They chose worlds that -- they say -- would never have evolved complex life on their own. To about 70 of these worlds, they took human groups. Not sure what kind of life to offer the innocent victims of their carelessness, they borrowed from many different places and times in Earth history, from a revived Egypt, to a still vital Sung China, to a Celtic Christian Empire, to an Aztec superstate. Some have even developed up to TL5, the Industrial revolution level. So the Earth's peoples have places to go. More importantly, the PCs have things to do.

The main benefit of this setting is that using a mixture of recognizable near-commentary Earth cultures and political groupings and realistic historical cultures, you have a workable Space Opera. The Internet, as an example of dynamic technological change, will surely transform our society in ways we'll never conceive of, until they happen. But not by the time of this setting, and that's only one thing put on hold. By the time of the campaign, 2019 (ten years after contact) Earth is in turmoil. The populations of every nation are moving off planet. You know what a mess it is to move yourself, try moving a nation. Every institution is on stand-by. New technologies may be created, but their development and deployment will have to wait until more stable times.

This instability is a major source of plot hooks. The second the Aliens announced that "the world is coming to an end but we'll take you somewhere else, and it's nice," real estate markets crashed. Only those objects that would remain valuable even if you cut them off from their original context, or draw value from a social context that will be sustained, can retain their value. Tools, weapons, relevant information, usable skills, all of these retained their value. Deeds to land, stocks, bonds, pensions, hereditary titles and the honors linked to them, almost always became worthless. This alone caused chaos aplenty.

Add to this the fact that, in order to facilitate relocation, the peoples of the world were going to be spread across 65 or more planets, none to get more than 200 million humans sent there, and many not to get that. The Aliens also made it clear that undemocratic nations would be broken up to give their citizens a chance at freedom, and low status peoples in every culture would get a chance to control their own lives and rebuild them closer to their liking. This means the end of every human culture; which is not totally bad, but it is profoundly confusing.

``. . . And I Feel Fine."

The Earth

The world of 2009 is not that different from 1999. The biggest changes are in the field of energy, and they are great. A stable Fusion power generator has been demonstrated. It is really a giant Vacuum Tube (see note 3). The prototypes were successful and were 95% efficient in turning the fusion reaction into electric current. Production models are to come out in 2010.

Material science and Bio-Tech have progressed dramatically as well, but in the eyes of the general public, technology doesn't seem to have progressed as much as it did between 1989 and 1999. They are wrong, but that's what it seems like. The only really big change the public notices is the solid state refrigerator (see note 4), but most people don't seem to really understand what a breakthrough it is.

On the whole, the political scene in 2009 is much like that of 1999 but strangely less involved. The Arts seem to be picking up steam. Popular music has no one all conquering sound, but new sounds are plentiful. Fashion has no ideas, but the visual arts seem to be exploding. France is producing dozens of major art shows every month and the paintings and sculptures are stunning, original, and beautiful to behold. In fact beauty is back in all the arts.

Economically, it is a slower version of today, except of course for the enormous hopes pinned on the new fusion systems. Global warming is no longer denied, but the political right still denies that it is linked to pollution. The population's growth has slowed but the Earth now has 7 billion people, and it's becoming obvious that this is not sustainable. Religious conservatives still denounce population control measures based on contraception and many aspects of the women's rights movement as immoral.

In Science, quiet steady work in biology is about to lead to a bio-tech revolution. The public and the pundits ignore this. The gravitational readings from deep space probes have totally undermined conventional relativity, but no new theory has yet been put together to explain the observed facts.

The news the Aliens bring throws the world into such confusion that in many ways, the years after 2009 are technologically more like the mid-1990s. The Internet is disrupted by the social chaos, and most factories are putting all their production efforts into the Evacuation. Scientists are more involved in moving their institutions than in research. Technology is frozen for the duration.

This means that your Space Opera heroes will be using present day tools and resources. In fact, once the transport systems begin to break down, the PCs may find they need horses to get to the spaceport. This is a world recognizably like our own. The only really important difference is that it is doomed. This is part of the charm of this setting -- there is no reason to explain why the Space Opera heroes act and think like modern day people. They *are* modern day people.

New Worlds for Old

The Aliens are a decent group of beings. They are genuinely sorry for destroying the Earth, which was an honest mistake, and they are seriously working to make amends. The Aliens have taken a large number of worlds and made them into new Earths. They then seeded some of these worlds with human cultures. Because of humanity's rapid, if fitful, progress, they have gotten the go ahead to evacuate the whole Earth just recently (see note 5).

In order to set up and protect the cultures on the worlds they Terraformed, they took humans from the Earth and educated them as allies in their rescue program. These people, who call themselves "the Coventry" (see below), are running the Evacuation. They control the ships and have already helped build the cities the Earth's peoples are being sent to. There are places for all of the Earth's people, if they will come, and if they can organize themselves to get on the ships.

The terraformed worlds are scattered around the Milky Way Galaxy. Each has a gravity within 20% of Earth norms and the majority are within 10%. The years, axial tilts, and day length of these worlds can vary by up to 40% from earth norms, but the mean temperature, background radiation, stellar spectra, and mineralogical content of the planets are amazingly Earthlike, and variations are generally not noticeable. Each world's plant and animal life is entirely terrestrial in origin. Some life forms have been modified but there are no truly alien lifeforms on these worlds.

There are 72 worlds, out of 297, with human communities on them. Of these, 69 are worlds that sample groups of humans were placed on as preserves for the human species in the wild. These groups were gathered between 15 A.D.. and 1734 (see note 6). Every major human group is represented, including many which no longer exist on the Earth. Each world had between 60 and 250 different cultural groups planted on them. On most of these worlds, as the populations grew and spread out, often coming into contact with radically different neighbors than they had on Earth, they diverged into new societies and civilizations.

Only ten of the worlds settled by preindustrial humans will be open to Earth's refugees. Each of these has one or more cultures entering the early industrial phase (18 other worlds are at about this level of technological advancement, but

these ten lost the lottery). These and 55 more worlds have large areas prepared for immediate inhabitation by Earth's populace.

On the pre-inhabited worlds, Earth-folks will be brought to live in seaborne arcologies. These will be self-sufficient cities miles across, floating in the tropical seas. Thus the "natives" lose no useful land. Sailing vessels of those nations friendly to the Coventry will be allowed to enter the harbors and trade with or otherwise communicate with Earth-folks. A great place to start your anthropologist, treasure hunter, diplomat, or just plain thrillseeker PCs.

The uninhabited worlds have a wide variety of arcologies built on them to allow their new owners a wide range of climates and opportunities. In each case, the first Earth-folks to arrive will be busy setting things up for the next wave and the wave after that. The pre-inhabited worlds will get about 15 million Earth-folks apiece, while the other terraformed worlds will get between 100 to 200 million Earth people. Certain small communities will be taken to other places. Some groups of Amazon Indians, Intuits, and other hunter/gatherer peoples will be taken to worlds separate from the rest of humanity, where they may live in peace. Some groups of space enthusiasts and technophiles will be taken to live in space habitats. Both groups will be very small in total numbers.

The Evacuation

In December of 2009, the first groups of humans leave the Earth. They are mainly people that the Coventry have selected as teachable. The Coventry have access to a TL16+ speed-teaching technology. They intend to use this to train the armies of Earth- folks needed to organize the Earth's populace in their new homes. Because it is easier to speed-teach those who are already literate, these first few millions had to be drawn from the ranks of those who already have educations.

Even illiterates can be trained in TL16 physics with these devices, but if you aren't used to using the appropriate types of abstract symbols, such as numbers and formulas for engineering or science, extreme cognitive dissonance sets in (see note 7). Unlike normal cognitive dissonance, this cognitive dissonance can last for weeks and cause delirium. This can be handled, but that takes more time per student than can be spared until later in the process.

Between Jan. 1, 2010 and Dec. 31, 2015, 500 million people are taken off planet. These are almost all literate people. The upper working, middle, and upper classes of Europe, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and the Americas are largely gone. The wealthy and middle income areas of most western cities are mainly empty. The poor have the Earth and are waiting for their tickets off planet.

Jan 1, 2016, places are ready, and the first super transports begin to take people to the stars. 500 million people a year are being taken to their futures.

The trips take from six weeks to six months. The transports are much like passenger liners; this surprises most people because they assumed that the airplane-like ground-to-orbit transports were a sign of what the trip would be like. There are recreational facilities on these ships, but much of the time is taken up in speed learning. Since there is plenty of time in transport, and Earth-folks have been trained to run the systems, this is now practical for the illiterate, as well. There are still limits as to what can be done without inducing dementia, but any training at all is a very good thing.

These ships are filled with up to a million and a half people from all the world's cultures, frightened, often angry, seeing treachery in everything they don't understand, and that is understandable. Many PCs would be people taken off Earth early and trained to handle the passengers on these ships. Pursers, and that is what the PCs would be, take care of the passengers and maintain order among them during a voyage. Given the situation, this would be a lot like being police officers and social workers at the same time. Anyone who has seen movies like *Ship of Fools, Murder on the Orient Express, Titanic, Charlie Chan goes to the Races, A Night at the Opera*, or *The Lady Vanishes*, can see the adventure possibilities of people in closed off, isolated spaces going on along journey. Heck, just throw people from 20 or so different mutually hostile cultural groups together, in forced contact, even in spacious quarters, and even plots from *The Love Boat* can get deadly!

An interesting campaign could be built around PCs who are Cruise Director/Entertainment Committee types. Just think about a ship taking a rich selection of refugees from the Balkans, the Eastern Mediterranean, the Caucasus Region, Central Asia, and the Arabian Peninsula, and then finding events that all of them would regard as harmless fun. The mixture of farce and horror should be original.

Given the facts about human stubbornness, which the Aliens are taking into account, it is assumed that only for the first few years will the transports get to carry maximum loads. They have allotted 20 years to this part of the evacuation, so that the Earth will be largely empty by 2036.

Not known to the general public is that in 2036 the Aliens plan to have the Coventry, with the permission of Earth governments and the aid of Earth-folk troops, forcibly remove those groups that are deemed "unable to comprehend their danger or cooperate in their own removal." The Aliens fully intend to let those they deem capable of understanding the danger stay if they choose. The attitude of some Aliens toward such people was summed up by one Alien Ambassador as "Social Darwinism is evil, but some people will inflict it on themselves. That is their right, and you are lucky to get them out of your gene pool." Most other Aliens simply sigh and say, "There should be another way, if you think of one tell us, please."

However many technologically primitive small-scale cultures, living in areas like the Amazon jungles, the wilds of Borneo, the mountains of central Asia, or the Sahara desert, are deemed unlikely to understand their danger (see note 8). The Coventry will have to round up these people without hurting them. Given the fact that many of these people have every reason, from long and bitter experience, to distrust all outsiders, and exceptional skills in guerrilla warfare on their own territory, this would make a demanding campaign.

The period after 2036 is seen as a mopping up operation, and those too stubborn or foolish to have gone earlier will be given the opportunity to leave now as "Doomsday" draws near. Scholars will be making extensive studies of the planet, as this will be the last chance for that sort of thing. The Earth will be chaotic and in many areas empty. Transport and power systems will have been left without proper routine maintenance since the early 2020s in most of the world. That may not seem like a long time, but it is only constant maintenance that keeps most large systems going. Most structures will be standing right up until the hypercanes generated by boiling seas blow them away, but the connections between them will be lost quickly.

One good campaign for this period would be a treasure hunt. Since both the remnant Earth governments and the Coventry would be loathe to leave any valuable cultural treasures on the Earth to be fried, PCs could be a group of searchers who find rare items that were not brought along and will be forever lost if someone doesn't go now and get them. Picture any interesting place on Earth which might have a rare item, 17th-century love letters, sealed diplomatic documents, holy relics, or lost *Doctor Who* Episodes (see note 9)! This would not be just a detective game -- without regular maintenance, cities can become death traps. Once the humans leave, wild animals would be coming into the cities because they are a great habitat once you get rid of the people. Those humans that refused to go might be a serious threat to the PCs. They would probably see the Aliens as foes and the PCs as traitors to humanity, or they could just be violent idiots; either way, armed thugs can be a nuisance.

On August 25, 2049, The ***Starfly*** (the out of control Alien craft) will collide with our sun. The Aliens prefer a secure safety margin, so all of their ships will be out of the solar system by August 15. This means that they will have to leave the Earth by July 25. A small group of volunteer ships and crews will stay on Earth until the ***Starfly*** gets 10 light-days out, and then they, too, will leave. Anyone left will simply die, which should set up a great "race for the last transport" scenario.

Afterworlds: Earth and the Stars

The Earth

The sun will not explode. The "Others," whom the Aliens deal with, would not want that, as it would be far too disruptive. "Brakes" have been placed in orbit around the sun to contain the shock. Instead of an explosion, the sun

will lose 3% of its lifespan. The side effect of this containment is that Sol (the sun's proper name) will radiate substantially more light and heat for the next 15,000 years, and constant solar storms, sun flares, and stranger phenomenon will combine to make space travel fatally dangerous within the solar system for that period.

On Earth, the sun will appear much brighter. By early October, hypercanes will form in the tropical oceans. Hypercanes are a special form of hurricane. When an area of water around 30 miles in width reaches a surface temperature of 120 degrees, a hurricane forms that extends into the upper atmosphere, about 20 miles high; this is a hypercane. One hypercane can destroy an earth-like planet's ozone layer by spreading fine particles of salt water into the upper atmosphere. By Halloween 2049 there will be 50 active hypercanes.

Hurricanes and hypercanes are cooling mechanisms. The increased heat will be spread by these storms, but it can not be dissipated. By mid-winter of 2050, between ultraviolet radiation, violent storms, and brutal heat, all unprotected human, plant, and animal life is dead. Some life remains in the deep oceans. Those people who sought to ride the crisis out in deep subterranean shelters, rather than flee to the stars, will now know that their cooling systems will fail in a few months.

By 2100, the seas are boiling, even around Antarctica. The Earth is becoming a runaway greenhouse world like Venus. Once the oceans are gone, organic molecules will begin to break down into base chemicals. The release of carbon will speed the temperature increase. Eventually the water molecules will disassociate and the free oxygen will bind to the carbon. The hydrogen will rise to the top of the atmosphere and be lost on the solar wind. The moon will look down on a world no different from Venus.

The Stars

Earth-folks will be settling into the Arcologies as early as 2010. Many of these earliest settlers will be people who work in what might be broadly defined as "cultural" jobs. Television and film production was moved to the new worlds quickly. This made it possible for positive, comforting images of the new worlds to be sent back to the Earth. The Earth-folks liked what they saw and resistance to the removal was somewhat lowered.

Colleges, universities, museums, and libraries all quickly set up shop. In fact, in the years between 2012 and 2020, most Earth-based universities had more teachers than students. Many cultural institutions were asked to just move to the stars and go on as if they'd only moved across town. You could, if you set your game on one of the new worlds in this period, have an opera house chorus drag the PCs off the street to make them watch a performance!

Ethnic bakeries and restaurants, dance halls and discos, theaters and concert halls, will all be part of the arcologies as the Earth-folks swarm in. But it won't feel like home to the first generation.

Until the 2040s, the new worlds will have a unsettled makeshift feel. The surroundings will be lovely but the people will be focused on what they left behind. By the 2040s the first humans born in their new homes will begin to find their voice. After the Earth is known to be dead, those who have few memories of it or never were there at all, will begin to think of themselves as being from the worlds they live on.

Social and cultural life will revitalize in the 2060s. The teenagers will all have been born off Earth. They will be Star-folk, not Earth-folk. The arts will reflect new lives, and visions and science and technology will start to deliver 60 years of pent-up innovation. Some worlds will thrive, some will sink into chaos, others will blend the two, but humanity will keep changing -- maybe even progressing.

On the pre-inhabited worlds, cultural exchanges will speed the social and technological development of the societies dwelling there. Being able to visit a TL8 city, even if you don't learn how things are done, can give you ideas. The industrial revolution strikes again, and other kinds of revolution as well.

From 2045 on, the Coventry allow Earth-folks to move between the worlds that refugees were taken to. This is to reunite families and allow people to find suitable communities to live in. After 2090, the Coventry restrict passage by non-Coventry. Only scholars, scientists, diplomats, artists, and other people deemed to have serious reasons for travel

between worlds will be permitted passage. The Coventry are required to make this restriction by the Aliens, who say that the Others required it of them.

Barring the development of anti-agathics, by 2150 Earth passes out of living memory. The star-folk are becoming new ethnic and national groups. The prototypes of TL9 devices are in the graphics computers. Earth is becoming Atlantis, Irem of the Pillars, Camelot, or El Dorado, a lost dream.

How Is It Possible?

You may ask, "How could the Aliens have gotten the Earth's leaders to trust them?" After all, it would be very hard to prove that there was an out-of-control spaceship heading for the sun at a high percentage of C, let alone prove that it would disrupt the sun in such a way as to sterilize the Earth. Even finding the ***Starfly*** with terrestrial astronomical tools, without proving what it is, is probably impossible. So how do the Aliens win over Earth's leaders? Mind Control Rays. It pays to be TL16+.

Having studied humans for millennia, the Aliens know how to take limited control of our minds for short periods of time (full control of someone who knows you're trying to control them is not practical, and will damage the subject and perhaps the would-be controller). The Aliens wouldn't want such control anyway; they see it as immoral, but they still use their techniques for one limited effect. Whenever an Alien tells you the truth you will know that what was said was what the Alien believes to be the truth; conversely, you will automatically know a lie as well. Limiting as it might sound, it is a powerful strategy; the level of trust that can be built can move mountains. The devices are built into the electronic voice boxes that they use to produce human speech.

There is a profound problem with these devices, however. They work very well on those who spend time working with abstract symbols (letters, numbers, musical notes, etc.), but on those who rarely work with such things they are less effective. People with the Literacy advantage and more than three points in skills like Mathematics, Writing, Poetry, Literature, Law (legal matters take a lot of abstraction), Heraldry (abstract symbols all), Musical Composition, Medicine, or any science skill including Research, gets no chance to resist the effect. Anyone who reads more than one language fluently (Musical Notation counts) also gets no chance to resist.

Literate people who do not have or use abstraction skills have a chance to resist at Will-5 when they are exposed to the ray. Each time they fail to resist they permanently gain another -1 to Will to resist the ray. On a Critical Failure they permanently lose the ability to resist the ray. Illiterates who have the Musical Ability or Language Talent advantages, or more than three skill points in these areas, or have the Mathematical Ability, Lightning Calculator, or Intuitive Mathematician advantages, or a point in Mathematics (Ciphering) or (Arithmetic) (see note 10), are like the last example, except that their Will penalty is equal to all of the character points in these areas.

Examples: Mary has Musical Ability 2 and a point each in Guitar and Drum, so her Will penalty is 4; Luiz has Language Talent 3 and a point each in English, German, Spanish, and French, so his Will penalty is ten; Yashu has one point in Ciphering, so his Will penalty is one.

The penalties for the listed advantages also apply to the literate, but the skill-based penalties do not. In any case, anyone whose will penalty is greater than his intelligence gets no chance to resist.

Total illiterates lacking any of these skills or advantages, or those who have a chance to resist and have more than three levels of Strong Will, or advantages/disadvantages that strengthen the will to resist, get no will penalty to their resistance, and never have their resistance weakened by failure. Critical failures to resist the ray tend to cause paranoid delusions about the user of the ray.

This device meant that the leaders of almost all large human groups knew that they had to leave the Earth and that the Aliens were their only hope. Many people hate the Aliens and the Coventry for pulling down their power structures, but they knew they were dependent on them for survival and that they were honestly offering rescue and safety.

An important point about the Mind Control Ray: It can only get people to believe that you are telling the truth, it

cannot make them believe you are right, or just, or truthful in nature. The Aliens convinced people they were right by a display of technological ability and showing leading scientists the ***Starfly*** through their sensors. Knowing that someone is speaking the truth is not the same as knowing they're right.

The Coventry

``. . . And I Feel Fine."

The Coventry are the genetically modified descendants of humans taken from Earth, during the centuries after the Aliens realized that the***Starfly*** accident had doomed the Earth, but before they made formal contact. The Coventry are what***GURPS: Robots*** would describe as Biroids or Trans-genetic Humans. I'll use the ***GURPS: Fantasy Folk, 2nd Edition*** format to describe them, but use ***GURPS: Bio-Tech*** and ***GURPS Compendium I*** for some of the advantages and disadvantages.

Advantages

All of the Coventry have +4 in the four basic stats (180 points).

They have the following transgenetic brain modifications: Alert+5 (25 points), Ambidexterity (10 points), Autotrance (5 points), Intuitive Mathematician (25 points), Language Talent+5 (10 points), Musical Ability+5 (5 points), 3D Spatial Sense (10 points), and Versatile (5 points).

These are the Coventry's Cardiovascular modifications: Auxiliary Heart (bought as Extra Hit Points +2 and Hard to Kill +3)(25 points), Boosted Heart (bought as Extra Fatigue +1 and Hard to Kill+1) [Bonus also applies to aging rolls and to any rolls made to avoid heart attacks +20%] (6 points), High Efficiency Kidneys [bought as reduced Life Support)[half normal water requirement] (10 points), Recovery (10 points), Very Fit (15 points), and Very Rapid Healing (15 points).

For cosmetic reasons (and to make them more efficient persuaders), the Aliens made sure that the Coventry would all be at least Handsome/Beautiful (15 points).

The Coventry have the gastrointestinal modifications of No Appendix (0 points) and Sanitized Metabolism (5 points).

Advantages from glandular modifications are Early Maturation (5 points), Improved G-Tolerance 2 (10 points), and Combat Reflexes (15 points).

Their improved immune systems grant them Immunity to Disease (10 points) and Immunity to Poison (10 points).

Lifespan modifications are Extended Lifespan 1 (5 points) and Longevity (5 points).

The Coventry have several Musculo-Skeletal modifications, such as Double Jointed (5 points), Manual Dexterity+5 (15 points), and Toughness 2 (25 points).

The Aliens also made respiratory modifications to the Coventry, such as Breath-Holding 1 (2 points), Filter Lungs (5 points), and the Voice (10 points) advantage.

Their sensory modifications are Faz Sense (10 points), Night Vision (10 points), and Polarized Eyes (10).

Their reproductive modifications are Easy Childbirth (1 point), Light Menses (1 point), and Reproductive Control (2) for the ladies, and for the gentlemen Injury Tolerance (No Vitals) (groin only -60%) (2 points), internal testicles. This gives female members of the Coventry 532 points in advantages and males 530 points of advantages.

Skills

Although they have limited access to ultra-high-tech, the Coventry are educated only to TL8. The Aliens were not allowed to go beyond this. This means that the Coventry do not have to pay points as a race for high technology. But remember, in this scenario Earth technology is just barely TL8; the Coventry have *mature* TL8 technology. Just think of the difference between the U.S. in 1951 and today. That's how great the difference is. Most analysts suggest that with higher levels of technology, smaller tech lags can be more of a disadvantage.

All of the Coventry are extensively educated. Almost all of the Coventry involved in the evacuation have finished the equivalent of a university education. Graduation is normally at about age 75, which, given their lifespans, is not as high a percentage of their lives as many modern American grad students. Thus the Coventry almost always start with at least 150 points in skills.

Certain skills are always studied by the Coventry. Their culture has three major languages which they call Green, Red, and Blue (the code names of the separate camps the Aliens set up to mold human cultures they could work with). Every member of the Coventry has one of these as their native tongue and learns the other two Coventry languages to IQ+3 (Each language is M/A, 1 Point, remember their Language Talent). For historical reasons, Gaelic, Classical Greek, Latin, Chinese, Ancient Farsi, Palahvi, Sanskrit, and Swahili are all studied, (1/2 point each, 4 points total).

The Coventry's libraries have an extensive amount of literature in each of these 11 languages, both known and lost terrestrial works, and the Coventry's own contributions. English, Spanish, French, Arabic, and at least eight other modern languages are also studied (1/2 point each, 6 points total). Linguistics is always learned to IQ+2 (2 points). Chess is always learned to IQ (2 points). The skills of Literature, History, Theology (Hermetic, see below), Bardic Lore, Rituals & Ceremonies, Philosophy, and the Theologies of at least four major Earth faiths (Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism are normally on the list), are learned to IQ (40 points).

In science, Research, Psychology, Zoology, Physics, Geology, Genetics, Engineer (a specialty will be chosen), Biology, Botany, Ecology, Chemistry, and Genetics, get 1 point each (12 points). Mathematics is studied to IQ+3 (4 points). Singing, Musical Composition, and Play Instrument skills in Keyboards, as well as three other instruments, are also required (1/2 point each, 3 points total). Artist, Bard, Dancing, Dreaming, Lucid Dreaming, Poetry, Sculpting, Writing, Choreography, Performance, Directing, Flower Arranging, Gardening, Punning, Scene Design, Administration, Carousing, Diplomacy, Fast-Talk, Politics, Savoir-Faire (Coventry, and four Earth Cultures), and Erotic Art are all known by every Coventry Member dealing with Earth-folk (1/2 each, 13 points total).

The basic self-defense style taught to all Coventry members has Karate, Judo, Body Language, Boxing, Gun (stunner), and Cane (Short Sword), as primary skills. Arm Locks, Finger Locks, Hit Locations, Ground Fighting, Kicking and Break fall, are the maneuvers (6 points). There are many Cinematic forms, Trained By a Master is Common, as is advanced skill. Up to 5% of the Coventry would be seen as 4th dan or higher martial artists. This covers only the basics known to all members of the Coventry -- as they all have at least 150 skill points when they join the Evacuation Committee, and only 89 points are accounted for on this list, that means every member of the Coventry has at least 61 character points to spend in their special skill areas.

Disadvantages

All Coventry have Reputation: Oversexed Outer space Weirdos -2 (reaction on -10) (-10 points), and the Quirk, Bisexual (-1 point). Thus, it costs 669 points to play a male member of the Coventry, and 671 points for a female.

Character Options

Empathy, Intuition, Common Sense, are all common advantages, as are Higher Purpose, Animal Empathy, Charisma, Eidetic Memory, Strong Will, Collected, Composed, Cool, Cultural Adaptability, Imperturbable, Unfazeable, and Rapier Wit (if it fits your campaign). The Coventry *never* have genetic disadvantages, and any handicaps would be healed by the Aliens (they could never stand to see the Coventry in pain or suffering). Most disadvantages will be of

the Duty, Sense of Duty, and Vow types. The Coventry are given to intense commitment. Attentive, Broad-Minded, Cannot Harm Innocents, Cannot Kill, Pacifism (self-defense only), Careful, Charitable, Chummy, Compulsive Carousing, Compulsive Generosity, Congenial, Curious, Disciplines of Faith, Dreamer, Extravagance, Gregarious, Imaginative, Lover's Distraction, Nosy, Overconfident, Proud, Responsive, Trickster, Weirdness Magnet, and Xenophilia, are all disadvantages the Coventry often have. All other disadvantages tend to be rather rare.

The Coventry in the Campaign

The Coventry are not combat monsters, and they are far from point cost effective. What they are is highly competent and versatile. They are humans who have been encouraged to be good at being human by Aliens who'd embrace Timothy Leary's SMI2LE ideology. They function as the Aliens that the PCs deal with. Think of Tom Baker and Lalla Ward as Doctor Who and Romana II; they were smart, charming, good natured (within limits), and much weirder than the monsters. Patrons, Allies, and strange but delightful friends, that's the Coventry.

The Coventry as PCs

Normal members of the Coventry are between 750- and 900-point characters. If your campaign is at that level, fine. Most members of the Coventry directly involved in the evacuation are young, between 75 and 100 years old. The Coventry have access to good anti-agathics, so 500-year-old members of the Coventry are not that rare. Players creating Coventry characters should be talented at making kind and generous people real and interesting. There are unpleasant, miscreant members of the Coventry, but their sins tend to be petty and dull. Any exciting hero/villain types are busy elsewhere. Cross Lady Romanadvotrelundar with the Mountie from *Due South*, and you have a normal member of the Coventry. Charming to be with, useful in the game's background, but gameable only by certain players.

Psychology

The Coventry are human beings who have lived all their lives in a society that most humans would call Utopian. It's not Never-Never Land -- there are problems -- but just as a medieval peasant would have trouble understanding that modern North America was not a paradise, so much more mysterious are most of the Coventry's problems to Earth folks. They are pleasant, cheerful, people, not because they are unmindful of the "realities of life" or hiding from them, but because the realities of their lives are wonderful. Think what the people around you would be like if they had never known want, and further, if they had lived on worlds where *no one* had ever known want. Where hope was always justified, where trust made sense, where people always cared; they would be utterly different people. The Coventry are just human, but humans who have led very different lives.

Ecology

The Coventry were created when the Aliens took groups of humans from several ancient cultures to camps on three terraformed worlds. These worlds were designated Green, Red, and Blue. The Coventry still live on these worlds and in a large number of space habitats. These days the vast majority of the Coventry live in space. Their ancestors were taught TL8 skills by the Aliens and required to live in peace. Robots and AIs did the drudge work.

The Coventry have a "Post-Scarcity" economy. Even if no one ever worked, society would continue simply because there would always be food on the table and the plumbing would always get fixed (see note 11). Many social structures and restrictions based on scarcity make no sense in such an economy, which adds to the oddness of the Coventry.

The most important job the Coventry has is to maintain the viability of the Terraformed worlds that Aliens put Earth's flora, fauna, and sentients on. The reason these worlds would never have developed complex lifeforms on their own is the fact that the star systems these worlds are in lack gas giants. In our Solar System, Jupiter swallows up so many asteroids that the mean time between major asteroid impacts on the Earth is increased by a factor of one hundred. This means that where the Earth has had a major asteroidal impact every 24 million years or so on average (we are presently about 40 million years overdue, thank Jove), the worlds the Aliens terraformed had a major impact every

240,000 years or so. Complex life could not get a foothold. The Coventry now reroute the asteroids in the star systems containing terraformed worlds, so that they stay terraformed.

Families among the Coventry stay together because of pleasure and custom. People can go it alone, but like the very poor and the very rich here on Earth, the Coventry enjoy their families and live with or very near them all their lives. Each of the three languages of the Coventry are rich in detailed descriptions of kinship. When we say "my Aunt Mary," those listening to use assume that Mary is the sister of a parent or grandparent, or an older cousin. In each Coventry language there are specific words for maternal aunt, paternal aunt, mother's maternal aunt, mother's paternal aunt, father's maternal aunt, father's paternal aunt, and many variations. They like their families and talk about them.

In sexual matters, the Coventry have very firm sexual morals and stick to them. However, whereas Earth-folk sexual morals are based around the virtues of fidelity, chastity, and abstinence, the Coventry base their sexual morals around the virtues of respect, generosity, experimentation, playfulness, and compassion. This often leaves the Coventry and Earth folks accusing each other of having no sexual morals at all.

The Coventry mature as quickly as Earth folks but do not enter middle-age until about 100. Or rather, if they did not use anti-agathics, they would. Without anti-agathics, 200 would be as old for them as 100 is for us, but because of their excellent health, many more of them would get there and in good condition.

Culture

The Coventry do not have a hierarchy of any kind in their society; they have networks. There is a lot of structure and organization in their lives, but it is a horizontal, never vertical structure. Only in those situations where they are forced into duplicating another culture's rank systems do they ever use such structures, and then they don't like them. The equality of the Coventry members is such that no member of the Coventry has Status or Rank relative to other members of the Coventry, either as an advantage or disadvantage. Reputations are common, and people can be known to have organizing duties, and will be listened to when organization is needed, but there is no hierarchy. The Aliens worked steadily to achieve this. They don't have hierarchy, and they knew that they'd had it in their primordial times, so they assumed that humans did not need it either. Thus, they created the perfect human anarchists.

The Coventry are a vast cosmopolitan culture based on a variety of subcultures. The basic subcultures are defined by the languages Green, Red, and Blue, which come from the worlds that the Aliens started the Coventry on. Green was dominated by a mixture of Hellenistic Greeks and Gaelic speaking Celts, Red was dominated by the Han Chinese and the Persians, and Blue was a mixture of Ancient Indian Hindus and Buddhists, Javanese, and the peoples of the Swahili city-states. The languages all have perfectly regular grammars (Alien influence there) but are richly expressive in different ways. The interplay of different styles of expression and mediums of communication, in ways that often seem chaotic to Earth-folk, is normal for the Coventry.

After this original population had formed a stable cultural matrix, new peoples were brought in. They enriched both the gene pools and the cultures. Many maintained subcultures based on their original ethnic or religious group. These new additions were discontinued in 1734, the same year as the last groups of people destined for the terraformed worlds were removed from Earth.

All Coventry are educated to understand a variety of cultures and viewpoints. Their embrace of the arts, particularly music and drama, is largely seen as a path to a truer perception though a deeper expression.

The Coventry are deeply spiritual. The tendency to religious faith among humans disturbs the Aliens. Luckily for them, lacking the social chaos of Earth, otherworldly messianic faiths were never popular. People brought from Earth to join the Coventry often maintained their ancestral faiths, but few Earth faiths caught on or even sustained their numbers. Buddhism was an exception; a syncretic Mahayana Buddhism is a common faith. Taoism, influenced by Persian mysticism is also common. Celtic Druidic practices and Greek mystery cults were even more important. Their emphasis on personal knowledge and individual spiritual life fit the non- hierarchal life of the Coventry more easily than world-renouncing faiths. Shamanic ideas, and the Druids and Mystes were always pretty much shamans anyway, were introduced by many people from cultures were such faiths still flourished. The Shaman's practice of going to the

Otherworld of the Gods and spirits yourself and getting your own answers was attractive to the Coventry. Ceremonial magicians combined the spiritual seeking of the shaman with the intellectual imperatives of the high cultures of the Earth. This combination, strongly influenced by the other traditions became the central theology of the Coventry. An Alchemist from renaissance Europe joined the Coventry in 1524. Freed of the fear of the Inquisition, Augustus Gigorio Guaineri became a philosophical and spiritual genius. His Alchemic theology became the basis for the Hermetism that is the faith of the mass of the Coventry (about 65% of them). The Rituals & Ceremonies skill refers to this spiritual background, as does the Autotrance Advantage.

The name the Coventry is not religious. The members of the Coventry know that they have restrictions, they know that their patrons the Aliens have to deal with other aliens, and that they are not fully free because these other aliens will not allow it. But once the Earth-folk, or the people of one of the terraformed worlds develops interstellar travel techniques, the Aliens can allow the Coventry to "join" their kin. The Coventry and the Aliens know that they have a deal to have this happen when Earth descended people achieve starflight on their own. This is their solemn oath, their covenant. They used to call themselves the people of the Covenant or the Covenantors, but that has serious religious meaning on the Earth, so they decided to come up with a variant -- the Coventry. After "sent to Coventry" became a saying, both the Coventry and the Aliens, quiet aware of Earth culture, thought it was amusing, and apt, given the relationship between the Aliens the Coventry know, and the others that only the Aliens know. The most important restriction on the Coventry is in the area of science. The Coventry are not allowed to be scientists. They may conduct surveys and research for the Aliens, but they may not independently study the universe nor may they invent new technologies. Until humanity outside of the Coventry achieves TL9, real science is forbidden to the Coventry.

Most of this information will never come up in play, but it is necessary to define the Coventry. Most of the time they should seem very intelligent and more than slightly off kilter. Which, from our point of view, they are.

The Aliens

Little information is needed. They are in the background and mean to stay there. They do not like to be around humans, as we are considered strange and disturbing. They like Earth-folk, they love the Coventry, but we are, just, so weird. They find us worthy of their efforts because many of us can understand five things: compassion, love, humor, irony, and play. Our pride amuses them, our dignity delights them, and when we show integrity, they know we are kindred spirits. Besides, it is their mess, they have to make it right. But we are so creepy! They really wish we would have been insects.

In play, meetings with the Aliens are something PCs should see on TV or hear about from superiors. The Aliens should be rarely glimpsed and from a distance. The Aliens work through the Coventry and Earth-folk agents, and prefer to deal with them by telephone or E-mail. In the early years of the evacuation there was no choice, so the Aliens used lots of face to face meetings. But once that kind of contact is no longer needed, they withdraw and let the Coventry rescue humanity.

Campaigns And Characters

Player Characters normally start with 100 character points, plus a limit of 40 in Disadvantages and five in Quirks. Those drawn into the evacuation will gain new skills and abilities quickly, because they'll be taught by the Coventry. Assume that the characters gain 100 more character points, paying starting cost for attribute gains. All physical disabilities would be healed by the Coventry, using either their own skills or borrowed Alien technology. Any PC designed with physical handicaps like Blind or One Leg will have to pay for the removal of these disadvantages out of the second 100 character points, and may take no new disadvantages to regain the points except Fanaticism (Gratitude to the Coventry). Non-cinematic advantages are allowed, but only if the GM says that training or Coventry bio-tech (backed by the Aliens) could achieve it. Given the state of emergency there has to be a good reason for gaining a trait. **Examples:** Cultural Adaptability is listed in ***GURPS Bio-Tech*** as a genetically induced trait. Also, it would be darn useful in the evacuation, so it would be allowable. On the other hand, Weapons Master is cinematic, not Bio-tech inducible, or very useful to the task at hand, so it isn't allowed. A character may buy it with his first 100 points plus disadvantages and quirks, but not with the bonus points.

Characters representing evacuees, instead of those working in the Evacuation, would be built as normal PCs, as would most humans native to the terraformed worlds and those choosing not to evacuate.

Certain kinds of advantages and disadvantages will be lost or reduced during the evacuation. Status, positive or negative will tend to be reduced. If you were an English Duke, 3rd cousin to the Windsors and also related to half of the crowed heads of Europe, about Status 5, you'd probably drop to Status 2 or less! A movie star who keeps making films when they get to their new homeworld, a CEO, or an important government official who was still working in a government, might keep more of their Status, or all of it. Most of those with negative Status will rise to 0 because much of their past will be left behind. Similarly, most Contacts and Favors will be lost. The Coventry will make *certain* no one is Zeroed. Extra Identities will probably be lost. And most people will lose Wealth levels and/or debts. Wealth disadvantages will be wiped off the character sheet, and poverty will be worth no points. Wealth levels above Comfortable will cost double to reflect their rarity. Levels of Multimillionaire will cost triple, for the same reason.

Cinematic campaigns could be set during the forced removal of tribes or the cultural scavenging/treasure hunting period, both after 2036 on Earth. Cinematic campaigns could also be set among explorers, diplomats, and soldiers of fortune on the pre-inhabited worlds. Tribal removal would be a tough ***GURPS Special Ops***-type campaign. Outdoors, Social, Combat, and Thief/Spy skills will be needed. Diplomacy and Anthropology would be the most useful skills for getting the people to agree to come along for the ride. Stealth, Gunner (knock-out gas), and First Aid will be best with recalcitrant folks.

Treasure hunters will also need Outdoors skills and a variety of art history and goods-appraisal skills. Characters who were antiques dealers and are now swashbuckling scavengers looking for the last treasures on the Earth fit this campaign.

Those who go out to explore the pre-settled worlds will be going into very alien territory. These worlds are inhabited by the descendants of Earth people brought to these worlds over the past few centuries. Delivered into pristine worlds lacking diseases that had any effect on humans, armed with agriculture and other skills, their populations exploded (see note 12). The ten pre-inhabited worlds Earth folks will be allowed on all have at least one TL5 civilization and several TL3 and TL4 cultures, as well as small-scale societies. Think about Earth in 1800, now add vast TL8 cities floating in the seas. Adventurers could go both ways in these settings.

Karum

A Sample Pre-Inhabited World

Given the ancient name of an Iranian river, Karum is a world greatly influenced by a Persian based culture. Its gravity is 0.85 of that of Earth. The day is 53 minutes longer than Earth's, but the locals still divide the day into 24 hours. The planetary year is 364 1/7 Karum days long. It has a large moon, which the locals have named Tishtrya. This moon is larger than the planet Mars but it is so far from Karum that its tidal effect, while dramatically greater, is not large enough to be considered catastrophic. The lunar cycles on Karum are 26 planetary days. Since Tishtrya has an atmosphere and oceans, it is much brighter than Luna.

The two largest continents of this world are separated by a narrow rift valley sea running NW to SE and about 300 miles wide called the Vourukasha. Near the midpoint of this passage, as vital a trade route for this world as the Suez region is for the Earth, there is a river delta in a desert. This river is called Anahita. Isfahan, named for an Iranian city, is the nation that dominates the delta and the passage.

The river that forms the delta flows out of the heart of the northern continent. The headwaters of the river come from an area with several large rivers flowing out of vast lakes, like freshwater seas. Slavic groups influenced by Scandinavian trader/settler/warriors have created an imperial state in this area. The culture is in transition at this time because of a marriage alliance between the Tsar of the Slavs and a Nipponese princess from Wak-Wak. A new cultural fusion is forming which the Persians, even though they are allies to the present state, fear.

To the northwest is a broken continental area like the islands of Northern Canada or the Indonesia area. Peoples brought from Europe and northeast Asia live in this region. A culture based on a fusion of Chinese and Indian backgrounds dominates the eastern end of the northern continent, which is called Asfar (after a book on Metaphysics). South of the eastern end of Asfar, there is an Australia sized continent called Munajjim (because it was discovered by an astrologer by that name, according to legend) that is home to several southeast-Asian-based cultures. The dominant trading power is a Thai city on the northern cost. Munajjim is much rainier than Australia and has several large kingdoms.

Southwest of Asfar is Zanjan (a Persian term for Zanzibar). The northwest of this continent is called the Maghreb, after the Arabic term for northwestern Africa. It is inhabited by decedents of people from the Roman colony of Carthage and their Visigoth rulers. It is a mixture of Germanic, Latin, and Moorish cultures. South of the central desert (like the Sahara a Hadley cell desert), are kingdoms whose peoples were brought from Shonghi and the Zimbabwe cities. The eastern coast is dominated by Swahili-speaking city states.

Asfar extends its broken chain of islands over to a large northern landmass with a Canadian climate. Norse and Amerind peoples share this land, sometimes in war, others in peaceful trade. Because the Vikings and the Amerinds rule themselves by counsels, this land is called Maydan.

Isolated from all the other continents in the southern oceans is Santur (a musical instrument like a zither). It is called that because sailors from that Santur met Isfahanni sailors on an island west of Zanjan, and were named for the instrument they were playing. This continent received a mixture of Mesoamerican peoples and several Greek communities. It has a wide range of climates from Antarctic to tropical.

Taken as a whole, Karum has a smaller percentage of land to water than Earth. But more of the land is arable, and there are more and larger areas of rich fishing in the seas. Minerals seem to be as common as on the Earth. The Isfahanni state is developing solar power (much like the devices demonstrated at a fair in Paris in 1785). The Isfahanni are the dominant trading power of this world, much as Antwerp was in the 16th century on Earth. But both the Thai and Sino-Hindu states to the east, and the Celtic Leagues and the southwestern Zanjan kingdom to the west, dispute that dominance. The Swahilis back Isfahan, as does the Slavic Imperium and the Maghreb states. Santur is neutral, but being rich in minerals and unusual and useful plants, may not get to stay so.

Islam is the major faith of Isfahan and the Swahili states. An Isfahanni city named Ardvahist, which was the site of a spectacular meteorite impact, is this world's equivalent of Mecca. Most Zanjan states are largely Islamic, with the Maghreb, a largely Christian area, an exception. Maydan is mainly pagan, but Islam is a growing influence there. Syncretic forms of Buddhism and Christianity are dominant from the Celtic League cities just east of Maydan to the eastern borders of the Slavic Imperium. A state sponsored Hindu-Buddhism guided by Confucian ethical teachings is dominant in the Sino-Hindu states. Buddhism is the faith of Munajjim. Santur has several faiths based on the Mesoamerican cultures that dominate it and they are highly influenced by Greek Mystery cults and Gnostic Christianity.

The seaborne Arcologies are seen as new players in this power struggle. There is no reason for the sea cities to align with each other or the continental powers, but given the social turmoil in the cities, foreign policy distractions may be welcomed by whoever is in charge.

The New Worlds

The Arcologies that most of humanity will go to live in are spacious, comfortable, lovely to see, and provided with every state-of-the-art convenience. However, since the population will consist of stunned and disoriented refugees, they will be hard, spooky places to be for the first few decades. The great struggle will be to restart society. Human beings need a society in order to define themselves and interact with others. Those institutions that would have come through the evacuation at all will be highly disorganized, and often pathetic. Think of an unpopular and repressive government, its people scattered, its resources gone, given an office with no telephones as a sop by the Coventry. What can they do?

Other entities will come through just fine, and may thrive. Churches, political parties (the European kind, not the U.S. types), interest groups, and cultural movements would be in strong positions. People need purpose and these groups supply purpose. They would be new communities for those who had lost their communities. This could lead to lots of fuss if these groups come to blows, but it would help to bring civilized society back to life. Even if their purpose is to protect the nests of robins, most people feel stronger for having a purpose. Groups that supplied a sense of purpose would become very powerful very quickly. Besides, having the PCs fear the anger of the Audubon society can be fun.

Less positive groups would be involved as well. Gangs, Tongs, Triads, the Mafia, the Yakuza, the Shining Path, the Taliban, extremist I.R.A. factions, HAMAS, various Neo-Nazis, the Ku Klux Klan, and other criminal and/or political extremist groups will be seeking members and offering easy answers -- the wrong answers, but easy ones. The PCs could infiltrate the gangs or try to set up worthier groups.

Corporations will try to set up shop, as economic activity is something to do. And as it gives life some direction, the Coventry will give them some help. Corporations will have different goals. Some will be out for the cash, some will take Henry Ford's view, "Business is a public service," many will seek to make their businesses a power base.

Most of the people in the arcologies earn their living either by maintaining the structure of the arcologies or by production of goods and services. Food is grown in vast hydroponic farms, which provide an abundance of extremely fine produce. Items rare and expensive on Earth are common here. Dairy products, animal flesh, and eggs are produced in vat factories. These often produce such fresh products that even the fussiest must concede their superiority to ranch products. Venison burgers with portobello mushrooms are a common fast food snack in these cities.

Apartments will be large and comfortable. The Coventry and the remaining Earth governmental structures will encourage culture and entertainment, so new films, theater, concerts, night clubs, dance halls, and amusement parks will be available to all. In fact, entertainment and the arts will probably be an area for entrepreneurs to restart businesses in. Crafts will be encouraged both as a means of employment and cultural preservation. Both areas will lead to early conflicts involving cultural and religious values and identities.

Coventry and Alien Characters

The Aliens are NPCs only. The Coventry may start as 750-point characters (as described above) with limits of 40 additional points in Disadvantages and 10 in Quirks. That would be a rather high point total campaign. The Coventry are of every Earthly ethnic and racial type, and have many mixtures of types rare on Earth. They may buy Psionic powers and skills without the Unusual Background advantage.

Psionics and Magic

By default in this setting, Psi powers are rare (a 100-point Unusual Background, except for Coventry members), as well as weak and unstable. However if you want it as a common or important part of the setting, then all members of the Coventry can be at Psions, at least at the "normal" level for the campaign, and in many cases well beyond.

Magic is not part of the default background, but if you want it, it is there. For ***GURPS Magic,*** the Aliens would understand the genetics of human Magery and the Coventry would all have +5 Magery, and many points in spells. Illusion Art would be popular, as would creation of music with the Voices spell. If you use ***GURPS Voodoo,*** then all of the Aliens are at least level seven initiates, and the Coventry are all at least level five initiates by the time they meet Earth-folk. For***GURPS Mage,*** the Aliens are powerful Umbroods and the Coventry are all Mages specializing in Mind, Life, and Correspondence. If you are a fan of *Dune* or A.E. Van Voight, you could give the Coventry the Rapier Wit advantage and the Neurophon and Enthrallment skills from ***GURPS Compendium I.*** They will function as pretty good magic even in a no-magic world. Remember that all Coventry will need Charisma to use Enthrallment.

Crossovers

Illuminati

The Conspiracies won't be pleased. Or maybe they planed it, using the Aliens as pawns. Certainly setting up the Coventry was an interesting way to get rid of worthy troublemakers. But if the Conspiracies are caught flat footed, for the first time ever, then they would react badly. Killing off possible leaks and clearing up loose ends as they flee to the stars would make perfect sense. Certainly the evacuation would be a vulnerable period when enemies could strike at each other.

Historical

As the example of Karum shows, any historical book can be used as a source for the pre-inhabited worlds. Since every culture that existed before 1734 is represented in some form or other, almost all the books are useful. ***GURPS Goblins,*** set in Georgian London, would provide detail for a city not handling the Industrial Revolution at all well. ***GURPS Old West,*** or ***GURPS Scarlet Pimpernel*** could also be used for models of colliding cultures or revolutions.

The evacuation is much harder in any time before 1989. In the Cold-War-dominated ***GURPS Atomic Horror,*** each side would strive to make sure that the Aliens and the Coventry weren't co-opted by the other. Third-world states would strive to show the Aliens that they are not inconsequential, and would denounce their not going in the first wave as Colonialism! World War II would be a horror, as the Aliens might not be up to dealing with either Hitler or Stalin. Also, can the PCs rescue those imprisoned in the camps? Hitler might be willing to do anything to make the stars *Judenrein* (a Nazi term meaning Jew-free).

Evacuating before the 1890s might be a little like "Wild Kingdom" with the PCs as the hunted animals and the Coventry as Marlon Perkins. Just picture your gallant Knights being hunted by a little woman with a big stun gun.

Cyberpunk/Cyberworld

The One-and-Twenty is a mess. The Provisional Government would try to grab what it could and then give up under the pressure of the ***Starfly's*** approach. But it might try to eliminate undesirables on the Earth while it can. The dying Earth of the average Cyberpunk story would fall apart more quickly than the default society. Once the rich were safely away, they would be delighted to see the rest of humanity go down the tubes.

CthulhuPunk

Much like the above, except we'd all know who the "Others" were that the Aliens have to please. Another twist is the fact that the Coventry might be a major force in the Dreamlands; in fact, they might be trying to evacuate Earth's Dreamlands as well as the waking world. Also it might be that the lore of the Cthulhu Mythos is better preserved off the Earth than on. What are the secrets of the temples of Santur? The ones with human blood tricking down the stairs?

For those using gates of the Cthulhu Mythos type, it should be noted that time travel is possible. A journey of two years or less takes one point of Will. Two to four years takes two points of Will. Four to eight years takes three points of Will and on up though the powers of two. So if a mad cultist wanted to set up a gate from New Albion in 2135 to Earth in 2049, it would cost 17 Will points to get across the galaxy, and another 7 Will points to cross 86 years of time. The gates remain fixed in time as in space. So a gate goes not to one particular day, but a set distance back in time. Otherwise the time gates are the same, and as mad cultists will be using them to import unspeakable horrors from Earth, a major nuisance.

Time Travel/Alternate Worlds/Technomancer

Roma Aeterna and Ezcalli make great pre-inhabited worlds, just change the geography. If you look at the chronology of Shikiku-mon, then you'll see that an 18th-century Shikiku-mon would also be useful.

Timepiece/Stopwatch don't fit into this very easily, unless you place them several centuries up-time. Then the evacuation becomes one the most important events in history. Like the adventure "Titanic" in ***GURPS Time Travel***

Adventures, the PCs would attempt to mold history by changing who's grandparents go where. After all, if A's Grandmothers go to Karum, and A's Grandfathers go to New Albion, then neither of A's parents gets born.

For less politically-motivated time travelers, the planet of humanity's origin would be either a grand tourist attraction, a historical research topic, or a great place to loot. The years between 2036 and the end would be a fine time for looters. Also, crimes of theft committed well into the evacuation would not be seriously investigated in the chaos. Also, unfinished business could be looked into. If the notes of a scholar that died in 2008 suggest that he'd found the likely site of a major tomb, but no one had a chance between his untimely death and the collision to check it out, then time travelers might be willing to explore the site.

If Merlin is the threatened Earth, the evacuation happens normally and your mages must adjust to living on low-Mana worlds. The fact that magic is known to be real and powerful keeps it from being forgotten. The few normal mana areas on the terraformed worlds are valuable because they are the best places to teach the talented to do magic. As Magery is genetic in this setting, all the Coventry have Magery+5 and a fair selection of spells (see above). The Condor group would be a major nuisance in the evacuation. Also they'd assume that the Coventry's immortality is magical and they'd kidnap several to torture their secrets out of them. Rescues in time of Chaos make good stories, but hard adventures.

Callahan's Crosstime Saloon

The Harmonians would be related to the Coventry but their attention would be elsewhere. The new cities that refugee humanity has been moved into would be sad scary places at first. For all their comfort and beauty they are filled with people torn from their homelands and lives, cast across the stars and dumped. The Harmonians would be working to lift the spirits of the people and revive humanity's morale. Think what a place like Callahan's or Lady Sally's might do for a multi-ethnic city slapped together last week. Just getting people from different ethnic and cultural groups to come together in a spirit of play and fellowship could make the difference between civility and civil war. The Mick of Time is sorely needed here.

Planet Krishna/Witch World/Unnight

Each of these worlds could be used, with very little modification, as a pre-inhabited world. The Krishnans would have to be human, perhaps genetically modified by the Aliens, and Psionics would have to replace magic on the Witch World, but other than that, no major problems arise. Some of the technological embargo ideas from ***GURPS Planet Krishna*** could be used on the pre-inhabited worlds. The people of Witch World make little distinction between Magic and Psi in daily speech; as on Roma Aeterna, "Magic" could be a major mystery.

Terradyne

Humanity is much closer to the breakthrough the Coventry seek, and the Coventry's technical knowledge is not as advanced relative to that of the Earth. Other than that, it is similar. Space habitats will have to be found for the Lunars and the Martians. Terradyne will be struggling not to lose its position, and will be pressing for political recognition. Industrial espionage to regain lost advantage is likely. If the PCs are loyal to the evacuation, Terradyne could be a bitter foe. Terradyne PCs might be trying to maintain their vision of humanity's destiny against the envy and vengeance of others. Either way you have plot conflict.

Black Ops

The Company and its foes are both unhappy. If you assume that the Aliens and the Coventry know nothing of either the Company or its foes, then they are just land mines awaiting a swift kick. The Greys will petition the Aliens for rescue; think of the mess.

Given the Mystic proclivities of the Coventry, in this set up they'd be fairly strong psions. Either all of the Coventry would be Psionic, and have the Gestalt business down pat, or a high percentage of them would be. They would despise

those who misused Psi in either case, but they'd let them escape the death of the Earth. The Company would have to deal with Psionics becoming public knowledge and Psions gaining legal protection.

The Greys, demons, and other foes of the Company, if known to the Aliens ahead of time, would be cordially hated by them, or pitied. The Greys would be taken aside for shipment home. Demons and their kin would be given medical treatment, even euthanasia if that's all that's available.

Supers/I.S.T./Wild Cards/Psionics

If the ***Starfly*** is heading toward the sun in a Four-Color world, it might be possible to stop it, but unlikely. Still the whole business of up and evacuating humanity is very comic book. Supers should go very well with a cheery little apocalypse. The average member of the Coventry, in a Supers setting, would have a power of ten in every psi power, with the 100% advantage to Anti-psi that it could be used with other powers, and all psi skills allowed in the campaign at IQ, except for Mental Shield, which they learn to IQ+6. Extraordinary members of the Coventry could have power levels as high as any in the game, and they'd all know the Gestalt technique. Thus an ordinary member of the Coventry, backed by ten other members, could easily knock down any PC going and most teams of PCs.

The I.S.T. world would cooperate in leaving, as would Operation Phoenix or the Wild Cards world. Or most of it would. Certain corrupt nations would demand their people stay put, and do what they could to keep them planetside. Rulers like the Nur would see the end of the world as God's purifying wrath, and would work to keep others from leaving. Doctor Radiation would know that he could never leave except in a brig, and would never be allowed freedom again in his life. He'd want to take a few millions with him. That evil magician in the ***GURPS Supers*** adventure seed, "That Old Black Magic," may be offering his people to what ever demon gives him the most power. In all these cases, the rescue of millions of innocents would be an epic campaign.

Other villains would be harder to deal with. The Shadow Fists would relocate, and they would brutalize the shell-shocked masses of the Arcologies into slavery, subtle or blatant. They would be tricky to fight. The crimes of Ti Malice would continue as well, perhaps in more brutal fashions. The corruptions of the E.S.P. and other repressive anti-psi groups in the Psiberpunk world of Operation Phoenix would lose their hold on power. But many of the leftover operatives, lined up with mobsters, could be a menace for years.

Both the Network and the ruling families of Taskis would be interested in the new worlds. The Network might offer deals to the desperate. The Aliens and the Coventry would seem like rivals to the Nobles of Taskis. Also, the Coventry might be seen as breeding stock.

Espionage/Prisoner

The end of the Earth is not the end of secrets. Many people would be struggling behind the scenes to get away with something, anything, valuable (nest eggs are so useful), and others would be striving to be the power behind the thrones of the new societies forming in humanity's new homes. The differences between spies, gangsters, and power mad conspirators would be academic at best

The Village would be liquidated early in the evacuation. Those imprisoned there who survived might seek the truth, or mere vengeance. Alternatively, the Coventry might sort out the spies, mobsters, assassins, etc., and put them in a Village of their own. They would be interested in finding out who these folks worked for and who else is in the shadow world. A nice cheery Space Colony, where everyone is stuck because of a glitch, makes a fine Village. Don't let your players know what's going on too quickly.

World of Darkness

Each faction will see it differently. If you use only ***GURPS Vampire,*** then the reaction is totally hostile. Both the neonates and the Elders know they are to be left behind. They'll do anything to get on the ships leaving Earth. This would be a campaign of grim struggle as either hunter or prey. The few scattered Kindred that get to the terraformed

worlds would be lost, desperate, isolated, struggling to rebuild their power base.

If Gaia is only Earth, the Garou are doomed, which is what they always were anyway. But if Gaia is every living world's biosphere, then they belong in the stars. The were-coyotes are already there. The veil and the Delirium will be problems. But the Coventry should all be immune to the Delirium and willing to help them and their human and wolf kinfolk. The Silver Fangs, desperate for recognition of their now meaningless noble rank, the power hungry Shadow Lords, and the anti-human Red Talons will all be trouble. (The Coventry intend to drop the Red Talons on a world with no humans and be done with them.)

Mages change the situation more profoundly. The Coventry would have to work with the Technocracy, but they are natural allies of the Traditions. The new worlds will have such low human populations that Magick will be much easier to work. The paradigms will be unsettled, and the Coventry will doctor the speed teaching devices to promote a looser paradigm among the masses. The struggles between the Technocratic Union and their forced allies will be subtle and nasty. Remember that not only the ***Starfly*** and the doom it represents binds these three groups together, there is also the struggle to get the Elder Vampires and the Nephandi to let humanity leave at all!

The Arcologies on the new worlds will not be pleasing to most of the Traditions, though the Technocratic Union will like them. The struggle to mold humanity will continue, but as it will be out in the open, it will have to be far more subtle. It is a truly magely paradox that openness will require more kinds of secrecy.

Space/Lensmen/Traveller

This is a space setting to begin with. Many of the worlds the Earth-folk will be living on are not the only terraformed world in the star system. This means there will be explorable planets that can be reached by interplanetary vessels typical of TL8. In some cases, interesting worlds are nearer. Karum's moon, Tishtyra, is a Mars-like world. Because this world is within the zone of habitability, it, unlike Mars, has an atmosphere and oceans. The Coventry planted Earth lifeforms there; in the low gravity they both grew differently and evolved rapidly, into truly alien life. Certain flying foxes (Asian fruit bats) seem to have developed to pre-sentience! What an interesting mystery for PCs.

For Lensman and Traveller, this scenario becomes an interesting alternative background. It may explain any number of anomalies, or it could be a plot by Boskone or any other villain or rival.

Adventure Seeds

Cthulhu/Time Travel/Cliffhangers/Black Ops

A certain antiquarian, while examining photographs taken by an ill fated anthropological expedition to Nepal in the late 1990s, made an intriguing discovery. A series of photographs showed an object that was obviously of no known Earth culture. Furthermore, holographic analysis of the film proves that the object had a non- Euclidean geometry! This mystery must be explored!

The PCs will have the ability to go to Earth of the past and get the object. Because the location of the object, said to be from "the plateau of Leng," is of uncertain origin, someone looking for it would have to go to the Lamasery of the Esoteric Moon of Shambahla after September of 1999. Given the policies of the Nepalese government, which seemed to fear and hate the lamasery, the unstable political situation, and the Lamasery's brutal guards, who seem to be of a tribal group unknown elsewhere in the Himalayas, it is not possible to get at the Lamasery before 2049! In the winter of that year the strange tribesmen who defended the lamasery seem to commit mass suicide. This means that it is possible to get to the Lamasery in the year of the ***Starfly*** crash.

The Himalayas can't be climbed in winter. Spring thaws are deadly in the high mountains. Summer in the Himalayas is a time of storms from the monsoon. Only in autumn can the lamasery be reached. Therefore the PCs must time travel to the dying Earth, climb a deadly mountain, and steal a strange artifact from the monks who are led by the mysterious Yellow Priest.

Historical/Swashbuckler

Lord Cyril Fawney of Fawney Rig is worried about his son and heir, Sir Henry. It seems the young fool has gone off with a strange young woman of loose ways. She seems to be a lady, or some scholar's daughter. Anyway she knew Latin and Greek to a fare-thee-well. They seem to be mixed up in the Black Arts. He left a note, after he and his father had a bitter row, and it has Lord Cyril worried. Sir Henry said, in the letter, that he's joined a Covenant and will go to live in the stars!

This adventure seed can be placed in England, or with name changes, anyplace in of Europe, anytime between 1600 and 1734. Lord Henry has been recruited by the Coventry. The young lady is a traveling anthropologist and mystic. After she visits an important center of mystical studies, she means to take Sir Henry to the stars!

This can go in many directions. Capturing the couple and getting Sir Henry to return is only the most limited. Changing a Swashbuckling campaign into a Space campaign is also possible. The young lady might recruit the PCs!

For centers of mystic study try these: Prague from 1570 to 1621; The Irish Bardic colleges were active from ancient times to the 1650s when Cromwell happened to them. After 1640, Paris is the occult capital of Europe until the Revolution.

Special Ops

Rev. Mathias Bankhead is the leader of the Imminent Rapture Fellowship. He preaches that the Aliens are demons and the Coventry enslaved dammed souls. He has announced that he and his followers with not leave the Earth nor will they let the people of Bose, Montana, be taken away to perdition.

The Rev is armed, as are his followers. They have raided armories and gotten rocket launchers. The Rev has his forces set up in strategic areas around the city. They have announced that they know that leaving in an Alien ship is a fate worse than death. So they have no problem with killing anyone entering or leaving Bose.

The PCs' job is to liberate Bose. The U.S. army is scattered and disorganized; the special forces will have almost no back up.

Espionage/Illuminati

The authoritarian states of the Earth have been disbanded. But the Earth's refugees have not yet secured their freedom. The remnants of the secret police of several nations, along with ex-CIA types, have made an alliance with several organized crime groups. A coup d'etat is planed for the PCs' new home town. Can they stop it?

Special Ops/Cliffhangers

The Caucasus mountains are filled with defiant tribes. They defied the Hittites, the Persians, the Greeks, the Romans, the Byzantines, the Ottomans, the Russians, and the Soviet Union. They have announced their defiance of the evacuation order. "What fool says the sun will die?" They refuse to leave and they have 4,000 years of experience in guerrilla warfare. Rescue them against their will.

Cliffhangers/Space/Swashbucklers

The Yezidis of Karum are as strange to their neighbors as the Yezidis of Earth. They claim that they know where special knowledge of the secrets of the Aliens and the Coventry is hidden. The Yezidis claim that the knowledge is a prize hidden in plain sight for those who will take it. That going to get the knowledge is an initiation into the society of the Aliens and the Coventry. The Modern Coventry do not recruit, but they say they did in the past. Could the Yezidis be right? Their neighbors call them "devil worshipers," but also say that they have special insight.

The Yezidis have claimed, since they were brought to Karum, that the true Yalvah (the name of their sacred book) is on Tishtrya, Karum's moon. Pointing to the shape on the moon, which the Isfahanni people say looks like the mythical Tishtrya's wonderful three-legged, one-horned, flying ass, the Yezidis say that the true Yalvah is on the point of the horn.

Fusion powered space ships have been built by the sea cities. A group of Isfahanni adventures, led by a Yezidi Kavval, are asking to be taken to Tishtyra. The PCs, both Earth-folk and Isfahanni, get to go! Now what awaits on Tishtyra? What strange forms have evolved on this world where Earthly life was brought to such an alien world? And is there a true Yalvah?

Horror/Mystery

Jerusalem is a rare city in 2049 -- it is not deserted, it's packed! The faithful have come to await the end. Those waiting in Jerusalem look upon those who left as deluded at best. Not willing for profane hands from beyond the stars to defile precious sacred objects, the ultra-orthodox of many faiths have hidden many holy relics in the sacred city. The PCs must enter the old city of Jerusalem, find the hidden relics, and deliver them to transport. Remember, the city is packed with unruly crowds swept up in religious passions. They can easily become brutally violent. Also, finding a well marked address in the old city area of Jerusalem on a good day is often a great challenge. Imagine what it would be like to find the deliberately hidden in such a place. It is April of 2049, you've got until July to do what couldn't be done in the last 30 years as the city goes brutally mad.

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1. It was later found that this coloring was achieved by cosmetics. When asked why they chose those colors the Aliens said that they wanted to look "sexy but dignified." This is held to be proof of just how alien they are.

2. Iain Banks is the most notable exception.

3. Tom Ligon, *Analog Science Fiction and Fact,* page 40. "The World's Simplest Fusion Reactor and How to make It Work."

4. "Boiling Fridges," *New Scientist,* 24 Jan. 1998.

5. Yes, there seem to be "Others" the Aliens have to toe the line for. The Aliens make only vague references to these other Aliens, and even the Coventry are told nothing about them. They have received statements that this is to allow them freedoms they would not otherwise be permitted, but that is all they know.

6. The famous "Lost Colony" of Roanoke was an example of an unusually sloppy removal. Normally much less evidence was left.

7. Cognitive dissonance is a real world problem. Anytime new information confuses you, that's cognitive dissonance.

8. Both the Aliens and the Coventry know the reasoning behind this point of view is largely specious; most of these people could understand if an effort was made to get them to understand. However as time is short and neither the Aliens or the Coventry really wants to leave anyone behind, they are willing to use force.

9. Actually the Coventry have all of the broadcast episodes of "Doctor Who" and they'll tell people that, once they trust the BBC not to lose them again.

10. I'm following the precedent set in ***GURPS Middle Ages I,*** and recognizing that illiterates can learn arithmetic and labeling it as the skill Mathematics (Ciphering).

11. The Aliens have the Coventry use TL16+ devices to maintain their economy.

12. Read the books *Plagues and Peoples* or *Ecological Imperialism: the Expansion of Europe 1400 to 1900* for insights

into how fast small human populations can grow.

Jack Frost: Part One of Two

A Delta Green Adventure by Shane Ivey

Art by andi jones

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Introduction

The road sign is plain and green, the sort mandated by state law and never supplemented with anything more decorative: "Willis, Ala.," it reads, "Pop. 819." State Highway 19 runs past the sign through deep forest and high hills. A long, narrow bridge stretches across an expanse of swampy water: always a land of endless natural waterways, the region was inundated with new lakes and streams after the Tennessee Valley Authority began damming up the rivers in a Depression-era economic booster project. A sliver of December moon is hidden, high overhead, beyond thick clouds, and the swamp and the hills and the trees are barely visible in its ghostly light.

The hills flatten out, slowly, gradually, and the forest thins to either side. Then, ahead, comes a yellow glow blinking in the air, the strobe of an ordinary street light to signal caution. Other lamps shine beyond it, silvery-pink and constant, illuminating the shop fronts of a handful of two-story buildings. The post office is easily seen and easily the finest structure, with sculpted concrete pillars of a Classical design that seem ostentatious among the simple businesses of Willis. Christmas lights blink cheerfully in red and green in several windows and the limbs of trees.

Slowing for the blinking cautionary light, one can see silhouettes within a building near the road ("Hank's House," proclaims the shingle), the shadows of men and women gathered here for a nightcap, perhaps, before they join their families. At least they seem to be patrons; but perhaps that is a trick of the light, to make shadows look like the men and women one would expect. There is no movement to be seen, not in Hank's House, not in the streets, nowhere but for the swaying yellow light. But there, ahead, on the covered sidewalk leading to Hank's, someone is waiting.

Closer . . .

It is a man, perhaps 50 years old and heavy-jowled in worn denim overalls and a thick fleece coat. He seems to be waiting; certainly he is not moving. He does not look to the newly-arrived car. Closer: no fog of breath billows in the shadows from his opened mouth. His eyes stare, watching, empty, dry, and a strand of ice hangs unattended from his mouth. Then other men and women can be seen more clearly inside the tavern, sitting at drinks long since gone flat in the cool air or lying on the floor in strange positions, as if caught in the moment of a footstep and then falling in that same pose to the ground. Outside, again, shapes can be seen on the ground; a dog lies on its side, legs stiff and straight. Feathery clumps lie where birds fell in mid-flight to the earth. All are frozen, through and through; all are dead with a cold that will not go away.

Looks like Jack Frost came down to town again.

You Are Cordially Invited to a Night at the Opera

TOP SECRET / DELTA GREEN
EYES ONLY / ORCON / WNINTEL / SCI

TO: Active Cell
FROM: Alphonse
SUBJECT: Mission Briefing
DATE: DECEMBER 25, 0745 CST

As your cell leader has by now advised you, your cell has been activated for a mission of great sensitivity. A paranormal incident has resulted in numerous deaths, requiring, if possible, our investigation and intervention. In this case, however, another organization has initiated an investigation before us.

Willis, Alabama, was a rural town of approximately eight hundred residents. Nine hours ago, an unexplained event swept across the town and county, apparently causing the death by freezing of every living creature in its area. Our group was not initially aware of this event; it was reported to us by a source within another covert organization, a unit of the Defense Department operating under the auspices of the Federal Emergency Management Agency which has already begun an investigation.

Our source within this group has arranged access. False identities have been developed for each of you, using the security clearances necessary (TS/WEATHERWATCHER) for consultants to the investigating FEMA task force, either fully-briefed or external operatives used to provide analysis or cover for their covert activity.

Your assignment is to infiltrate the operation, conduct an investigation from within, and minimize any further harm which may be caused by the Willis incident. We are particularly concerned that elements of the investigating group will attempt to harness technologies or forces beyond their control.

Your cell will be incommunicado for the duration of this mission. You must assume that any attempts you make to contact us from within the investigating task force's security parameters will be compromised. In such a case, we will respond if possible, but circumstances may allow your team no outside assistance. It is therefore imperative that you maintain secrecy as long as possible while undertaking your mission. Interaction between members of your cell should appear no different than your interaction with other members of the team. It is highly unlikely that you will have access to any resources beyond those provided by the task force--or those denied by them should your cover be compromised.

Your cell leader will provide transit details for you to rendezvous with the FEMA team at Maxwell AFB at 1100 CST. This will be our last communique until this assignment is completed.

Good luck.

TOP SECRET / DELTA GREEN
EYES ONLY / ORCON / WNINTEL / SCI

Welcome to the Village

Once they make their rendezvous at Maxwell AFB, events will proceed inexorably for the players. Escorted by hard-eyed, tight-lipped security officers in Air Force uniforms, they are driven to thick-bodied buses, the windows sealed shut behind metal screens. More guards accompany them in the bus, and falsified papers are checked and rechecked diligently, every step of the way. The players can decide whether to act like they know each other at this point; they are joined in the bus by six doctors, some of them medical doctors and some of them nuclear physicists, all of them cordial but carefully silent about the assignment.

The bus drives for ninety minutes, finally stopping to disgorge the passengers into the icy air of a forest overtaken by a government camp. Wide tents have been erected, jeeps and HUMVEEs drive by, helicopters hover noisily overhead, and soldiers are everywhere, all of them crisp, efficient, and quiet. Investigators with military experience will immediately guess that the area is run almost entirely by special operations troops. The players will be escorted, firmly

but politely, to the largest tent, where they will meet their ostensible mission leaders. The room is occupied by six suspicious-looking men in expensive overcoats, thirteen scientists and doctors, and a dozen soldiers wearing the maroon beret of US Air Force Rescue and Recovery.

As the last investigator is seated, one of the plainclothes agents stands. He is a middle-aged man, thin and wiry, with black hair, pale skin, cold eyes, and a southern drawl.

"Welcome to Willis County," he says, with a touch of irony. "My name is Alphonse Lewis, Assistant Director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and I'm in charge of this operation. With me here are Lieutenant Colonel James Farrell, and Major Elton Harris." He nods to a shortish, greying man in an Air Force uniform, and a tall, hawklike man in a dark suit. "Lieutenant Colonel Farrell is leading the field operation. Major Harris is in charge of operational security. I expect each of you will listen to them carefully.

"Now," he continues, "you all are here to investigate a recent . . . event . . . that transpired in Willis County, Alabama, just five miles southeast of here. We don't know exactly what happened; that's why you all are here. All we know is that a town of more than eight hundred souls has been killed. Frozen to death, and hardly any of them outside in the cold.

"We have our theories, of course. Most likely, this is the result of experimental weaponry fallen into the wrong hands. The Russians have spent decades on fringe weapons science." One of the Air Force men coughs. Lewis stares coldly at the man for a moment before continuing: "And we've all heard about their problems with security. In any event. You all know your specialties. Now Lieutenant Colonel Farrell will take y'all to the site. Good luck to you."

Jack Frost: Part One of Two

Keeper's Information

"Jack Frost" is a ***Call of Cthulhu*** scenario for ***Delta Green***, written in two parts. The first part covers the introduction to the mission and the first day and night of the investigation. The second part will cover the final two days of the investigation and its deadly conclusion. Characters and maps expected to be used throughout the scenario have been reprinted in both sections.

Investigators in the scenario can be from any facet of the organization, but each of them must be capable of working in a dangerous undercover assignment. At the outset of the game their mission will be fact-finding and background investigation; the capability of medical and scientific analysis will be helpful, but it can be provided by NPC consultants at the Keeper's discretion. Communications and research skills are paramount.

Willis is a small farming town in northern Alabama, some 60 miles from Huntsville and its Space Center and the military and aerospace facilities of the Redstone Arsenal. The region is utterly rural, with small towns serving thin-spread farmers among hilly green fields, cotton rows and a few corn rows, dotted here and there with livestock and long, low chicken barns. The forested hills are broken by uncounted rivers and lakes, many of them formed only 60 years ago after TVA projects dammed the Tennessee River.

Willis is a dead town . . . or nearly so. It lies in a land of hills and rivers, thick with trees, an old land with an old history. Before English settlers came to the hills to carve rough and solitary farms the land was home to the Creek; before them, the land was home to older peoples still, much older, the immortals of blue-lit K'n-Yan, now forgotten in all but the most esoteric lore. Few traces of them remain, indeed; the span of their absence can be measured in millenia. But in the woods near what would become Willis one trace did remain across the centuries, one device of

strange stone hideously carved, an idol and shrine to Ithaqua, the Wind Walker.

Mysterious forces or conjunctions of energy in the area call Ithaqua to manifest in the area about once every two centuries, and they have done so since before the first humans walked the earth. When the people of K'n-Yan still kept outposts in the upper world, they established a shrine here to help keep Ithaqua at bay: when a sacrificial victim was sent, the victim's life-force would be drained, effectively to power the Dismissal of the Great Old One. The shrine remained when the people of K'n-Yan retreated to their caverns.

American Indian tribes eventually discovered the shrine, and a few shunned and bloody shamans worshipped at it, and they received visions of the K'n-Yani god Yig and of the "Snow Dance," the sacrifice to appease and ward off the Wind-Walker. The shamans kept this rite to protect their tribes, offering up themselves in sacrifice; when they failed, Ithaqua would manifest and make demonic Children of the Wendigo, his crazed spawn, of any living things nearby. In the last manifestation, 200 years ago, Creek shamans held Ithaqua at bay with the proper sacrifice; but the Creek were driven from the land not 60 years later, and within less than another century the shrine itself was submerged when a man-made lake filled the valley around it.

The Creek are long-gone, but some remnants of them remain, in physical artifacts and vague psychic residue. One local man was driven to madness from visions of the shamans and the threat to Willis. He finally took his warnings to others in the town, but too little and too late; the warnings were laughed away.

And so Ithaqua has come again. Last night, December 24th, the Wind Walker passed through the area and froze all within its grasp, planting the seed of its progeny within every living thing. Tonight, December 25th, Ithaqua will stir again, blanketing the region in cold and transforming any caught within it to a frigid parallel of life, unable to leave the frozen chill of the Wind-Walker's effect. Tomorrow night, the least of its progeny will stir, small animals of low lifeforce ravening as wendigo. In the third night, December 27th, Ithaqua will rise the last time; the people of the town will stir as hundreds of Children of the Wendigo. Only by locating the submerged shrine of Ithaqua can the sacrifice be completed and Ithaqua assuaged before the final doom of its victims.

While the nominal date listed in this scenario is December 25th, Keepers should adapt the date to their campaigns. In Lin Carter's "Of Times and Seasons to be Observed," it is said that certain dates are ideal for invoking the Wind-Walker: October or November (when the Sun is in Libra), June or July (the Sun in Gemini), and February or March, especially early March (the Sun in Aquarius, Mercury in trine) or early February (Candlemas). Those definitions are largely ignored in this scenario. Ithaqua's appearance here is given as a rarity, sporadic, due to unknown forces and conjunctions beyond human astronomical understanding. Keepers who prefer to sacrifice the holiday atmosphere for literary consistency should feel free to place the events of "Jack Frost" in the aforementioned dates; March 6-9 is particularly recommended as a conjunction of events (the Sun in Aquarius and Mercury in trine) with the usual time of the worst storms of Alabama winters. Just make sure you take down the Christmas lights from that opening narrative.

Running "Jack Frost"

"Jack Frost" is written with veteran players in mind; the scenario features both otherworldly horrors and the crafty interplay of several key characters with rivaling agendas. Keepers may wish to allow players to gain experience -- and hopefully learn caution -- in one or two prior scenarios before inflicting "Jack Frost" on them.

If the Keeper has a large enough pool of players, "Jack Frost" could easily be expanded to include a cell outside the strictures of the undercover op, investigating the Wind Walker while the primary cell conducts its secretive work in Willis. This might be an ideal alternative if some player-characters are less well-suited to undercover work than others; those with the right combination of skills can work undercover in Willis, while the others perform a parallel investigation in the world outside, interviewing specialists and looking for clues and moldy old texts without the constant pressure of NRO-Delta observers.

Communication with the undercover team will be critical, and it may be the greatest challenge faced in the investigation: the undercover team will have to work carefully to arrange times away from NRO-Delta scrutiny, and they will have to use ingenious methods to avoid having their communication intercepted: all land-lines are tapped, of

course, the radio signals of cellular phones will be detected and analyzed, and even Delta Green's traditionally prodigious encryption may be broken by Majestic COMINT specialists and technology. At best, the players may be able to conduct short transmissions which do not allow the Majestic security techs enough signal to develop a decryption protocol; phones or radios transmitting via narrow band bursts would be ideal for the purpose. (Perhaps allow a group Luck roll once per minute, or once per signal if narrow band burst transmissions are employed: if it fails, the recorded signal will be hacked and decoded within 1D6 hours). But even if the signal remains undeciphered, the fact that it was sent will reveal to the Majestic group that a mole or a survivor exists in Willis, someone using high-end encryption to avoid detection. Use of narrow band burst transmitter will certainly tip them off that an intelligence operation is being conducted.

Play out the NRO-Delta's investigation carefully with each undercover player. Anyone showing signs of too much nervousness or tripping over their reports will be suspect; any suspects will be interrogated thoroughly, short only of lingering physical damage, with amnesiac drugs employed to block the subject's memory of the torture.

The players' only real hope will be to play it cool enough to avoid immediate suspicion, and then to plan their transmissions so as to maintain the appearance that an as-yet undetected party is involved, sending the NRO-Delta agents on a wild goose chase while the Delta Green agents cover their trail. This will be tricky work: the NRO-Delta agents must be distracted while one or more player-characters go to make the transmission, then a thoroughly convincing cover must be concocted for every player to avoid suspicion. If even one is compromised, all will be neutralized.

Finally, one intriguing option would be to play this operation without Delta Green: the players would be agents of NRO-Delta or BLUE FLY, assigned by Lepus and Coffey to investigate the phenomena in "Jack Frost" under the assumption that some sort of alien technology is involved -- technology which must be captured or covered-up at all costs. An enterprising Keeper with a large group could even secretly make one or two players actual Delta Green agents, while the rest are Majestic. At the Keeper's discretion, one researcher might have crackpot theories relating to old Indian gods and alien science, to be scoffed and humiliated by Coffey and Lepus . . . until some of those crackpot theories begin to make sense. In any event, the Majestic agents' focus should otherwise be on science and technology, not on the occult, perhaps making them more down-to-earth than agents of Delta Green, and certainly making them less prepared for the full, awful power of Ithaqua.

Christmas in Dixie

The town of Willis is comprised mostly of businesses serving area farmers and the houses of those who work there. Highway 19 runs through the middle of town, bisecting it, with the post office and town hall sitting on either side. Other businesses are in walking distance, including the offices of Joe Little, Esq., attorney and tax preparer, the offices of Elizabeth Brown, the town doctor, Ed Loche, the town dentist, a modest used car lot owned by Lester "Less with Les" Cabe, and, of course, Hank's House. A popular restaurant is a greasy barbeque called Hog's Heaven, famous for their iced tea and their special sauce, and the local Winn-Dixie supermarket does moderate business. Houses in the town have wide lawns with sparse green grass and dark dirt, with rusting metal toys and tools easily found in many yards.

By the time the investigators arrive, before dawn on December 25th, the town of Willis has been quarantined in an emergency lockdown by the Federal Emergency

The Friendly

Delta Green's source in Jack Frost is a recently-acquired asset deep in the security section of the Majestic group; at least according to the investigators' briefing, which includes nothing more about the source. This asset installed false security approval flags in the false dossiers which CIA friendlies prepared for the investigators' cover identities. The investigators and their cell leader are not cleared by cell "A" for the friendly's bona fides: they will either trust cell "A" and execute the mission, or not.

The truth about the Friendly is left for the Keeper to determine based on his or her own campaign background. Some possible options include:

The Real Deal: The Friendly is a communications security expert from the NSA, working in a triple-blind: he or she works covertly for the National Reconnaisance Office and even more covertly for Section Delta, the security force used by Majestic, and now most secretly of all as an asset for Delta Green. Not long ago, the Friendly verified government complicity in horrors worse than even the Greys. He or she used NRO-Delta's files to contact a suspected Delta Green agent, then erased that file. This is the friendly's first substantial tip to Delta Green.

Management Agency (FEMA). The frozen citizens and animals of the town were first found by a trucker coming home late for Christmas Eve. Finding his pregnant young wife frozen dead in their home he immediately called out for help; an ambulance came from the nearest hospital, in Huntsville, and found the similar state of others nearby. Frantic calls were placed. A medical team came out, followed very soon by Army and Air Force security personnel from Huntsville and Redstone Arsenal. Next to arrive was a team from the Air Force's "Blue Team," a HAZMAT-suited special operations group dedicated to recovery of foreign aerospace debris such as satellites and spy-planes; and, if urban legends are heeded, fallen UFOs. Last to arrive was Alphonse Lewis, a somewhat sinister character from the upper echelons of FEMA, along with Special Forces troops in a Special Projects (i.e., "black ops") Team to provide land and waterway security (including a number of heavily-armed fast boats on the many rivers of the area), and a team of plainclothes agents of the Defense Intelligence Agency who promptly assumed command of the entire scene and every human being and piece of equipment associated with it.

Charlie: The Friendly is actually Charlie Bostick, chief of propaganda and information security for MJ3 Project GARNET, feeding information to Delta Green in his ongoing strategy to position the organization for later use against his project's rivals in the Majestic group. Charlie works directly for Gavin Ross, MJ-3, who may become involved in the scenario's ending.

The Hacker: a Delta Green hacker has gained access to certain files of NRO-Delta. Cell "A" gave the "insider story" as disinformation to the investigators' cell leader in case any of the team is captured and interrogated, to hopefully allow a few precious hours to raid Majestic's files while NRO-Delta hunts for a nonexistent mole.

Only a small investigative team of government researchers and intelligence agents is allowed within the quarantined perimeter of Willis County. Each of these researchers is part of the Majestic project, or pretending to be part of it: the investigators are among them. The team consists of three distinct units. The operation is commanded by Lt. Colonel James Farrell, U.S. Air Force Special Operations Command, whose 50 "Blue Beret" troops from Aerospace Recovery are charged with finding and containing debris and biological hazards or other evidence, using equipment ranging from sophisticated radio and radiation sensors to heavy-lift and reconnaisance helicopters; Farrell is actually a high-ranking member of the top secret Majestic Project MOON DUST and its sub-project, BLUE FLY.

Operational security is directed by Elton Harris, listed as a Major in the U.S. Army, Defense Intelligence Agency; Harris leads 24 other dark-suited agents with DIA credentials, all of whom are covertly assigned to the officially-nonexistent Section Delta of the National Reconnaisance Office, the Majestic group's security task force. (Astute players may note that the DIA is primarily responsible for ensuring compliance of private industry with security classifications and defense-related secrets, not with general counterintelligence or more esoteric spy work. Let them concoct whatever theories they want; Harris and his men will simply say that the Director of DIA assigned them to the case, and the director of FEMA has granted them security jurisdiction.) Farrell and Harris will both submit reports to "Alphonse Lewis," the FEMA chief stationed outside the area of analysis; in fact, Lewis is Adolph Lepus, the infamous director of NRO-Delta, assigned here to ensure tight control of whatever technologies may be found.

On-site analysis will be conducted by a team of specialists from a variety of fields; some are from other projects of the Majestic group, while others are included only to be fed a cover story by Harris and Farrell which they can deliver credibly to the media and external investigators. The players will be part of this third unit, the miscellaneous researchers and specialists.

Major Harris has been tasked with security for the operation, including physical security for the area and informational security: no information pertaining to the operation is to leave the site except by his or Lt. Col. Farrell's reports to their superiors. Harris and Farrell will maintain a professionally cordial antipathy throughout the scenario. Under most circumstances Farrell is in charge, with the understanding that Harris may assert situational authority as required by the exigencies of security. Harris' 24 "DIA" agents are immediately disliked by the rest of the team as unpleasant necessities. Almost everyone is afraid of them, a fact which they find endlessly amusing and gratifying. They are polite, barely. They never explicitly threaten to interrogate or liquidate any who appear to be security risks, but the idea is always somehow in the forefront of the others' thoughts.

During the scenario, Harris' team will work in shifts and in pairs to observe all investigative activity and to keep track of the locations of everyone and everything within the perimeter. They will be difficult and dangerous to elude. They

will also keep careful track of communications within the team, especially outgoing communications. Attempts to send a secret message out by encrypted e-mail will be met with immediate and probably disastrous interrogation, as will persistent occurances of seemingly irrelevant courses of investigation. The NRO-Delta communications security station is located in their central command post, under constant guard. If the players manage to sabotage it, they will gain valuable time to communicate undisturbed with the outside world -- but they will have to invent an ingenious gambit to distract the agents on guard and disable or divert electronic security and surveillance cameras while placing blame elsewhere. Merciful Keepers should give the players plenty of warnings of the consequences of discovery in such an action.

Lt. Colonel Farrell and his men will spend most of the first day of the scenario conducting physical examinations of the territory, conducting slow helicopter flyovers of the area and using advanced "sniffers" to measure various energy levels in the ground and foliage in an effort to locate a possible landing or crash site for an alien craft. They are dismissive of occult or mythological explanations, and attempts to convince them of such stories will be met with raised eyebrows and the risk of close interrogation by Major Harris. Their initial theory on the unusual state of Willis is that an alien weapon is responsible. The players, of course, are not cleared for any explanation of the weapon or why it may have been used. And, frankly, the Blue Fly team hasn't the slightest idea why or how, either.

The specialists and consultants, including the player-characters, are officially charged with investigating the course of the strange events in Willis, using local evidence and records to provide context or detail to the results obtained in Farrell's investigation. They will be overseen by agents of the "DIA" team at all times. Any tangible evidence or artifacts which the specialists find are to be turned over to Farrell at once. The exact roster of specialists and consultants should be determined by the Keeper to make sure the team is well-balanced and not redundant.

The Majestic team will have an impressive array of materiel at their disposal. The nuclear physicists will have bulky testing chambers, trucked into the command post by the BLUE FLY team; the medical team will have a field station set up with full biological quarantine capability; the BLUE FLY team and NRO-Delta agents will use two reconnaisance helicopters and two heavy transport helicopters, as well as two boats equipped with heavy-hauling equipment and powerful sonar, and several heavy ground vehicles and HUMVEEs. The teams will be heavily armed; it should be obvious to the players that they will not have a prayer of shooting their way out of trouble.

The Majestic Leaders

Lt. Colonel Farrell is disdainful and dismissive of the consultants; the real work here, Farrell believes, is the biological and physical analysis. He is driven to seize the goods for use in Project MOON DUST and for the advancement of his own career, and he will not rationally let anything interfere with those goals. He will quickly sink into denial about the threats posed by the supernatural events of the scenario, denial which will become increasingly paranoid and irrational as the supernatural events grow more dire.

Major Harris has dealt with alien technology before and has seen its effects: he is both more afraid and better able to handle it than the others, including Farrell. Harris and his men will show their SAN loss and growing fear during the scenario through quick-burning paranoia; if a disaster befalls them, they are likely to relieve Blue Team of command, seeing security threats in every eye and shadow.

The investigators may seem trapped between the growing paranoia of Farrell and Harris and their lack of

Do They Know It's Wintertime?

Alabama winters are typically icy and wet, with heavy winds and lightning and evening temperatures hovering around the 'teens. Snowstorms, when they occur, typically are not seen until late in winter or even early spring, usually around March.

The weather in "Jack Frost" will be anything but typical. The first night of Ithaqua's appearance, before the team's arrival, will bring the first snowstorm; it will last the entirety of the day, centered very roughly on Crow Lake but spreading foul weather for miles and blanketing the region in snow and slush. The first night after the team arrives, Ithaqua's arrival will be heralded by a pause in the storm, but only a localized one: outside Willis, the FEMA command post will be buffeted by the worst winds and sleet yet, while the town itself suddenly sees a calm descend. All will remain eerily still and quiet; characters at the edges of the effect might even see the flurries of snow outside their area, while the air is perfectly still around them. Lightning will flash as Ithaqua manifests, a bizarre lightning, erupting in brilliant strobes, one after the other, which light the nighted land in blazing mauve through the blanketing snow. The same effects will repeat on Ithaqua's subsequent visits.

Keepers should remain aware of the weather and remind the players of it as often as possible. Investigators who brave the

support from Delta Green. Excellent! As Keeper, play up the paranoia for all it's worth. Keep the players sweating and scared and ready to be found out at any moment. One or two NRO-Delta agents should be loitering around the investigators at all times, ready to report any interrogation-worthy security risk. The investigators' best defense may be to turn Harris and Farrell against each other when things go downhill. With some subtle goading or misinformation, either will readily blame the other as a traitor and a plant responsible for the mission's problems.

elements without adequate preparation will find themselves suffering illness or frostbite. Some investigators may not have even rudimentary training in cold-weather survival; they may find themselves in deadly trouble if trapped away from the safety of the Majestic command post. For each night spent out of doors, characters must make a Navigate (Land) roll or a Natural History roll to prepare against the cold. One character may roll for the entire party if they desire. If the roll fails, the character takes 2D6 HP damage from the cold; if the roll is a success, the character takes only 1D6 HP. First Aid can mitigate this damage as usual. The Keeper is encouraged to provide skill and resistance roll penalties, as well, perhaps at -3% per HP lost.

Big Brother's Watching

One thing should be immediately clear to the players: Elton Harris' "DIA" security agents are always around. Every time an investigator turns around, an agent is nearby, observing, and another is almost certainly within earshot. The players should not be able to simply distract the agents with red herrings and carry out their work unmolested: they should be under constant observation, and if it's obvious that some members of the team are out of observation, or that there seems to be some systematic effort to keep the agents from watching all of the team, even that will tip Harris off that something is not right -- and that members of Majestic's team may need to be interrogated to ensure their discretion and loyalty.

The players will have opportunities to investigate some things in secrecy, but they will face a challenge with each attempt. They should learn early on to pick their battles wisely: if something can be "hidden in plain sight," done under observation but with results or conclusions different from what is apparent, that will be the best tack to take. Actually diverting the security agents so that the undercover operatives can investigate something unobserved will require trickery and subterfuge clever enough to maintain the façade that nothing is unusual. The players will probably have to coordinate their own activities so as to keep tabs on the security agents' actions and tactics, then plan their maneuvers precisely enough to allow themselves short windows of opportunity to investigate on the sly. The Keeper needs to ensure that the players take the security agents seriously: they are smart, suspicious, and tough, and they should never come across as fools. The players should heave a collective sigh of relief if they manage to pull a fast one on Harris' men.

First Facts in Willis

The following facts are immediately available from meteorological and biological analysis:

At approximately 10:45 p.m., an area approximately ten miles in diameter experienced a sudden, unexplained drop in temperature from the typical low of 3 degrees Celsius to slightly above zero degrees Celsius. This alone is not enough to explain the condition of the victims, but is the only weather data available. The temperature rose at a normal rate to ambient levels after the drop. The town of Willis is located within this area; the exact epicenter of the effect is not known.

Individuals who entered the region after the initial deaths seem to be unaffected.

Media presence has already begun. FEMA, under the

Sequence of Events

This can be a complex scenario for Keepers to present. Below is a possible timeline of events. The Keeper is encouraged to remain flexible at all times, however, to avoid too strict a sense of linearity in the scenario, and to be well-prepared with the reactions of the NPCs to whatever schemes the players concoct.

1. A Letter from Alphonse
2. Blue Team Briefing
3. First Facts in Willis
4. The Autopsy
5. Clues in the Ghost Town
6. First Night: Ghostly Dreams
7. Aftermath: Isolation
8. Clues in the Ghost Town, cont'd
9. Howie Parker
10. Second Night: Ghostly Dreams
11. Aftermath: Purgatory
12. Crow Lake

direction of Alphonse Lewis, has established a quarantine at a distance of five miles, but effectively limited to the roads and the city proper due to extensive forest cover, to allow an investigation to proceed. The quarantine will not last long once word inevitably spreads that no further deaths or unusual illnesses have occurred, as civilians intrude into the area and the state government demands explanations and participation.

13. Defeating Ithaqua
14. Third Night: Ithaqua Rises
15. Survival
16. Evasion and Escape
17. Conclusions

Autopsy

The BLUE FLY team will perform an autopsy on one of the frozen victims as soon as circumstances permit. The players may be involved or allowed to witness the procedure, according to their skills. Analysis of the body indicates death from freezing: the process was nearly instantaneous and occurred uniformly throughout the body. Such an event is impossible, of course, in the experience of normal medicine: even at extreme temperatures, freezing should progress gradually from the extremities to the more insulated body core. Equally strange, the microbes which elicit decay in dead bodies will not assault the cells of the subject; the bodies are also subject to constant, unnatural cold at 0.5 degrees Celsius, only slightly above freezing: even exposed to direct heat, the body's cells will not increase appreciably in temperature. They simply will not thaw. Physicians in the team will guess wildly at some form of new cryogenics technology at work, though they cannot guess the means of preserving a body without any equipment or ongoing power usage. Characters suspecting nanotechnology will find none in the bodies.

During the examination, the examiner and any others nearby will be gripped with a powerful and immediate hunger for the cold and dead human flesh. They must roll SAN immediately. Success indicates the character retains self-control, but with a SAN loss of 1 point; failure indicates that the character indeed attempts to gorge on the subject's flesh and organs, with a SAN loss of 1D4/1D10. Non-player characters in the room will be appropriately horrified. Two NRO-Delta agents assigned as security will interfere with the feaster; allow a second SAN roll for the character to regain control before they lose patience and shoot him or her dead. (Merciful GMs may allow an affected player-character extra rolls to avoid being taken out so ignominiously, or he can let the chips fall where they may.)

Clues in the Ghost Town

There are several landmarks which the players are likely to explore, including the Town Hall (which doubles as county courthouse and library), the Post Office, Doctor Brown's Office, and the Sheriff's Office. Several clues can be found throughout these locations. Willis is not a particularly modern town: most useful information will be found in newspaper archives and in old journals and scrapbooks. The Keeper may require a Spot Hidden or Library Use roll for each clue, depending on the investigators' actions and the course of the roleplaying. Each such roll should require 1D6 hours of searching and reading and cross-checking. Be sure to distribute the handouts according to the investigators' actual courses of investigation. Don't give out the information on the Creek or the Mounds, for instance, unless the investigators actually look into American Indian culture or legendry in the area or are in dire need of a free clue.

Doc Brown's Office: Elizabeth Brown's office is packed with old-fashioned files and dusty books and walls filled with photographs of the best moments of the last few years in Willis, Alabama. A graduate of the medical school at the University of Alabama in Birmingham, Doctor Elizabeth Brown has been practicing in Willis for seven years now Funny, intelligent, young, and successful, until her "death" in the breath of the Wendigo she was the most eligible bachelorette in town. A minor clue may be found here if an investigator succeeds at Computer Use roll to decode her computer password and read her e-mail files.

Handout #1: E-mail sent to a colleague at the University of Alabama in Birmingham, dated 18 DEC.

Town Hall: The Town Hall doubles as the Mayor's office, upstairs, and the county library, downstairs adjacent to the main hall. Hand-drawn banners decorate the white-painted cement walls and dark wood paneling, announcing upcoming holiday events and homecoming games at Willis County School (K-12). The library includes a repository of old issues of the Willis County Dispatch, the local newspaper, and a videotape archive of interesting news reports

about Willis County.

Handout #2: Willis County Dispatch, "Disturbance Enlivens Town Hall Meeting," 23 DEC.
Handout #3: Channel 44 Evening News, "Jack Frost Tragedy Strikes Again," 3 JAN 1995.
Handout #4: "The Secrets of Moundville," Brochure, Alabama Department of Tourism (1998).
Handout #5: Willis County Dispatch, "Local Collector Turns 80," 14 MAY 1998.

Gardenia Hollister's Archives: Gardenia Hollister, a widow since her husband died in a frozen field in the Korean War, grew a bit odd over the years, but her children allowed her any eccentricities she adopted. Among other things, she became a notorious collector. Nothing ever got thrown out unless it had begun to rot: furniture is cluttered among spare sewing machine parts and half-finished quilts and old books and letters. The books and letters are the most overwhelming feature of her home, odd books and letters and diaries from nearly every family in Willis over the years, all strewn and stacked among bookshelves and desks and tables and boxes. Gardenia was terrified of cold and the risk of freezing. Every room in her house is draped with quilts, some old, some new, all of mediocre quality. She was found without so much as a sheet to cover and protect her.

Handout #6: Letter from May Eddings to son, Willis Eddings, 1914.
Handout #7: Diary of Abe Gardner, 1880.
Handout #8: Tales from Indian Country, a hardback book for juvenile readers (signed in the frontpage by Terry Hollister, grandson of Gardenia), Young Apache Press, 1942.
Handout #9: Letter of Holly Corder to brother, Timothy Corder, 1988.

Howie Parker's House: Howie's family house is a simple affair with two floors on hilly forest land not much good for farming.

Handout #10: Willis County Dispatch, "Local Man Commits Suicide," 4 FEB 1942.

Sheriff's Office: The sheriff's office also holds the county jail (empty as of the arrival of Jack Frost) and impressively lean files of past incident reports. Most of them deal with public drunkenness or harmless brawls, with only a handful of the worst examples of everyday human behavior.

Handout #11: Incident Report, signed by Sheriff Carly Dawson, 22 DEC.

The Creek in Alabama

Certain clues found in town might draw the players' interest to the Creek, a Native American tribe which originally lived in the region which would become Willis. The following information should be available to the players with a History roll, a Library Use roll (with research in the local library or on the Internet), or if they somehow consult an expert in local history.

The Creek received their name from white settlers and traders who referred to the many rivers and streams which coursed through their country. They included many distinct tribes and peoples, mostly bound by the same language, Muskogean. A handful of their old legends and beliefs remain widely known: in one tale, Creek warriors hid in an earthen mound to ambush and defeat a Cherokee war party. They used tobacco, ground into the postholes of houses or distilled into drinks, to drive away evil spirits.

In the late 17th Century there were around 30,000 Creek in about 50 towns in northern Alabama and Mississippi. Active crafters and traders, at first they traded actively with English settlers, but strife and war soon erupted. Many Creek were driven south to Florida, but the conflicts grew more pronounced with Creek attacks on American settlements in the War of 1812. After an infamous battle in which the Red Stick tribe destroyed the garrison at Fort Mims, General Andrew Jackson was dispatched with a small army to hunt them down. Subsequent treaties resulted in American acquisition of vast territories from the Creek; but from 1830 to 1842, the Creek, like other tribes, would be forced in entirety to relocate to the Indian Territory, in what would become Oklahoma.

The last Creek tribe was forced out of the region at gunpoint in 1850.

Howie Parker

The investigators may follow up on research in the town to seek Howie Parker among the frozen corpses of the citizens of Willis. Their first obstacle will be the security measures of Harris' team: especially after the gruesome incident at the autopsy and the isolation imposed from above, NRO-Delta agents will be assigned to watch the "meat locker" and to prevent any unauthorized access. The players should be able to gain access to the locker as part of their investigation, but they will be constantly overseen by attentive guards.

Parker can indeed be found among the dead in the Locker, catalogued and listed along with all the others in the initial inspection of the scene. (Note that this information may well be kept by Dr. Howell, if the players manage to get the information from her by persuasion or theft.) His appearance is unremarkable, much the same as the other corpses: he appears to be mildly surprised at his fate.

The Ghosts Speak

The psychic, ghostly residue of ancient Creek shamans is bound to the region by the K'n-Yan shrine, their life-force drained into it in rituals long past. Never dead, they are not quite spirits or ghosts, merely a spiritual will or tendency to influence the psychically sensitive. They will manifest to sensitive individuals, especially after the team locates and inspects Howie Parker or the submerged Shrine, in a relentless urge to locate the Shrine of the Wendigo; a living human must enter it in sacrifice to the Shrine, his or her life-forced used to ward off the vengeance of the Wind-Walker. For our purposes, "sensitive" individuals will include those with high POW, though characters with average POW but high Art and/or Occult skills may also be affected. Ordinarily, contact with the ghosts should come only after the players find Howie Parker or the sunken shrine, but the Keeper can introduce them earlier if the players need a push in the right direction.

Characters contacted by the shamans will first experience powerful, disturbing and draining dreams about the coming of Ithaqua, replete with symbols important to the ghostly shamans in vague hints of the imminent danger and the necessity to complete the shamans' task. See Handout #12. Sanity loss for the first dream is 1/1D3; it may be of little immediate value to the investigators, but it may offer clues to be interpreted later. After the events coming in the first night in Willis, they may or may not have an opportunity to investigate the strange imagery.

Ithaqua Rises: The First Night

The night air in Willis is wet and as cold as ice that pierces cloth and flesh. The air billows in sporadic bursts of painful wind and snow, driving the cold deeper into blood and marrow. The stars shine brilliantly in the indigo canopy overhead; as the storm subsides, Orion stalks at a strange angle among the constellations of winter. Then comes the howling: it wavers across the earth from some point unutterably far above, deeper and more mournful than the wind or any animal of the wild, undulating slowly over endless minutes. A moment of silence grips the air again, and then the howling begins again, filling the night. The air grows colder, achingly cold. (SAN loss is 1/1D6.)

Any investigators or NPCs who are near Crow Lake overnight (the Keeper can use a unit of Farrell's Blue Team to suffer and report the experience if the players stay close to base) will see hypnotic, shimmering lights among the painfully frigid winds overhead. Within the drifting pastel lights black eyes stare, boundless, mournful, inhuman, hungry. (SAN loss is 1D3/1D10.) Simultaneously, all who are caught outdoors within the radius of Ithaqua's influence (approximately five miles in any direction from the shrine) suffer a paroxysm of terrible cold and are suddenly enmeshed in a thin and wispy layer of snowy ice. Each character is affected, unless one can succeed at a POW vs. POW resistance roll against Ithaqua: the outer few layers of skin freeze to ice. Movement -- almost certain to occur, even involuntarily -- causes the iced flesh to crack and break. Remaining still, the ice will soften and melt, leaving the flesh dead and white. The victims suffer 1D6+3 HP damage from agony and infection. Victims who lose half their HP from this curse will be blinded, at least temporarily, as their eyelids and the surfaces of their eyes freeze over and are

ruined. (SAN loss for all victims will be 1 per HP lost, plus 1/1D4 for witnessing such a blinding, or a flat 1D6 for suffering it.) Cold-weather clothing is no protection, but, strangely, characters who are underground or indoors will not suffer this effect.

After this event, strangely, the cold seems to lessen a little for everyone in the region. Each character's breath no longer blows fog into the icy air, and fingers do not go so immediately numb when exposed for fine work. All is hardly, well, though. Tests will show that the body temperature of each character has dropped to approximately 41 degrees Fahrenheit (5 degrees Celsius). The characters will discover this soon enough if they do not think to check it physically: as soon as they enter a heated area they will feel it to be sweltering. The normally-chilly command post, at 60 degrees Fahrenheit, seems to be 117 degrees to the affected characters: they will soon suffer heat stroke unless preventative steps are taken. Leaving the five-mile radius, the effect is far more pronounced: affected characters will begin to cook, scorched as if in an oven even standing in sub-zero night air, for 1D3 HP damage per round until they return to the "safety" of the five-mile radius. Otherwise they seem to suffer none of the deleterious effects which such a drastic physiological change would cause. (SAN loss is 1/1D3.)

The victims will revert to normal once Ithaqua rises for the final time, on the third night (see below)--assuming they survive.

For dramatic effect, the Keeper should select at least one or two NPCs to be caught outside and suffer this fate if the investigators are too careful for it; an NPC who goes temporarily insane might try fleeing, whether by road or helicopter, allowing the players to witness the effects of stepping out of the affected zone. SAN loss for seeing (or hearing, by radio) a victim die of heat stroke in the frigid air is 1D4.

The next morning, the players will get the *bad* news.

To be continued...

Characters

Lt. Colonel James Farrell
MJ-5 Operative and Blue Team Commander, age 46
Race: Caucasian
STR 12 CON 13 SIZ 12 INT 16 POW 14
DEX 10 APP 10 EDU 17 SAN 70 HP 13
Damage Bonus none
Education: B.S. American History, Air Force Academy; ARRS Training
Occupation: USAF Special Operations Command, Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service, detached to Project BLUE FLY
Skills: Climb 60%, Conceal 43%, Credit Rating 35%, Dodge 40%, Drive Auto 32%, First Aid 50%, Hide 40%, History 56%, Jump 40%, Listen 65%, Martial Arts (boxing and judo) 45%, Navigation 60%, Parachuting 60%, Sneak 53%, Spot Hidden 63%
Languages: English (own) 100%
Attacks:
Fist/Punch 65%, 1D3 + martial arts
Grapple 53%, special
H&K Special Weapons System (.45 handgun with laser sight) 50% (+10%), 1D10+2
Armor: Reinforced kevlar vest and helmet over HAZMAT suit, 12 points
Appearance: Farrell is on the short side and just getting old enough to lose some of the lean muscle of his youth. He can still keep up with the younger men of his unit, though, and none of them hesitate to follow his orders or example. He has greying crew-cut brown hair and a plain face, weathered from time spent in the air and in the field, with clear and stern blue eyes.
Notes: Farrell has taken many lessons from his commander, Colonel Coffey, the head recovery officer of operation BLUE FLY, on handling extraterrestrial investigations, but he is neither as experienced nor as xenophobic as Coffey. He is thrilled in a macho, self-serving way with the apparent remnants of alien forces. Lt. Colonel Farrell will deny

that Ithaqua's howls are in fact biological: they are a transient and highly localized meteorological effect, a lingering side effect of an alien weapon. He and his men see the world through the lens of the information given by the Greys to the Majestic group; myths about monstrous deities have no place in their investigation.

Sample Blue Team Operative
Maroon and Grey, age 25-40
Race: varies
STR 16 CON 15 SIZ 15 INT 14 POW 13
DEX 13 APP 11 EDU 17 SAN 65 HP 15
Damage Bonus +1D4
Education: USAF Special Operations Training (ARRS)
Occupation: USAF Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service, detached to Project BLUE FLY
Skills: Climb 60%, Conceal 60%, First Aid 50%, Hide 50%, Jump 50%, Listen 55%, Mechanical Repair 50%, Navigate 55%, Parachute 50%, Sneak 50%, Spot Hidden 65%, Swim 40%
Languages: English (own) 85%
Attacks:
Fist/Punch 60%, 1D3+db
Fighting Knife 55%, 1D4+2+db
H&K Special Weapons System (.45 handgun with laser sight) 60% (+12%), 1D10+2
M-17 Assault Rifle 55% (+11%), 2D6+3 (with armor piercing rounds, 1/2 armor protection and -1 damage)
Attached grenade launcher (20mm HEAP) 45% (+9%), 3D6 explosive (2 m. radius)
Armor: Reinforced kevlar vest and helmet over HAZMAT suit, 12 points
Appearance: The BLUE FLY troops are crew-cut and tough, classic American special operations. Most of the time they wear grey camouflage-pattern fatigues. Most wear the maroon beret of USAF Pararescue; two wear the grey beret of USAF Special Forces Meteorologists. These last two may be the most baffled and disturbed of all at the influence of the Wind-Walker.
Notes: These men are veteran special operations troops, the elite of the elite, professional and wary. They have been trained to expect anything when dealing with alien technology; but when the Mythos is involved, training only goes so far. Faced with mounting encounters with the power of the Great Old One, the BLUE FLY troops may react in unpredictable ways. Some will revert instinctively and obsessively to training, focusing on concealment and security as they await normalization or a chance to bug out, while others will get more and more violently "proactive" in securing their environment. Confrontations with Harris' NRO-Delta agents might be very likely if they are manipulated skillfully by the investigators.

Major Elton Harris
Undercover NRO-Delta Commander, age 49
Race: Caucasian
STR 13 CON 11 SIZ 16 INT 16 POW 11
DEX 12 APP 13 EDU 19 SAN 44 HP 14
Damage Bonus +1D4
Education: M.S. Criminology; Special Agent training, FBI Academy
Occupation: "DIA Special Agent," actually a Major in the National Reconnaisance Office, Section Delta, for MJ-3 Project GARNET
Skills: Conceal 45%, Dodge 39%, Drive Auto 50%, Fast Talk 53%, Law 34%, Listen 54%, Martial Arts (karate and judo) 50%, Navigate 40%, Persuade 44%, Psychology 56%, Sneak 46%, Spot Hidden 66%
Languages: English (own) 95%
Attacks:
Glock-18 (silenced) 60%, 1D10
M-17 Assault Rifle 50% (+10%), 2D6+3
Kick 55%, 1D6+db+martial arts

OICW: THE M-17

The OICW (Objective Individual Combat Weapon) protocol in 1992 defined the next model of personal infantry weapon to be deployed by American armed forces. Many contractors produced prototypes for inspection by the Army and Marine Corps, with the intent to deploy the rifle generally in 2005. In "Jack Frost," the Majestic covert forces are equipped with advance models of the weapon.

The M-17 is a 5.56mm assault rifle (these troops use armor piercing [depleted uranium] ammunition) with modular infrared imaging gun camera and laser sighting, gas buffers to reduce recoil, and an attached 20mm explosive round launcher capable of direct or indirect fire (replacing the M203 grenade launcher). The weapon's ordinary maximum effective range would be 130 meters; taking a round to use the rangefinder and scope will increase effective range to 520 meters, with the standard skill bonus for laser sighting. The shoulder stock and accessories may be removed, if necessary, to reduce the weapon to an eminently concealable rifle no larger than a

Grapple 52%, special
Armor: Concealed kevlar vest, 5 points
Appearance: Harris is tall and lanky, still lean and agile from daily karate exercises and time in the field. He has short black hair not yet going to grey. His dark brown eyes bear traces of cruel humor and easy irony. He wears a black suit and tie as if they are required by regulation.
Notes: For good or for ill, "Major" Harris is more likely than Farrell to take seriously the bizarre supernatural effects of the Wind-Walker's manifestations. He has no inkling of the truth, of course, but he has seen some the more outre incidents of the Greys' activity, and he has reasons to suspect that more bizarre and malignant forces may be behind them than the Majestic committee will admit. This will be little help to the investigators; he has some idea how much he should fear the "supernatural" (for lack of a better description), and he will quickly become obsessively paranoid and dangerous as the scenario progresses and his SAN is depleted. The more he is convinced of some unstoppable alien power in the area, the more likely he will be to irrationally call JERICHO/PURGATORY (see Part Two) to eradicate all traces of it.

small submachine gun (the rifle's effective range should be halved without the shoulder stock; it is then fired using the Submachinegun skill). The 20mm shell can be set to explode on impact or mid-air, to aid in reaching covers behind concealment: it takes one combat round to program the range, but with a normal attack roll the explosive shell will negate the target's protective cover. The gun camera can also transmit wirelessly to a wrist or helmet-mounted viewscreen, enabling "blind" fire around corners at only half the normal skill chance (rather than unaimed).

In some testing models, the OICW has increased the killing efficiency of equipped troops by an order of 500% or more. Investigators would be wise to learn the Majestic team's weapons well before taking them on.

5.56mm NATO rounds: Rifle skill. Standard damage for the caliber. Base range 130 yards. ROF 2 or 30. Malfunction: 00.

20mm shells: Grenade Launcher skill. 3D6 damage/3 yard explosive burst. Base range 50 yards. ROF 1. Malfunction: 99-00.

Sample NRO-Delta Agents
24 more Men in Black, age 35-45
Race: Varies
STR 15 CON 14 SIZ 13 INT 15 POW 14
DEX 15 APP 11 EDU 18 SAN 70 HP 14
Damage Bonus +1D4
Education: CIA Operations Training, Camp Perry, or Special Forces Training, Fort Bragg
Occupation: Security Officer, NRO Section Delta
Skills: Climb 53%, Conceal 50%, Dodge 41%, Drive Auto 52%, Hide 55%, Jump 50%, Listen 61%, Locksmith 46%, Martial Arts 52%, Psychology 40%, Sneak 56%, Spot Hidden 61%
Languages: English (own) 95%
Attacks:
Fist/Punch 60%, 1D3+db+martial arts
Kick 50%, 1D6+db+martial arts
Grapple 50%, special
Glock-18 62%, 1D10
M-17 Assault Rifle 54% (+11%), 2D6+3 (armor piercing rounds, 1/2 armor protection and -1 damage)
Attached grenade launcher (20mm HEAP) 45% (+9%), 3D6 explosive (2 m. radius)
Armor: Concealed kevlar vest, 5 points
Appearance: The men who accompany Harris into Willis wear plain clothes: most of them wear black or grey suits, well-tailored but not flashy, and thick trenchcoats and fine leather gloves against the cold. Those assigned to the perimeter of this mission will be dressed and equipped as U.S. Army Special Forces, in fatigues and black berets. They are uniformly clean-cut and clean-shaven, with hard eyes and cold senses of humor. They are alert, savvy, and suspicious, and the investigators should be hard-pressed to fool them for long.

Dr. Fred Bimmel, Energy Department
MJ-6 Researcher, age 61
Race: African-American
STR 8 CON 8 SIZ 13 INT 17 POW 18
DEX 6 APP 11 EDU 21 SAN 90 HP 11
Damage Bonus none

Education: Ph.D. Nuclear Physics, MIT
Occupation: Nuclear Physicist, U.S. Department of Energy, and researcher for MJ-6 Project PLUTO
Skills: Accounting 40%, Astronomy 30%, Bargain 35%, Chemistry 60%, Computer Use 50%, Conceal 35%, Credit Rating 55%, Electrical Repair 50%, Electronics 60%, Fast Talk 25%, Library Use 55%, Persuade 45%, Physics 80%, Spot Hidden 35%
Languages: English (own) 105%
Attacks: none above base skill
Armor: none
Appearance: Dr. Bimmel was never in the best shape, and recent years have been hard on him. He smokes constantly, he eats poorly, and he sleeps infrequently. His skin is somehow both wrinkled and seemingly haggard, despite the paunch that graces his midsection and seems to grow every year. His kinky short hair is grey and white, and his eyes are a watery dark brown. He wears a typical white scientist's coat over a rumpled suit.
Notes: Bimmel is a distinguished physicist with past experience evaluating the bizarre effects of alien (called "foreign," but Bimmel knows better) technology. At first confident and arrogant, he will become easily rattled as Farrell's tests reveal none of the electromagnetic effects or radiation found in past "Grey" incidents; his reactions are more likely to be simple fear, however, not the irrationality that the others might suffer: Bimmel has an extraordinarily resilient personality. His working theory will be that some sort of weather-control device is being tested, using (unknown) quantum binding processes to dampen molecular activity. He has no hard evidence to that effect, though, and he will spend most of the scenario conducting laborious tests and recalibrations in his field lab, particularly around Crow Lake once he detects anomolous readings there. Bimmel might prove a useful ally to the investigators, if he becomes convinced that Grey technology in fact has nothing to do with the events around Willis, and his word will hold some weight with Farrell; smart players might use him as a means of protection against Harris' agents. Bimmel is accompanied by five assistants in this operation, each of them a PhD with similarly impressive credentials and classified background.

Dr. Lisa Howell, USARMIID
MJ-6 Researcher, age 48
Race: Caucasian
STR 12 CON 8 SIZ 9 INT 16 POW 12
DEX 12 APP 8 EDU 23 SAN 54 HP 9
Damage Bonus none
Education: M.D., Virology and Gene Therapy, University of California at Los Angeles
Occupation: USARMIID Field Researcher, MJ-6 Researcher (Project PLUTO, Sub-Project CORE)
Skills: Biology 80%, Chemistry 50%, Computer Use 40%, Credit Rating 45%, Drive Auto 50%, Fast Talk 35%, First Aid 70%, Library Use 55%, Listen 35%, Medicine 75%, Natural History 40%, Persuade 45%, Pharmacy 50%, Psychology 35%
Languages: English (own) 115%, Latin 40%
Attacks: none above base skill
Armor: none
Appearance: Dr. Howell has never cared a great deal about her looks; she looks down her nose at fellow doctors who spend energy on such superficialities. She is asthmatic and nearsighted, with thick glasses and thick features and stringy blond-brown hair tied into a haphazard ponytail. She wears a physician's coat over a simple pantsuit.
Notes: A specialist in genetic medicine, virology, and chemical warfare, Doctor Howell has worked on alien biotech before, and she was terrified by the implications of what she saw: in past projects she has seen the mixing of genes, aggressive genetic structures, superviruses, and so on. She will cooperate fully with any secrecy or security arrangement, believing BLUE FLY to be working to protect humanity. She will not blink at detainment; she will only frown in discomfort at torture or murder committed in the name of operational security. She will act immediately and intelligently to inform Harris' agents of any hint of subversive activity by the players. Like Bimmel, Howell leads a small team of six doctors investigating the biological implications of the tragedy in Willis.

"FEMA Crisis Task Force Manager Alphonse Lewis"
A/K/A Adolph Lepus, Local Sadistic/Psychotic Hardcore Badass Made Good, age 50
Adolph Lepus is detailed in ***Delta Green*** (p. 92). Born to poor Alabama farmers, Lepus knows this country and its people, even if he has never been to Willis County proper; more than ever, his easy drawl masks quick, decisive

intelligence and a core of cruelty and ruthlessness. Lepus is posing here as the ranking FEMA officer, charged by law with authority over federal and local resources in this crisis. The chief of the Majestic group's wetworks section, Adolph Lepus knows that something is not right with the Greys, and he knows that there are unexplained powers out there that may be totally unrelated to them. Still, he sees Delta Green as a threat to MJ12's hegemony and an unnecessary risk of premature exposure, and he and his men have had several violent encounters with them; while his superiors have not yet decided to instigate direct confrontation with Delta Green, Lepus gathers what intelligence he can in the hopes of using an open conflict with the rival conspiracy to advance his own place in the Majestic project. Captured Delta Green agents can expect a long and unpleasant incarceration if Lepus gets his hands on them. But with the expert treatments of MJ12's OUTLOOK mind-control program (whatever shape it takes in the Keeper's campaign), agents may be released with no conscious memories of Lepus at all; only secret dreams of pain and the flash of golden teeth.

Handouts

Handout #1: Doc Brown's E-mail

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From: Elizabeth Brown, M.D. [docbrown@mindnet.com]
To: Carl [cdcarlton@uab.edu]
Subject: re: Howdy!
Sent: December 16

It's good to hear from you! The small-town practice is
just fine. Nothing but ribs for lunch and wine & caviar
for dinner, and I only have to work three hours a day!
Honest!

But seriously, it's been good here. The winter will be
rough for another month or two. It hit pretty hard this
year, and it caught a few people off-guard who want to
work past dark. It looks like this will be the coldest
winter ever. Or at least for the past 100 years, when
they started recording things like that.

Singh is a big pussycat. And if he's not already reading
this behind your back, you can tell him I said so. You
residents just need to learn tohandle the pressure, that's
all!

cdcarlton@uab.edu wrote:
>Hey girl, haven't heard from you in a while. How's the
>small-town practice? Things are about the same as
>always here in the "big city." Singh is the Great
>Taskmaster, you know how it is. Well, keep in touch.
```

Handout #2. Disturbance at Town Hall

A Town Hall meeting the night of December 22nd was disrupted by Howie Parker, a local carpenter. Parker seemed to be in a daze, shouting that everyone in town had to leave at once or else suffer an evil curse. He was laughed down by the citizens at the meeting and escorted out by the sheriff. Most concluded that Parker had been hitting the brew at Hank's House a little early that night.

(*Willis County Dispatch*, "Disturbance Enlivens Town Hall Meeting," December 23rd.)

Handout #3: Channel 44 Evening News, "Jack Frost Strikes Again"

From the Channel 44 Evening News, January 3, 1995:

ANCHOR: "Tragedy struck the Williams family of Willis, Alabama, this weekend. Susie Williams, 17, died of exposure in a sudden cold snap which froze Willis County. It has local residents wondering just what is behind this peculiar, and deadly, weather condition."

[Cut to the reporter, wearing winter clothes, standing outside a small house.]

REPORTER: "Susie Williams was out walking the family dog, her mother, Abby Williams, told News 44."

[Cut to an interview with a grieving, middle-aged woman.]

ABBY WILLIAMS: "She put on her coat and gloves and everything, and she didn't walk all that far. She knew better than to walk too far when it's cold out. I don't understand it."

REPORTER (voice over): "Susie's father is also baffled."

[Cut to a grim-looking middle-aged man.]

JOHNNY WILLIAMS: "I guess it was Jack Frost. Looks like Jack Frost come down to town again."

[Cut to an elderly doctor in a small doctor's office.]

REPORTER (voice over): "Elizabeth Brown was Susie's doctor, and she examined her body after she was found by a neighbor."

DR. ELIZABETH BROWN: "It was simple exposure. She was outside at the wrong time, and the cold caught up to her. It's a terrible shame."

[Cut to a panning overhead shot of the forest and rivers of Willis County.]

REPORTER: "Susie succumbed to exposure, but it may not have been so simple. 'Jack Frost' is a nickname for sudden, deadly cold snaps which have occurred around Willis County every few years. Susie Williams is only the latest victim."

[Fade to a series of photos: a plain-looking man in overalls, a wiry, elderly man wearing blue jeans and a thick fleece coat, a stocky, fat man wearing overalls and a baseball cap.]

REPORTER (voice over): "Leroy Corder died in 1988 while out fishing. He had been on the lake for less than six hours, according to his wife. Amos McGee died in 1984 while working on his tractor. He was found underneath the tractor, tools around him, dead of hypothermia. Harold Kill died in 1981 in his barn, feeding his chickens. His wife said that only two of the chicks died with him, and the rest were still clucking away around his lifeless body."

[Cut to the news studio.]

ANCHOR: "Doctors and meteorologists alike have no explanation for 'Jack Frost.'"

WEATHERMAN: "That's true, Bill. The fact is, there's a lot we just don't understand about the weather. The 'Jack Frost' phenomenon is one of those things. Maybe someday we'll be able to predict it. In the meantime, folks in Willis and surrounding counties need to be careful, and stay indoors when it's cold out."

ANCHOR: "That's good advice for all of us. A funeral for Susie Williams will be held at Willis First Baptist Church, on January sixth."

Handout #4: The Secrets of Moundville

"The defining feature of Moundville Archaeological Park is the widely dispersed arrangement of twenty-nine flat-topped grassy hills or mounds. Most are twelve to fifteen feet tall, but some cover an acre or more and are thirty to sixty feet high. They have been found to contain pottery and post-holes, remnants of old dwellings. Other discoveries have given archeologists a picture of a farming tribe, perhaps several thousand strong in its heyday, led by a hereditary priest-chief who worshipped a fire or sun god. Moundville was originally surrounded, all three hundred acres of it, on three sides by a mile-long wooden wall complete with towers; the area is bordered on the north by the Black Warrior River.

"Originally a thriving town and home to all classes of the tribe, the mounds eventually were occupied only by the priests and nobles; finally they, too, moved out, leaving it a necropolis, used only for burial of the dead. The mounds of Moundville were abandoned altogether around 1500 A.D."

("The Secrets of Moundville," Brochure, Alabama Department of Tourism [1998].)

Handout #5: Local Collector Turns 80

Ms. Gardenia Hollister of Box 29, Route 15, keeps the county's oldest archive of diaries and books and letters, and she has stubbornly refused to donate them to the county library.

(*Willis County Dispatch*, "Local Collector Turns 80," 14 MAY 1998.)

Handout #6: Eddings Letter

Ed Horton froze to death on a mild winter night while out hunting in 1911.

(Letter from May Eddings to son, Willis Eddings, 1914.)

Handout #7: Gardner Diary

A deadly chill took the region in 1877, when the Barney farmsteads, father and son, were frozen out and all within were slain.

(Diary of Abe Gardner, 1880.)

Handout #8: Tales from Indian Country

An English trader and trapper told of wintering for a month with a Creek tribe in 1775, when the tribe wore amulets and sang prayers for a whole night while hundreds of serpents hissed outside. The tribe told the trapper that the serpents would protect them from the ice spirits that came from the people of the tribe in the time of each grandson's grandson.

(*Tales from Indian Country*, a hardback book for juvenile readers [signed in the frontpage by Terry Hollister, grandson of Gardenia], Young Apache Press, 1942.)

Handout #9: Corder Letter

Some say "Jack Frost" is an Indian curse for the massacres and expulsions of the Creek from Alabama.

(Letter of Holly Corder to brother, Timothy Corder, 1988.)

Handout #10: Hiram Bates Suicide

Mound Builder Dies By Own Hand

Hiram Bates of Willis died by suicide on February 3rd, 1942. Bates, who had suffered for years from schizophrenia, hung himself at his Willis home, 122 South Shade Lane. Bates gained notoriety not long ago for constructing the Crow Lake Mounds, which some first thought to be archeological discoveries. He is survived by one daughter, Eugenia Parker, and one infant grandson, Howie Parker. His estate will be managed by his daughter.

(*Willis County Dispatch*, 4 FEB 1942.)

Handout #11: Incident Report, 12/22

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Howie Parker, of 122 South Shade Lane, was escorted out of the Town Hall
meeting of 22 DEC at 18:58 after disturbing the meeting. He appeared to be
intoxicated. He hollered and yelled that the county was cursed and that
everyone had to flee, and that he had friends who had come from far away to
give the warning.
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(Incident Report, signed by Sheriff Carly Dawson, 23 DEC.)

Handout #12: The First Ghostly Dream

The dreamer sees bloody snakes across a frozen wooded landscape and writhing in the loins of shrieking women and men, their fangs dripping blood and poison. Glowing mists shimmer and swirl in the vault of an enormous cavern, coalescing into cold green stars. The stars are eyes, great, distant eyes, cold and malevolent and hungry. Toward the end, an enormous mound of red earth is seen

rising above the trees and the writhing bloody snakes, sucking the stars and shimmering mists into its bulk.

Maps

- Map #1
- Map #2
- Map #3

Click here to read part two of this article!

New Spells for AD&D Oriental Adventures

by Lloyd Brown III

Art by andi jones

Wu jen, the mysterious sorcerers of Kara-Tur, have many strange spells unknown to other wizards. They have powers over nature, they can influence the secret ki powers possessed by many Oriental characters, and they seek to command the spirits that inhabit that foreign land.

Many of the wu jen's spells deal with the elements, including the elements of nature not known in the western world. These spells deal with natural forces, including plants and animals. Since they generally lack powerful evocations, these elemental spells may make the wu jen's selection seem more "priestly" than a standard wizard's arsenal. Foreigners should not be fooled, however. The wu jen can rain destruction down on his enemies with powerful whirlwinds and devastating tsunamis.

Their power over their fellow humans is not reflected in charm spells, but in control over the ki power that characters seek to understand and utilize against their enemies. Shukenja, the priests of Kara-Tur, have the greatest power in this area, but wu jen also wish to control ki powers. They use a few valuable spells to augment and control ki.

The pervasive spirits that dwell in trees, rivers, and mountains in Kara-Tur also possess great powers. Wu jen and others emulate, appease, or command these spirits to gain power from them. Although it is difficult and sometimes risky even to speak with these spirits, the rewards of successful negotiation can be great.

Creating a Wu Jen

A player can choose to play his wu jen in one of several ways, according to how he sees the wu jen character and which options the Dungeon Master allows. First, he could use the wu jen straight out of the ***Oriental Adventures*** book. He could only use those spells listed in the ***OA,*** custom spells the DM might allow, and the new spells listed here.

The player might see the wu jen as a more martial wizard, a "mage of physical action" as Dave Cook describes it in his update of the class in *Dragon Magazine #229.* The player could use that format, in which the wu jen expends his own life force in the form of hit points to cast spells that are never removed from memory.

In this case, the only spells available are those from the school which the wu jen follows. The new spells listed below are identified by schools when appropriate, so that they can also be added to those listed in Cook's article.

The wu jen kit is also available in the ***Complete Wizard's Handbook.*** This version allows the player to take a standard mage or even a specialist wizard. The ***CWH*** wu jen is allowed common or oriental weapons, uses the normal spell lists, and leaves much open to personal interpretation.

If the player sees the wu jen as primarily a wizard who seeks to command the elements, he can play the character as an elementalist, using either the system presented in the ***Tome of Magic*** or the Zakharan elementalist described in the ***Arabian Adventures*** sourcebook. In either case, the character's ability to control and use spells of his own element is enhanced, while his ability to use spells from other elements is diminished or disallowed.

Players who describe all of the spells and abilities of a wu jen as different ki powers can create a channeler, using ***Players Option: Spells & Magic*** to create a custom character. In this way, the character can be seen as drawing on his own limited ki every time he casts a spell. The more powerful he gets, the more ki he has and the more spells he can cast (represented by the superior saving throws and, therefore, the greater ability to resist fatigue effects).

Wu jen who seek to draw their power from the great spirits of the land can use the system of magic described for warlocks and witches in ***Spells & Magic,*** although the nature of the spirit is generally neutral rather than inimical to mankind. The spirits are reclusive and resent intrusion, but they are rarely actively evil. In this interpretation of the class, instead of being slowly drawn toward evil, the wu jen is increasingly devoted to the protection and service of the spirits of the land, acting against humankind whenever they offend the spirits. Thus, a high-level wu jen who is well on his way to complete obedience or domination might serve as the spirits' agent in destroying a village that has angered or harmed the spirits. In any case, when actions like these are forced on the wu jen at later stages of the path to servitude, the character is under the control of the DM, and becomes completely so at the final stage, just as if the character served a chaotic and evil power.

New Spells

Clearly, players who wish to create a wu jen character have a great variety of resources for character generation. They also have a variety of spells to choose from, including these affecting the elements, ki and its use, and the spirits, so that any wu jen can use them, regardless of which system was used in the character's creation.

While the wu jen already has a formidable arsenal of spells, even those kits or classes that disallow some of the more common western magics, these foreign wizards can research new spells, too. Development and growth are universal,

whether the wizard is from Oerth, Chult, Solamnia or Kara-Tur. Thus, new spells can easily be integrated into any campaign featuring wu jen.

Level One Spells

Ball of Fire (Evocation)

Range: 20 yards/level (200 yards maximum)
Components: V, S, M
Duration: Instantaneous
Casting Time: 1
Area of Effect: One target
Saving Throw: None

Wu jen have never developed the more common form of fireball, and this is the form that spell takes among them. Ball of fire allows the caster to emit a 6" radius sphere of flame that appears in front of the caster between his open hands and shoots out toward the target, striking for 1d4 points of damage plus one point per level. The caster must make an attack roll with no penalties for range. A missed target takes no damage, but the ball of fire must strike somewhere, possibly hitting another target (use the grenade-like missile table from the ***Dungeon Master's Guide*** to determine where a miss lands).

The material component is a drop of pitch.

Maja's Curse (Necromancy) Reversible

Range: 90 yards
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 2d6 rounds
Casting Time: 1
Area of Effect: 1 10' x 10' square/level
Saving Throw: None
All creatures with 3 HD or less caught within *Maja's curse* are stuck with painful muscle cramps throughout their body, causing a -2 on all attack rolls. Creatures without muscles, undead, or extra-planar creatures are unaffected.

The reverse of the spell, *massage*, removes the effects of magical or natural cramps, including the use of this spell.

The material component is a drop of water from a great depth (300' or more).

Dreamstrength (Invocation)

Range: 30 yards
Components: V, S
Duration: Up to 8 hours
Casting Time: 1 round
Area of Effect: 1 creature/level
Saving Throw: None

Dreamstrength bolsters a creature's ability to fend off magical attacks against its spirit that take place while it is asleep. The creature so protected gains a +4 on saving throws made against the *nightmare* spell, the attack of a night hag, or any other special attacks made specifically against a sleeping character.

Focus Ki (Invocation)

Range: 0
Components: V
Duration: One round
Casting Time: 1
Area of Effect: Personal
Saving Throw: None

Focus ki allows the wu jen to intensify his natural ki power briefly, focusing it on a specific attack. For the round following the casting of the spell, the wu jen may make one attack at +3 on the attack roll and +3 on damage. This spell is often used in combination with another special attack form (such as an attack spell that has a range of "Touch") to guarantee success. It can certainly be used in conjunction with a martial arts attack, and since the spell uses only a brief verbal component, it might be used surreptitiously in a martial arts competition where magic is not allowed.

Hide (Illusion/Phantasm)

Range: Touch
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1d6+1 rounds
Casting Time: 1
Area of Effect: One creature
Saving Throw: None

Hide is a very specialized illusion meant to allow the wu jen to gain a brief combat advantage or flee a battle. For a random duration, the caster turns both invisible and silent. Since in this case the silence is a phantasm and not an alteration, certain creatures might not be fooled. Attacking or casting a spell immediately ends both the invisibility and the silence, as with the second-level wizard spell *invisibility*.

The material components are a small black cloak and pair of black cloth boots.

Level Two Spells

Extend Ki (Invocation)

Range: Touch
Components: V, S
Duration: 1 turn + 2 round/level
Casting Time: 2
Area of Effect: One person/four caster levels
Saving Throw: None

Extend ki allows the recipient to feel an enemy's attack just slightly before it strikes. The effects of this spell allow the recipients to gain a -1 initiative modifier and a +1 to Armor Class, since they can strike or dodge while their enemies are unready. Up to one person for every four levels of the caster can be affected.

Hardglass (Alteration) Reversible

Range: 10'
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 hour
Casting Time: 2
Area of Effect: One object

Saving Throw: None

This alteration spell make glass extremely resistant to blows, adding +4 to saving throws to resist breaking. It is used to protect delicate treasures during transportation, potion bottles, or glass windows in time of danger. The item must be less than 10 pounds per caster level and must be made of glass or crystal to be affected.

The reverse, *softglass,* makes a glass or crystal item fragile and easily broken, causing it to break when struck unless a natural 20 is rolled on a saving throw. The DM may rule that some blows disallow a saving throw (a 200' fall, for example). Magic items held by a person are allowed the owner's saving throw vs. spells to resist the spell's effects.

The material component is a steel plate in the case of hardglass or a small hammer for the reverse.

Steal Breath (Enchantment/Charm)

Range: 10 yards/level
Components: S, M
Duration: Instantaneous
Casting Time: 2
Area of Effect: One target/three levels
Saving Throw: None

This spell can causes a creature to exhale forcefully. Most of the time, the creature is unharmed, as he simply starts breathing again. If cast while the creature is underwater, however, the results can be quite different. The creature has lost its breath and may begin to drown immediately, depending on whether more air is available.

If the target is attacked by a cloud-based spell or magic attack (such as green dragon breath or *cloudkill*) during the same round, the target's saving throw vs. the cloud-based spell is made at -3.

The material component is a puff of air from the caster. If the wu jen is underwater also, the spell can be cast, but it costs him one round's worth of his own air supply. If he is using *water breathing* to breathe water instead of air, then he cannot provide the material component.

Level Three Spells

Dark Fire (Alteration)

Range: 60 yards
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 2 rounds/level maximum
Casting Time: 3
Area of Effect: 10 sq. feet/level within a 40-foot radius
Saving Throw: Special

Dark fire produces an effect similar to the priest spell *faerie fire* and can be used to make targets easier to see, as with that spell. Upon command from the caster, however, the eerie flames become real, burning the targets for 3d4 points of damage. After burning and causing damage for one round, the flames go out, although other materials on or near the targets might be ignited.

Usually, the caster uses this spell to force a desired action out of a target who is familiar with the effects of the spell, offering to allow the spell to run its course without causing it to ignite if the creature obeys. When used against targets unfamiliar with the spell, the wu jen gives his allies the benefit of the improved chance to hit the enemies, and then ignites the flames after the enemies have been wounded and are near death.

The material component is a stone magicked to provide light (*light, continual light,* or a custom spell).

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Enchanted Hands (Enchantment/Charm)

Range: 10 yards
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 2 rounds/level
Casting Time: 3
Area of Effect: 1 creature/3 levels
Saving Throw: None

Enchanted hands is often cast upon a character trained in the martial arts to enable him to attack creatures normally immune to non-magical weapons. It does not provide any protection against the touch of undead or other creatures, however, so caution is advised. The target can easily wear leather or cloth gloves to keep his skin from touching the creature, and the spell still enables him to attack. Metal gauntlets prevent the spell from functioning, however, for as long as they are worn.

Creatures other than characters may also have this spell cast on them, enabling them to attack with claws, fangs, tail, etc. Thus, a trained hawk might have this spell cast on it, enabling it to harm a peryton, for example.

The attacking creature is considered to be attacking with a +1 weapon only at the lowest caster level -- 5th. At 6th level, the creatures affected can strike monsters hit only by +2 weapons, and at 11th level, the wu jen's spell allows creatures to strike monsters hit only by +3 weapons.

The material component is a silver-studded glove, which normally costs 5-10 gp.

Non-Metal (Alteration)

Range:60 yards
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 round/level
Casting Time: 3
Area of Effect: 1 object, up to 10 pounds/level
Saving Throw: None

Non-metal changes metal objects like weapons or armor into obsidian of equal strength and quality. The item's ability to inflict damage or resist blows is unaffected. Thus, swords and other weapons are rendered immune to rust, magnetism, the priest spell *heat metal,* and other common attacks. Magical items in the possession of another gain a saving throw if the owner is unwilling to receive the spell.

The material components are a small piece of lead and a block of obsidian the same size.

Numbing Touch (Necromancy)

Range: 0
Components: V, S, M
Duration: Special
Casting Time: 3
Area of Effect: Caster only
Saving Throw: None

When *Numbing touch* is cast, the wu jen gains a potent touch attack that can be used to disable a victim's limb for 1d6

hours. When the wu jen touches a target, it must make a saving throw vs. petrification or lose use of the limb touched. If the wu jen touches the head, the victim is rendered unconscious for 1d6 hours if the save is failed. A touch on the torso or abdomen slows the victim to one half normal movement and attacks. The limb touched can be determined using the "Hit Location" tables from the Critical Hit charts in ***Combat & Tactics,*** or by rolling d10 for humanoids: 1-2 = right leg, 3-4 = left leg, 5 = abdomen, 6-7 = torso, 8 = right arm, 9 = left arm, 10 = head.

Level Four Spells

Burning Katana (Alteration/Enchantment)

Range: Touch
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 turn/level
Casting Time: 4
Area of Effect: One weapon
Saving Throw: None

The *burning katana* spell enables any type of sword, knife, or dagger to temporarily gain some of the magical abilities of the magical *flame tongue.* The spell causes flames to run along the length of the weapon which can ignite combustibles that are touched by the blade. The weapon becomes +1, +2 vs. any of the creatures normally affected by a *flame tongue:* avian, undead, or cold-using creatures. The weapon is unharmed by the spell. *Burning katana* does not work on weapons that are already enchanted.

The material component is a lit torch, which is touched to the blade. The torch disappears and the flame leaps to the blade of the weapon.

Protection From Earth (Abjuration)

Range: 0
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 3 turns + 1 turn/level
Casting Time: 1 turn
Area of Effect: Caster only
Saving Throw: None

The wu jen uses *protection from earth* to defend himself from warriors or monsters who would harm him with weapons. The caster suffers -1 damage from metal or stone weapons, subject to a minimum of 1 hp. Earth elementals attack at -2 on attacks, -4 on total damage. Other metallic or stone creatures inflict -1 point of damage per die, to a minimum of 1 hp each.

The material component is a piece of granite and a drop of acid.

Restore Ki (Invocation) Reversible

Range: Touch
Components: V, S, M
Duration: Permanent
Casting Time: 4
Area of Effect: One person
Saving Throw: None

This spell can be used to restore an oriental character's ki power if it has been used for the day. This spell cannot be used more than once on the same individual within 24 hours. This spell has seen a resurgence and increase in

popularity since it has been discovered that it also restores up to 25 PSPs in a psionicist or wild talent, up to the creature's normal maximum.

The reverse of the spell, *destroy ki*, removes the potential for using ki power. If the targeted character has already used its ki power, then the spell has no effect. If it has not used it, the ability to use the ki power for that day is removed. If the character is currently using a ki power, then the effects are negated as the power is removed.

Destroy ki can also be used to decrease a psionicists available PSPs by 25, or half that amount if a saving throw vs. spells is made. These lost PSPs can be restored by rest, by rejuvenation, or by *restore ki*.

The spell's effects are permanent in that the effects can be changed by later events, but do not change due to the ending of the spell, in the same way that hit points cured by cure wounds spells are permanent.

The material component is a pair of glass or ceramic spheres, one black, one white.

Level Five Spells

Glass Shape (Alteration)

Range: Touch
Components: V, S, M
Duration: Permanent
Casting Time: 1 round
Area of Effect: 1/2 cubic foot/level
Saving Throw: None

This spell unique to Kara-Tur allows the wu jen to alter the shape of glass or crystal. It is otherwise similar to the existing spell *stone shape.* If used against a creature made of these materials, it inflicts 4d6 points of damage.

The material component is thick wet sand.

Wall of Wood (Evocation)

Range: 10 yards/level
Components: V, S, M
Duration: Permanent
Casting Time: 5
Area of Effect: Special
Saving Throw: None

This spell creates a section of wooden wall that can be used in construction, or to block pursuit, or other purposes as the caster desires. The wall is up to one inch thick per caster level, and up to 20 square feet per level. The wall can only be created flat -- it cannot be shaped into a sphere, an arch, or anything else.

The material component is a cut piece of wood.

Level Six Spells

Protection from Nature (Abjuration)

Range: 0
Components: V, S, M

Duration: 1 turn/level, 18 turns maximum
Casting Time: 5 round
Area of Effect: Caster only
Saving Throw: None

This powerful abjuration spell gives the caster complete protection from non-magical wooden weapons and all natural attacks by real-world animals with 6 HD or less. Magical wooden weapons harm the wu jen normally, as do animals with more than 6 HD or magical monsters like carrion crawlers and buso.

The material components are a fang and claw from an animal affected by the spell and a small wooden mace or club.

Level Seven Spells

Dispel Life Force (Necromancy)

Range: 20 yards
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 3d6 rounds
Casting Time: 7
Area of Effect: One creature
Saving Throw: None

Dispel life force is a direct attack on a creature's spirit, causing the spirit to depart the body as if the creature were dead. During this time, the being appears to be dead to all inspection, including magical. The spirit returns after the spell duration ends or the magic is successfully dispelled.

When the spirit returns, the creature is weakened as if it had been killed and raised. That is, it cannot cast spells and must rest before undertaking any strenuous activity. Its hit points, however, are the same as when the spirit left the body, unless damage has been done to the body since it was rendered helpless.

The material component is a holy symbol appropriate to the target's faith. If it professes no faith, then a symbol from a power whose cause is furthered by the creature's actions may be used. Obviously, this requires either some knowledge of the creature or a lucky guess on the part of the caster.

Unburn (Alteration)

Range: 30 yards
Components: V, S, M
Duration: Permanent
Casting Time: 7
Area of Effect: One object up to 5 pounds/level
Saving Throw: None

Sometimes the wu jen might suffer a loss at the hands of another wizard, or a pyromaniacal warrior, or an accident, and lose a valuable item to fire. *Unburn* can be used to repair the item, provided it was burned less than one hour ago, it is unliving (the spell cannot be used to heal damage from fire-based attack spells), and it was damaged solely by fire.

The material components are three small gems, one red, one blue, and one clear, minimum value 50 gp each.

Level Eight Spells

Recall from Oblivion (Abjuration)

Range: 60 yards
Components: V, S, M
Duration: Permanent
Casting Time: 8
Area of Effect: One item
Saving Throw: None

This is a specialized but very useful spell that brings back an item that has been disintegrated or annihilated (by a sphere of annihilation) or otherwise instantly destroyed. Some restrictions apply to the use of the spell. *Recall from oblivion* affects an area within 60 yards from the caster, and the item must have been disintegrated within that range. The item must have disappeared instantly, not quickly. A piece of paper caught within a *delayed blast fireball,* no matter how large, was burned, not disintegrated. Lastly, the item must have been disintegrated whole -- the spell does not return the missing part of large items that were only partially disintegrated.

The material component is a small puzzle-like box with a copper or silver coin inside. These intricate puzzles cost 200 gp or more.

Level Nine Spells

Mass Petrification (Alteration)

Range: 30 yards
Components: V, S, M
Duration: Permanent
Casting Time: 9
Area of Effect: 30' x 30' square, up to 4 creatures
Saving Throw: None

Mass petrification is a powerful attack against several opponents. Up to four targets may be chosen by the caster, each of whom saves at -1. If all of the creatures targeted resist the spell -- by making a saving throw, magic resistance, or other protection -- then the caster suffers a minor backlash and is held (as the spell *hold person*) for 2d4 rounds (save for half duration). *Mass petrification* is not reversible.

The material component is ichor of jishin mushi, a monster (detailed in ***OA***) with strong ties to the element of earth.

Unbind Spirit (Abjuration)

Range: 30 yards
Components: V, S, M
Duration: Permanent
Casting Time: 9
Area of Effect: One golem
Saving Throw: None

The wu jen is a master of spirits, and the chaining and enslavement of these spirits by enchanters is seen as an infringement on their powers. The wu jen often finds it handy to release the elemental spirits that inhabit golems, and that is exactly the purpose behind *unbind spirit.* When this spell is cast at a golem, it must make a saving throw vs. spells or the spirit is free to return to its plane of origin, leaving behind an inanimate form of flesh, clay, stone, or iron.

The evil and intelligent golems of ***Ravenloft*** are sufficiently different in makeup and motivation that they are not affected by this specialized magic.

The material component is a tiny silver key and lock, valued at 50-100 gp.

How Do You Get Women Into Gaming, Anyway?

In the Beginning

My formal introduction to gaming didn't begin until I started college in 1991. While I had gamed with friends in high school, it had never been serious, and it largely consisted of board games like ***Civilization.*** We had played a few sessions of ***Dungeons and Dragons,*** but the sessions were few and my friends were more interested in blowing each other apart on a ***BattleTech*** hex map.

My college career started rocky. Here I was, in the second week of my freshman year, and I loathed my roommate, avoided the loud parties on the hall, and hid from the most traditional of freshman activities -- imbibing at strange frathouses in the middle of the night. I was having a *little* difficulty meeting new people. Luckily for myself and hundreds of other wayward freshmen, the University of Michigan provided.

Every year, in the middle of September, the University hosts a large gathering of clubs and groups in the center of Central Campus named Festifall. The event introduces and indoctrinates new students into available clubs and activities on campus. Tables radiate out from the center in a series of lines, and are only far enough apart that a wary student can barely navigate between them in single file. Standing at the foot of the steps up to the Graduate Library, smiling faces hand out fliers with maps to those who are brave enough to navigate the gathering.

There are tables for clubs, sports teams, fraternities, sororities, journalism apprenticeships, and political activists, all of them with enthusiasts waving pamphlets. I took literature from the rowing team, the Women in Engineering student group, and the Trotskyists. I listened to a pitch for a sorority house from a girl dripping in pink. I talked to a Rabbi from Chabad House, the Jewish student group, who tried to convince me to become Orthodox. I didn't, although I thanked him for the refrigerator magnet.

Sitting off to a side was the table for the Wolverine Gaming Club. There wasn't anything on the table except a few stacks of colored paper. A bored looking girl handed me a pair of fliers.

"What are these?" I asked.

She mumbled a brief and largely memorized run down of the great Michigan Terminal System (MTS), the mighty mainframe which fostered computing communities all over the state, and harbored the hallowed lands of the Student Conferencing Project. She included in an offhand way how to score an account and log onto the system.

Three days and a trip to the Education building later, I had an account in my hot little hands. That night, over my 2400 baud modem, I followed the directions I had received from the girl at the table. At the prompt, I typed the words which would gain me access to the confer-u system:

source game:guild

For the first time, I saw the banner of the Game Guild BBS that was the core of the local gaming community. It asked me my name. I told it. No one ever told me that girls weren't supposed to be gamers.

Years later, I would be the one handing out the fliers at Festifall.

Welcome to Gaming

When I joined the University of Michigan gaming guild for the first time in September of 1991, there was already a rolling debate in progress about getting women in gaming, and it was rapidly on its way to becoming a full bore flame war. The argument had started civilly some weeks before school had started, but as people returned from summertime, it had picked up speed. There were hundreds of posts. I jumped right into the fray, believing that I, in a naive sense of

nobility and justice, had the answer to that very question. After all, was I not the whole of the local female population? Did I not know exactly what every woman in gaming wanted?

What a difference eight years makes.

What is the answer? What *do* women want, and how do you get them into gaming? Years have passed, and there has been plenty of time to think up a good answer. There have been dozens of arguments and flame wars on the subject across all facets of the net, but the truth turns out to be pretty simple. Women want to get the exact same things men want to get out of gaming: a few hours of fun, a good villain to trounce, a cheap pizza that congeals in under a half an hour, a few watery beers, and good time spent with friends.

How do you get women to game in the first place? How does one get their girlfriend/spouse/platonic friend into this hobby? That's the hot question, the core of discussion across a myriad bulletin boards and mailing lists. That has been asked over and over again for years, ever since the first roleplaying game came out. *How do you get women to participate in the game?*

First and foremost, there has to be some level of basic interest. If the prospective woman player is the sort of person to sit around on her weekends crocheting afghans and discussing recipes, then the indoctrination is unlikely, no matter how much the indoctrinating parties may try to put over the brainwashing mojo. This is not a hard and fast guideline; there are many female gamers who happen to both crochet *and* discuss recipes -- sometimes at the gaming sessions proper. This is a "use your judgment" bit -- a good query might work just as well. But if there is interest, then the indoctrination can begin!

Gather your female friends together and introduce them to the game. One reliable way to introduce a new female gamer is to de-emphasize the gaming aspects and play up the improvisational theater. Outside of the rules at its core, roleplaying is a method to express interactive imagination, and improvisational theater is the medium for that expression. The medium is the conduit for the storytelling. (Several games, in fact, do this -- including the now defunct ***Theatrix, Amber Diceless Role Playing,*** and the excellently written ***Everway.***)

Emotional involvement in the story is key, and bringing the woman gamer into the story is an important step to fostering a new addiction. Female players want story. They want involvement. They want real characters in real situations. Skip the part where the players have to tote the pile of useless gold treasure out of yet another dungeon in sacks of dubious depth, and go right for the part where she's saving the townspeople from the serial killing demon lord. She will return. Guaranteed. Besides, then she doesn't have to figure out how she got those 4,000 gold pieces out of the (now) dead demon lord's chamber in a backpack.

Forget the rules. Yes, you love them. Yes, you have them all memorized. Yes, you can recite the rules to all three editions of the game. But they're not going to do you the slightest bit of good in this situation. Faced with piles of rule books, strange plastic dice-like objects, half finished adventures, and arcane terminology, anyone in their right mind would turn tail and run for the hills. Who understands the intricacies of any new endeavor the first time they sit down to play? If the game is fun and easy, the rules and the dice will come in time. It's all about the story line! See step one.

The next step is just as crucial as the previous ones. It's difficult to get into any hobby without knowing a few interested people to start in the right direction. The *community* of gamers is the heart of gaming. There can be no game without a gaming group. The group may be vaguely unwashed and rather dubious in general, but the game needs gamers, and gamers are a rather clingy, yet friendly, lot. (I, myself, finally jumped in when there was an online community of people to join, discuss the game, and interact with on a daily basis.)

The group is more than just people who get together and utter arcane terms like "to-hit numbers" and "percentile dice." Women want to be a part of a group, and providing that group is part of the successful formula. They want friends who enjoy spending time exploring new worlds together -- gritty urban fantasy, science fiction, high fantasy, horror. Introducing the new female player to a friendly group of people with similar addictions is a good, solid method to laying groundwork for a fun new hobby. Furthermore, it often starts several solid friendships which extend outside the game and into other fine time wasters as watching anime and hanging out.

When all else fails, try board games. Or more beer. Or pay for the pizza -- that occasionally works.

But . . . but . . . but gaming is nerdy!

Once the curtain is pushed away and the game is revealed to be another way to spend time with one's friends, enjoying the camaraderie of exploration and investigation, and becoming emotionally invested in the story line, coming to the game becomes significantly more appealing. Okay, sure, it has a stigma of being nerdy, but put a baby-killing monster in front of a group of female players, and it will be amazing how much they beg to play the next session. Play up the emotions.

What do women want out of gaming? What women want out of gaming is the story. Give them the story, and you can get them into the game.

Women want to become creative for a few free hours. They want to get into different mind sets, explore solutions to strange problems, and be confronted with new and unusual situations in outlandish places. They want to be in other places, other times, and involved with other people. Sometimes, women want to fight the dragon at the end of the tunnel and win. Sometimes, women want to die dramatically at the climax of the story. Every once in a while, women want to whip out their big, spiffy powers and use them to spank the bad guys.

And when the gaming is over for the night, it helps to go out afterwards.

Today . . .

Somehow, logging into Game Guild lead me from the introverted freshman I once was into an extrovert obsessed with the Knights Templar. I've never been entirely sure how I reached that point, but I assumed that gaming was somehow involved.

MTS has long been shut down to anyone except the kind of archivists that are depicted on the front of ***Spammers*** cards, and Game:Guild has been forced to migrate first to a UNIX platform and then finally disperse to the four winds. The online community that once was is no longer, but eight years is a long time for anything to exist on the net. Instead, the community continues to exist where it can in a tangled web of friendships almost a decade long. One thing was sure: the gaming community it fostered brought dozens of gamers, including opening the door for *many* women in gaming -- most of whom actively game to this day. The door the community opened offered a hobby that many people still actively enjoy.

It's true that it is a challenge to get women into gaming. That is no myth. But once they have their formal introductions, are handed their character with a good background and shown into a world where their actions mean life or death, many are hooked, if not for the campaign, then for a lifetime. And a little free food doesn't hurt.

Next Time . . .

Now that you have women who want to roleplay, what do you do with them? Which games are the absolute best to play and which are the absolute worst? I'll examine which games -- and why! -- are the best to introduce to your new pack of slavering gaming addicts, and which should be best left on your bookshelf.

by James R. Stilipec

Photos by Christian Eskelund and the crew of the *U.S.S. Carl Vinson*

Roleplaying Relaxes Sailors

[*Editor's Note:* This article originally appeared in *The Eagle*, the shipboard newspaper of the *U.S.S. Carl Vinson.*]

Sailors have many different ways of dealing with the stress that comes from deployment. Some work out, others write home. A few spend their free time far away from the ship, in another world.

Role-playing is a game that lets people pretend to be a different person in a different place and time. It can be likened to improvisation or acting without a script while still being directed.

"There are a lot of misconceptions about role-playing," said Intelligence Specialist Seaman Jeffrey Parrish, "But those of us who play think it's a very intellectual game. You must be imaginative because most of it takes place in your mind."

Parrish started role-playing with his older brother as a teenager and has now been playing for nearly 12 years. "I like the escape it offers. I can stop thinking about the real world for a few hours and relax," said the Florida native.

"There are two main facets to role-playing," explained Electronics Technician 2nd Class Craig Smith. "First, the players get to make up a character and control him or her through an adventure. The Game Master (GM), or referee, controls all the other aspects of the game; The story, setting and the characters the players meet."

"The GM is the overlord of a game," said Parrish. "He takes the players through a story, and usually it doesn't go along exactly as he expected. Thinking on your feet is an important skill whether you're a player or a GM."

Players make up characters with specific statistics and abilities. Six types of dice are used to determine a character's success at a given skill.

There are many systems and settings that you can play in. Familiar games like ***Advanced Dungeons & Dragons*** put the characters into a medieval setting with knights and wizards.

Then there are more free-form game like the ***Generic Universal Role-Playing System (GURPS).*** This game lets players create any type of character in any type of setting. It allows you to play space pirates, Chinese warlords or modern-day investigators.

Fire Controlman 3rd Class Fredrick Lopez started role-playing after he came to *Carl Vinson.* "I was going to check my e-mail when I saw a few guys playing. I asked about the game and if they wouldn't mind me playing."

Lopez said the game can seem overwhelming at first with its many books, rules and charts, but that shouldn't deter anyone from playing. "It took some time, but eventually I got the basics down. I've been playing now for six months, and the game is relaxing," said Lopez.

Parrish explained that role-playing isn't just about rolling dice and fighting monsters. "The games often have puzzles and riddles in them. It's about being able to immerse yourself into a different world and fit the role of your character," said Parrish.

"I get a sense of accomplishment from the game," said Smith, an 18-year role-playing veteran. "It exercises the mind and pushes the limits of your imagination. When you complete an adventure with your friends you get a good feeling from working together and completing the adventure."

"I like role-playing because it's a great way to wind down after a long day," said Lopez, who works on the Phalanx Close-In Weapon System. "We play maybe twice a week or whenever enough of us can get together."

There are several role-playing groups on the ship. "If you're curious about the game, feel free to get with someone and sit in on a session. Games usually last for two or three hours," said Parrish.

"Many people don't understand role-playing," said Smith, "And what we don't understand we tend to put down or belittle. I think once they see what it's all about, they'll see it's just a game."

by David Edelstein

Art by Ken Waters and Philip J. Reed, Jr.

In Nomine GM's Guide Designer's Notes

It seems that a ***Game Master's Guide*** is obligatory for every game line nowadays, so now ***In Nomine*** can boast one of its own. And I can boast that I wrote it.

Given that there are so many GM's guides out there, though, it would be a little presumptuous of me to claim I can tell other GMs how to run a game, and do a better job of covering such topics as narration, plotting, pacing, atmosphere, and the like, than writers who've taken a crack at it in the past. Honestly, I didn't even try. ***In Nomine*** is cinematic in feel, and almost comic book-like in appearance, but it's not a lightweight game. It raises serious questions (for those inclined to pursue them) about the nature of God and man, and the distinctions between Good and Evil and Selfishness and Selflessness. And for that reason, I've noticed that ***In Nomine's*** hardcore fan base tends to be very well-read and philosophical . . . and generally veteran gamers. Having been a gamer for nearly 20 years now, I tend to skip past the sections on "How to Deal with Problem Players" in most GM's guides, and look for the stuff specific to the game for which I bought the book. I want "toolkits" that give me stuff I can use or not as I see fit. I want a lot of resources and plot hooks that I can just drop into my game, and I want to get a glimpse at how the game designers see their universe; not necessarily to emulate them, but to know what adjustments I'll need to make if I want to make my version of their universe a little different.

Speaking of adjustments, here is the Campaign Checklist which took up too much space to be included in the book. While useful (especially to someone who *isn't* an experienced, improvisational GM), it was cut because it's basically just a summary of topics that are covered in more detail in the book. By perusing this list, you can see what sorts of things the ***GMG*** describes for ***In Nomine*** world-builders.

Setting Up the Campaign

A campaign doesn't have to be mapped out in elaborate detail before it begins — you can run a pick-up game of ***In Nomine*** with just the basic rulebook. However, when you start thinking about all the details discussed in this chapter, you will probably want to do some planning. What follows is a guide that will take you step by step through all the decisions you'll want to make when setting up your campaign. Remember that many of these decisions are *optional*,

and some can be left until well after the campaign is underway.

I: Establish a Mood (pp. 35-36)

Decide on the overall mood for your campaign. Remember these are *not* rigid definitions from which your campaign cannot deviate!

- Brightness
- Contrast
- Humor

II: Choose a Setting (p. 37-41)

Where is your campaign set? If it's not the modern world, describe it. Otherwise, is it a localized campaign or a global campaign?

Characters (pp. 37-38)

Make decisions (and lists) addressing the following:

- Important Word-bound characters
- Other important NPCs (immediate supervisors for the PCs, important humans, ethereals, etc.)
- Is there an unusual relationship between any influential NPCs?

Tethers (p. 40)

- In a local campaign, what Tethers exist, and who owns them?
- On a global scale, how common are Tethers? (Average of 1 per _____ humans/Approximately _____ worldwide, or an average of _____ per Superior)
- List some of the important (worldwide) Tethers in your campaign.

III: Choose a Theme (pp. 41-43)

Decide on what kind of campaign premises you want, and what style of play.

- Mythic
- Realistic
- High Concept (Quest, Crusade, Premise, etc.)

Canon

- How closely do you intend to stick to canon? (p. 59)
- Are you playing a variant campaign? Describe how it differs from a standard ***In Nomine*** setting.
- List any rule changes

IV: Superiors (pp. 43-45)

What role will Superiors play in your campaign?

Politics (pp. 43)

- High Politicking

- Low Politicking
- No Politicking

Influence

- Which Superiors are most important? Who will you focus on in the campaign?
- Describe any changes from published descriptions, and/or Superiors you are adding or removing.

V: Celestials on Earth (pp. 46-48)

How do celestials interact with the corporeal world?

Frequency (p. 46)

How common are celestials on Earth?

- The celestial/human ration is about 1/_____; There are about _____ celestials on Earth.

Intervention (p. 47)

- Open Intervention
- High Intervention
- Moderate Intervention
- Low Intervention
- Non-Intervention

Mundane Matters (p. 48)

- Are Roles required? What happens if you don't have one?
- What kind of ID can a celestial have without a Role?
- What possessions are celestials allowed? How hard is it to acquire new stuff?
- Is money a consideration? Do celestials have an allowance?

VI: Humans (pp. 49-54)

What role do humans play in the campaign?

Exceptional Humans (p. 49)

- How can a human gain a 6th Force? What percentage of humans have more than 5 Forces? What percentage of humans are Symphonically aware?
- How many Soldiers are active in the campaign? Which Superiors have Soldiers in the area? Are there any Soldier organizations?
- Describe other exceptional humans (pagan and rogue Soldiers, sorcerers, Saints, undead, etc.) who will figure into the campaign.

Human Agencies (pp. 49-54)

Consider the *competence* and *participation* (see below) of any major human agencies. Remember that some agencies are too large to be classified as a single group; describe those organizations that will play a part in your campaign.

- The Government
- The Law
- The Military
- Intelligence Agencies
- Business
- The Media
- Academia
- Religion
- Organized Crime

Competence (p. 50)

- Inept
- Average
- Competent

Participation (p. 50)

- Unaware
- Misled
- Informed

VII: Canon Doubt and Uncertainty (pp. 59-61)

These questions don't *have* to be answered in your campaign, in the beginning or ever. The items below are just a few of the metaphysical topics you *might* want to think about.

- God's nature
- Religion and Messiahs
- The afterlife
- The Higher Heavens and the Lower Hells

VIII: Creating Characters

Now, decide what information needs to be given to your players. Then let them create characters. (First check out Chapter 1, *Characters*, p. 5-20.)

Player Character Types

- Are all PCs celestials?
- Are human PCs possible?
- Other PC types (ethereals, Remnants, etc.)?

Allocating Resources

Any changes from the basic ***In Nomine*** rules?

- How many Forces are allotted to starting PCs?
- How many points to buy Resources?
- Any free skills, special bonuses, or other rules?

Party Composition

Are there any special considerations you need to take into account? Such as:

- Rival Superiors (p. 55)
- Mixed groups (angels & demons) (p. 56)
- Mixed humans and celestials (p. 58)

I wrote the ***In Nomine GMG*** with that attitude -- I assumed that most ***In Nomine*** GMs are fairly experienced, and don't need lessons in basic GMing. They want to know more about the ***In Nomine*** universe, and how to fit it all

together to make a campaign that captures the mood and style they're looking for. This doesn't mean the ***GMG*** won't be useful for novice GM's; I certainly hope it will be! But I didn't devote a lot of pages to the craft of GMing itself. I dove right into both the nuts and bolts and the atmosphere and philosophy of the ***In Nomine*** universe.

This book has required more research than anything else I've written for ***In Nomine,*** since I devoted an entire chapter to religion. ***In Nomine*** is a game about angels and demons, after all; shouldn't we say something about the billions of people on Earth who actually believe in such beings? First of all, I wanted to give a summation of various religions for those who might not be knowledgeable about such things. It's my hope that even if you have no use for religion yourself (I'm an atheist personally), you'll see that real-world religions are far more interesting, complex, and full of plot hooks and fascinating characters that any fiction. Secondly, I wanted to tie real religions into ***In Nomine's*** history; Archangels and Demon Princes *had* to be interested in how humanity worships. But while religion is rich territory for ***In Nomine,*** I had to be careful of the twin traps of making celestials *too* influential (lest too many major developments in human history turn out to be the manipulations of supernatural beings, thus making mortals superfluous as in a certain other game line), or worse, writing something inaccurate. These are *real* religions, after all. While I don't mind if someone gets offended by satirical implications (indeed, the most amusing playtest complaints came from pagans, who wanted *their* beliefs treated with special reverence, even though the beliefs of monotheists have been run through a blender in ***In Nomine***), I don't want anyone accusing me of being ignorant!

Here are the fruits of some of my research which also couldn't be included in the book . . . not because we feared that someone might be offended, but because such interesting personalities deserve more space than a one-line blurb to cover their ***In Nomine*** significance. Hopefully I'll get a chance to go into more detail in a future book . . .

Jews in the War

- Abraham (c. 1900 B.C.) -- the original Hebrew Patriarch. Descended from Noah, through Shem and Eber (after whom the Hebrews are named).
- Moses (c. 1300 B.C.) -- A prince of Egypt and a prophet of God, who led the Israelites for 40 years in the desert, gave them the Ten Commandments, and brought them to the promised land.
- Deborah (c. 1200 B.C.) -- A prophetess, one of the first Hebrew judges, a military leader, and a Soldier of God.
- King David (c. 1000 B.C.) -- Second King of Israel, Soldier of Stone, slayer of many diabolical servants.
- King Solomon (c. 960 B.C.) -- David's son, one of the most powerful sorcerers ever (and one of the few known "white" sorcerers), and builder of the First Temple.
- Elijah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and Jeremiah (8th to 5th centuries B.C.) -- The greatest of a slew of Hebrew prophets who received revelations directly from God. Some of them were active Soldiers as well.
- Judah Löw ben Bezulel (16th century A.D.) -- Also known as the "Maharal of Prague"; a rabbi and enchanter who was the first mortal in modern times to learn how to make golems (see *Constructs*, ***Corporeal Player's Guide***, p. 49).
- Shabbetai Tzevi (1626-1676 A.D.) -- A charismatic student of the Kabbalah who was deluded by Servitors of Dark Humor into believing he was the Messiah (one of many "false Messiahs" in Jewish history). He amassed a large following, but in 1666, captured by Turkish authorities, he converted to Islam. Kobal got even more laughs out of Tzevi's followers, as Shabbetaianism continued for over a century. They became willful apostates, engaging in nihilism and orgies, rationalizing that "sacred sins" were in fact the best way to *honor* the Torah. Shabbetai Tzevi was one of the greatest embarrassments to Judaism in history.
- Israel ben Eliezer (c. 1700-1760 A.D.) -- A devout Jewish mystic who taught religion and Kabbalism to the common people, and founded the Hasidic sect. He impressed Eli enough to make him a Soldier of God;

thereafter he was known as the Ba'al Shem Tov ("Master of the Good Name"), as he supposedly knew the ineffable true name of God (p. 66). Whether Eli actually taught him that name is unknown, but it's rumored that the Ba'al Shem Tov is still an active Saint of Creation.

Christians in the War

- Jesus Christ (c. 6 B.C. to 30 A.D.) -- Prophet, Soldier, Saint, or celestial? Or bonafide Son of God? To this day, even the Archangels don't know for sure.
- Saul of Tarsus (10 A.D. to 67 A.D.) -- Better-known as Paul the Apostle. A Jewish Soldier of Judgment who converted to Christianity after having formerly been an enemy of the sect. He wrote many letters which became books of the New Testament, and was one of the most influential figures in the early Church.
- St. John of Patmos (1st century A.D.) -- Also known as John the Apostle, or Saint John the Divine; he was one of Jesus' companions, and wrote one of the Gospels. He was also a prophet who received the Book of Revelation. His skull has become a sacred relic (***Liber Reliquarum***, p. 90).
- Montanus (c. 170 A.D.) -- A former pagan Soldier who was turned into a false prophet by Lucifer. Convinced that he was a divine avatar, he preached bloody martyrdom and apocalyptic battle with the forces of evil. Montanism lingered in Asia Minor and North Africa until the 9th century.
- Pope Joan (9th century A.D.) -- The medieval tale of a woman who was elected Pope in 855, reigned for 25 months, and then was exposed (and stoned to death) after giving birth during a Papal procession, was considered factual even by the Church for centuries, until it was disproven . . . incorrectly. Pope Joan *did* exist -- she was a Soldier of Dark Humor. (And she was set up by Kobal, and *did* get stoned to death.) Kobal's Servitors thereafter kept the legend alive, while creating inconsistencies that later led to the story's being discredited.
- St. Francis of Assisi (1182 A.D. to 1226 A.D.) -- One of the Roman Catholic Church's most venerated Saints, founder of the Franciscan order, and a Soldier of War while alive. Since his death, he has served as a Saint for centuries, under many different Archangels (but most commonly Michael, Jordi, and Zadkiel).
- Martin Luther (16th century A.D.) -- Though he was "nudged" by Laurence, he was not actively aware of the War. Heaven regards him with mixed feelings; he sparked the Protestant Reformation, which is considered good by some and terrible by others. Luther was also a vicious anti-Semite. He didn't arrive in Heaven or Hell after his death, so many believe he met his destiny *and* his fate.

Muslims in the War

- Muhammad (c. 571 A.D. to 632 A.D.) -- Heaven still does not know whether he was a true prophet or merely Gabriel's mouthpiece. Like Jesus, he didn't show up in the Lower Heavens after his death, and he has the same aura of ineffability believed to have been placed by Yves.
- Muhammad al-Mahdi al-Hujjah (9th century A.D.) -- Also known as Muhammad Al-Muntazar. The 12th Imam of the Shiite sect (p. 75), who disappeared in 878 A.D. Most Shiites call him the "Hidden Imam," believing that God concealed him until the day when he will return and bring truth and justice to the world.
- Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani (1077 A.D. to 1166 A.D.) -- The founder of a major branch of Sufiism (p. 76), and the most revered of Sufi saints. In fact, he *is* a Saint, working among the Muslim community under the guidance of Archangel Khalid to this day.
- Salah al-Din Yusef ibn-Ayyub (1138 A.D. to 1193 A.D.) -- Better-known as "Saladin," the great Muslim sultan and military hero who recaptured Jerusalem and balked the Third Crusade. He was so virtuous and resolute in his faith, both Laurence and Khalid wanted him in their service . . . consequently, the rival Archangels had to agree that neither would recruit him, but both appointed Servitors to guard him.
- Nasir al-Din al-Tusi (1201 A.D. to 1274 A.D.) -- A Persian Shiite philosopher and mathematician, and a Soldier of the Game. Pretending to be an Isma'ili (p. 75), he took up residence in the Assassins' mountain fortress; by betraying its defenses, he was instrumental in the destruction of the Assassins by the Mongols. Asmodeus ordered this so that a group of Renegades hiding within could be extirpated, and because the Assassins had killed several of his agents. Tusi now holds a relatively comfortable position in Hades as a historian and scribe.

So, what else is in the ***Game Master's Guide*** besides building blocks for your campaign, and a history of religions in

the ***In Nomine*** universe? How about complete guidelines for roleplaying Superiors? (And how do they reward and punish player characters?) Want to add new Archangels or Demon Princes, or shake up the existing hierarchy? What can Superiors *do*, and what are the limits (if any) on Lucifer's power? What happens if a Demon Prince takes on an Archangel in battle? And where does GOD fit into the game?

You'll also find practical advice for managing character development, especially things that Superiors hand out, like vessels and additional Forces. There is an entire chapter on the Word-bound, and how Words grow or shrink. You'll also find loads of optional rules, both for variant campaigns and for streamlining game mechanics.

Here's one more item that was cut from the book; a Random Discord table. It's not necessary for experienced GMs, but it does handily list all of the new Discords that have been introduced in supplements following the main rulebook.

Random Discord

The Random Discord table in ***In Nomine***, p. 89, includes only the Discords found in the basic rulebook. Several other sourcebooks, notably the ***Corporeal Player's Guide***, the ***Angelic Player's Guide***, and the ***Infernal Player's Guide***, provide new Discords, including some that are particular to specific Choirs and Bands. If you have access to these books, the table below provides more variety when rolling Discords randomly.

Note that some Discords, such as Geas (***In Nomine***, p. 88), Selfless (***Infernal Player's Guide***, p. 105), and various Discords particular to Seneschals (***Liber Castellorum***, pp. 26-27) are not included here, because these Discords do not normally manifest at random.

Corporeal and Ethereal Discord

Roll 2 dice on one of the tables below (choose one, or roll 1 die: 1-2 = A, 3-4 = B, 5-6 = C)

Table A	**Table B**	**Table C**
2 . . . . Pallid	2 . . . . Discolored	2 . . . . Stink
3 . . . . Obese	3 . . . . Covetous	3 . . . . Pity
4 . . . . Stigmata	4 . . . . Twitchy	4 . . . . Addicted
5 . . . . Vestigium	5 . . . . Nocturnal	5 . . . . Diurnal
6 . . . . Aura	6 . . . . Hatred	6 . . . . Ugly
7 . . . . Choose a Corporeal or Ethereal Discord from the Choir- and Band-specific Discord list (below)	7 . . . . Choose a Corporeal or Ethereal Discord from the Choir- and Band-specific Discord list (below)	7 . . . . Choose a Corporeal or Ethereal Discord from the Choir- and Band-specific Discord list (below)
8 . . . . Berserk	8 . . . . Guilt	8 . . . . Jaded
9 . . . . Bound	9 . . . . Tongue-Tied	9 . . . . Obsessed
10 . . . . Fear	10 . . . . Cowardly	10 . . . . Paranoia
11 . . . . Vulnerable (chosen by the GM)	11 . . . . Crippled	11 . . . . Damaged Sense
12 . . . . Roll on the Celestial Discord table	12 . . . . Roll on the Celestial Discord table	12 . . . . Roll on the Celestial Discord table

Celestial Discord

Roll 2 dice

2 . . . . Angels may try again on the Corporeal and Ethereal Discord tables; demons must roll again on this table and add 1 to the level of the Discord!
3 . . . . Celestial Blindness, Deafness, or Muteness (choose, or roll randomly)
4 . . . Gluttonous
5 . . . . Greedy

6 . . . . Lustful
7 . . . . Choose a Celestial Discord from the Choir- and Band-specific Discord list (below)
8 . . . . Merciful
9 . . . . Murderous
10 . . . . Need (chosen by the player, with GM approval)
11 . . . . Slothful
12 . . . . Demons may try again on the Corporeal and Ethereal Discord tables; angels must roll again on this table and add 1 to the level of the Discord!

Choir- and Band-Specific Discord

Seraphim
Painful Lies (Corporeal)
Truthfulness (Ethereal)*
Forked Tongue (Celestial)*

Balseraphs
Forked Tongue (Corporeal)
Truthfulness (Ethereal)*
Burning Lies (Celestial)

Cherubim
Life-Linked Attunement (Corporeal)
Ritualized Responsibilities (Ethereal)*
Trenchant Bond (Ethereal)
Overzealous (Celestial)*

Djinn
Apathy (Ethereal)*
Obsessive-Compulsive (Ethereal)*
Distracting Attunements (Celestial)

Ofanim
Combustible (Corporeal)
Claustrophobia (Ethereal)
Hyperactive (Celestial)

Calabim
Pain (Corporeal)
Aura of Entropy (Celestial)
Indiscriminate (Celestial)

Elohim
Emotional Static (Ethereal)
Oversensitive (Ethereal)
Empathy (Celestial)

Habbalah
Mutilation (Corporeal)
Pity (Ethereal)
Unshielded (Celestial)

Malakim
Burning Touch (Corporeal)
Evil Warning (Ethereal)
Binding Oath (Celestial)

Lilim
Chained Geases (Corporeal)
Generous (Ethereal)
Deteriorating Geases (Celestial)

Kyriotates
Contrariness (Ethereal)
Inner Echoes (Ethereal)
Fractured Forces (Celestial)
Inseparable Forces (Celestial)

Shedim
Oozing (Corporeal)
Cold-Blooded* (Ethereal)
Driven (Celestial)

Mercurians
Unnerving Stare (Corporeal)*
Oblivious (Celestial)*

Impudites
Reduced Essence Capacity (Corporeal)
Infatuation (Ethereal)
Tainted Essence (Celestial)

* These Discords are most common among the indicated Choir/Band, but may sometimes manifest in others (but usually not randomly).

A Delta Green Adventure by Shane Ivey

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Introduction

"Jack Frost" is a two-part scenario for ***Call of Cthulhu*** and ***Delta Green***, in which the investigators are sent undercover to a Majestic operation into things it is not equipped to handle. Part One was published in *Pyramid* last week. This section picks up immediately where Part One left off, following the first night of the investigation. Part Two cannot be played separately. Characters and maps which are used throughout the scenario have been reprinted in both parts.

Aftermath: Isolation

After the first night's trouble, orders will come down from above (from Alphonse Lewis, at the FEMA command post) to quarantine the region: nobody goes in, nothing comes out. Soldiers in thick, warm camoflauge will be posted every 50 yards around the perimeter, supported by thermal imagers and sound-based motion sensors, with orders to shoot to kill anything that tries to escape. This will include the players or any other NPCs who attempt to test or escape the quarantine. Requests for additional rations or testing equipment will be filled by parachute within 2D6 hours. Requests for armaments or ammunition of any kind will be recorded and ignored.

The Second Ghostly Dream

Sometime after the first night, whenever a psychically-sensitive character meditates or sleeps deeply, the "ghosts" will visit again. See Handout #13. Sanity loss for the second dream is 1/1D4. Unfortunately, in being drawn into contact with the ghosts the character is also more sensitive to the presence and urges of the Wendigo. After the second dream, the dreamer awakens in the throes of adrenaline reaction, the "fight or flight" reflex of a physical threat, but he or she knows only the hunger of the windigo, the need for the flesh of the dead. Call for a POW x 5% roll for the player to resist the urge to rush to the meat locker to feed, but describe the scene to the player only as the character is coming to his or her senses: either outdoors, running toward the locker, or inside while feeding on the dead. SAN loss for the latter case is 1D4/1D10.

Researching the Ghostly Dreams

The colorful mist and stars fit no known myths, but the image has a superficial resemblance to the Aurora Borealis of sub-Arctic skies. It is identical with the effects surrounding Ithaqua's appearances in the nights of this scenario, if a witness can compare them.

Research into the images will reveal a few hints to the history of the area and the recent phenomena, but other clues will seem contradictory. See Handout #14. Investigators can learn this information by contacting researchers in libraries outside Willis; or with a combination of Persuade, Computer Use, and Library Use rolls for investigators using various Internet sources and telephone contacts to conduct the research, with certain excerpts sent by e-mail or fax if possible. Further research may offer useful clues about Yig and Ithaqua (Handout #15), but no works are found in "mundane" channels or even popular occultism which detail the means by which these gods can be placated.

Unfortunately for the investigators, Ithaqua is among the more poorly-documented of the Great Old Ones. The only work with any accurate details of its worship, which may be referenced in the most erudite of other (more accessible) works as a lost source of rich details about the windigo cults of Native Americans, is the annotated *Thaumaturgical Prodigies in the New English Canaan*. For investigators with the right connections, however, it might be accessible. A bound photocopy of the book is held by Delta Green-friendly Dr. Jensen Wu in the "D" Stacks of the American Museum of Natural History (see ***Delta Green: Countdown***). Given time, adventurous investigators might talk Dr. Wu into granting them access to the "D" stacks and helping them decipher and master the ritual to Dismiss Ithaqua (called "Ithaka" in the book); but the nights of Ithaqua's rising in Willis may come far too quickly if the players are over-cautious. The only other source is the man that Wu obtained it from: the original is held by Stephen Alzis in New York City (see ***Delta Green Eyes Only Volume Two: The Fate***).

The Keeper should roleplay this research in some detail, especially playing up the investigators' risk of discovery by the omnipresent men in black of NRO-Delta. A secondary team active outside Willis will be ideal for this work, if one is available. Otherwise, the researchers' best course of action may be to win Harris' approval for a series of other contacts with the outside world, and then to work in their private research while other investigators distract the NRO-Delta chaperones.

As described in the Keeper's introduction, all contacts with the outside world will be monitored by Majestic agents, unless the players manage clandestine transmissions. Harris and Farrel both will question occult lines of inquiry, but the players might satisfy them by relating the research to the "official" theories of the incident; they might claim that the Indian legends relate to evidence of ancient alien astronauts who had contact with humans in the area, for instance. A Persuade roll will probably be required.

Examining the Lake

The most immediately striking feature of Crow Lake is the presence of the Crow Lake Mounds, just off-shore. These five mounds are arranged in a pentagram, each of them about 12 feet tall and 30 feet in diameter, covered in the same thick, rough grass as the rest of the ground nearby. While they initially resemble the much larger mounds found in some ancient Native American habitations, they were in fact built in the 20th century, by Hiram Bates, grandfather of the ill-fated Howie Parker. Bates felt the touch of the "spirits" of the Shrine, though he could never make sense of their message. He suffered dreams almost identical to those experienced by the players (see above), and eventually he became fixated on the notion that by building a mound like that seen in his dreams, he would somehow placate the

ghosts or spirits that haunted him. When the dreams did not cease after he built the first mound, he went to work on the next one. When five mounds were built, he lost all hope; the players might run across the brief news report of his suicide. The mounds are now merely a curiosity. However, investigators using archeological sonogram equipment will find them to be not quite empty. At the foundations of each mound, Bates buried a twisted clump of copper wire, his deranged impression of the hidden shrine which he never saw.

The Majestic team will not take immediate interest in Crow Lake. Aerial surveys will immediately note the pentagonal arrangement of the mounds, indicating intelligent construction, but they are not interested in archaeology. They will be busy taking broad surveys of the area and examining the corpses (and trying to explain any cannibalistic frenzies that erupt in the autopsies), until some cue leads them to look more closely. Inordinate interest in the Lake by the player-characters will be one such cue; another should come on the second day of the scenario, when Dr. Bimmel reaches certain conclusions about radiation and quantum energy levels in the region. (See Handout #16.)

When they do approach the Lake, Farrell will check the mounds first. He doubts that they are involved, since they are decades old and he is after a recent event, but his men are thorough. They will find the copper wire in each mound, dig it up, and promptly file it away as "probably trivial." Sonar of the Lake, however, conducted by boat, will be far more interesting. The Lake is surprisingly deep, nearly 70 feet in some places, except for one obvious, anomolous, feature: near the shore, close to the five mounds, the lake floor rises steeply to a wide hill, some 50 feet tall and 200 feet across. The water is only 20 feet deep over the hill; and, buried less than ten feet from its top, is a large, twisted conglomeration of metal and crystal. Farrell's men will suit up and dive for it, but they will be wary enough not to touch it themselves. First they will photograph it, using normal and infrared, and they will take sonar readings and gauge radiation in every known spectrum: Dr. Bimmel will guardedly conclude that the artifact could have some relation to the anomaly, but he cannot be certain that it is its cause: the artifact shares some signature electromagnetic and radio emanations with the anomaly as a whole, but it may be that the artifact is somehow resonating to the energies generated by the anomaly. It will take many painstaking tests to reach any useful conclusions. The first day after the shrine is found, they will leave it untouched in the lake. After the events of that night (see "Ithaqua Rises: The Second Night," below), the team may be too preoccupied to examine it further; but if they do so, they will carefully attach hooks and haul the thing to the surface for a closer examination.

Investigators hoping to dive for the shrine without alerting Farrell or Harris will have their work cut out for them. First they will need to obtain the proper diving equipment, since the icy water will rapidly kill any unequipped diver; they could obtain the gear from Farrell's men if an explanation is concocted, but Farrell will almost certainly send at least a couple of his own troops to assist. If they manage to get the equipment, the players will need to divert Harris' NRO-Delta agents. Finally, they will need to decide what to do with the shrine itself, whether to leave it in place or to somehow haul it to the surface -- and they will have to decide what to do with it, then. Their best bet may be to worm their way into the examinations of Bimmel and Farrell, or to sneak access to Bimmel's notes: and Bimmel's notes will be very difficult to access. His computers are of a sort seen nowhere outside Majestic research stations, using unique hardware and software which are malignantly incompatible to any other systems, causing catastrophic failure and data-erasing magnetic spikes when exported. Bimmel's own computer registers his fingerprints and retinal pattern in lieu of a password; all the Computer Use skill in the world won't help the players if Bimmel is not there to open his files.

The Shrine

The strange conjunction of metals and crystalline shapes is the ancient shrine built by the sorcerers of K'n-Yan to placate and ward away the Wind-Walker. Gold and electrum are wrapped among another metal, unrecognizable to modern geologists; it has properties similar to radium, decaying as if it were a radioactive emitter with an extraordinarily long half-life, but it does not appear to have toxic effects. The metals are twisted and fashioned with great precision, delicate yet unpleasant, around contorted crystalline shapes of no known mineral. They react to light and energy similarly to structures of biological origin, such as fossilized amber, but they exhibit no properties to indicate excretion by any known organism. The shrine depicts no specific shape or symbol, though there is no question that it was fashioned with some unknown meaning; ominously, its shape is most suggestive of a dentist's chair.

Archaeology roll or external research will reveal that the shrine is similar to a very few other artifacts found in North

America and not positively identified; some scholars theorize that they were produced by a single, wide-spread proto-Amerind culture of the Neolithic past, while most scoff at such conclusions and say they may fit within other, known cultures, their similarities mere coincidence. A second Archaeology roll or successful consultation will indicate that the symbols on the shrine, while unknown among Native American history, seem to indicate some form of warding ritual.

If a character touches the shrine, its reaction will depend on Ithaqua's proximity. During daylight, the character should make a Luck roll: if the roll succeeds, the shrine does not respond, but the character will experience an odd urge to remain in the "seat." If the Luck roll fails, or if the character touches the shrine at night, the shrine will suddenly seem to come alive, its wiry metal filaments snaking up and around cloth and plastic to seize and pierce the character's flesh, sinking deep into the tissue of extremities and the torso, inflicting 1D6 damage and dragging the victim into a seated position atop the shrine. The trauma looks and feels worse than it actually is. SAN loss is 1D3/1D8 for the victim, 1/1D6 for witnesses. The shrine seems to go dormant again once the victim is seized, but the victim will experience vague memories of past victims, dreaming hints of the shrine's origin with the dusky priests of K'n-yan and its use by the shamans who sacrificed to it across the centuries. There is distinctly room for two more to sit in the deadly thing, and anyone doing so will experience exactly the same fate.

The victims are stuck. If the shrine is moved from the lake, the character slowly begins to suffer excruciating pain, losing 1 HP per 100 yards traveled. If anyone attempts to dismantle the shrine, they find its thinnest strands quite resistant even to powerful laser cutters.

The shrine will use its victim(s) as soon as Ithaqua rises again. See "The Sacrifice," below.

If a character is seized by the shrine underwater, they will find it likewise impossible to escape. The victim's companions may try to bring replacement oxygen tanks or simply run a long "snorkel" hose from the surface for air; if they slip and the victim drowns, however, they will find that the shrine won't let go that easily. The shrine itself will channel energy into the victim's body, pumping oxygen into the bloodstream in constant, minute reactions, enough to keep the victim alive (though unconscious) until nightfall.

Ithaqua Rises: The Second Night

The howling will wash over the region again on the second night. Maximum SAN loss rules should apply: the most that should be lost from the howling will be 6 SAN. This time, however, the Wind-Walker comes forth more directly, to the misfortune of any caught near the shrine. The pastel aurora fades as a massive, impossible figure sways overhead in the snow-stained black air, silhouetted against the hard and distant stars. A gigantic talon-like claw clenches. Snow will gather wispily around the air, pushed ahead of the massive splayed feet of the Wind-Walker and billowing in his endless horrid howl. Helicopters called to fly over the area -- or stealth jets sent by the PURGATORY command (see below) -- will see his form more clearly in a cloud of ice and snow, his boundless black eyes filled with stars, his face, inhuman but grotesquely reminiscent of humanity, twisted in savagery and misery, all before a gust of wind rises like a destructive wall and flings the puny aircraft like toys out of the sky. The howling reaches a terrible crescendo, deafening, before the wind lifts, rising upward as if from the earth into the sky, drawing leaves and dead brown pine straws and flakes of ice with it; then, after a moment, with absolute abruptness, one of the witnesses lurches into the sky in an impossible gust of wind. The victim's screams fade slowly and are gone. Then the giant turns skyward, too, lifting its talons high, growing into the sky until, distended, it bends its inhuman legs and leaps into the ether and runs on great webbed feet along the shimmering Auroran light into nothingness. SAN loss is 1D10/1D100 for this encounter with the Wind-Walker.

The Keeper should decide who the victim will be; it should be the character with the highest POW in the observing group, or, if the Keeper is generous, simply an NPC. (The Keeper may wish to place a BLUE FLY or NRO-Delta squad at the scene in any event, to return with a crazed report of the horror.)

After the night passes, dead animals in the region will stagger up to a semblance of life. Still half-frozen, wild-eyed and crusted with frozen saliva and blood, wild dogs, cats, housepets, deer, and even a black bear will stumble toward the nearest living things for the warmth of their meat and blood; even herbivores will seek warm blood to drink and wash in. These Children of the Wendigo can be killed, though with more difficulty than normal; their primary danger

will be surprise and the chance that they will incapacitate or kill one or two of the small team. Note that these creatures will not appear on thermal imaging night-vision goggles except as vague, dim blurs, but light intensifier scopes will pick them out like any moving objects at night. (See "Children of the Wendigo," below.)

Aftermath: Jericho/Purgatory

After Ithaqua's howling and the animals rise as bloodthirsty Children of the Wendigo, Harris may be well on the path to irrationality, and his agents will be little better off. The DIA/NRO-Delta team will forcibly assert authority over the mission. They will then send the first part of a two-part message to mission command: JERICHO is a codeword that will scramble four stealth bombers in the MJ base at Redstone Arsenal near Huntsville, vehicles enhanced with alien-derived stealth equipment and loaded with advanced firepower. The second half of the command is PURGATORY, which will order the gunships to cleanse the area of every living thing.

The investigators may learn some details of this contingency from the BLUE FLY team. The operatives will not discuss it openly, of course, nor will they even acknowledge its existence to anyone outside the BLUE FLY or NRO-Delta teams, but the investigators may spy on the BLUE FLY team effectively enough to overhear discussion of it. This will most likely require parabolic or laser microphones, unless an investigator is exceptionally skilled at stealth and keeping out of the line of sight of guards' thermal imaging goggles, to overhear BLUE FLY troops at ease trading fanciful stories (and a few real ones) of Majestic ops past, from Vietnam to Desert Storm to Waco to Yugoslavia. The investigators might also convince a BLUE FLY operative to divulge details after the JERICHO command is given, especially by playing on his sense of guilt at the impending massacre or his fear of not surviving it.

Whatever the source of information, the investigators can learn the following about PURGATORY. First, the gunships use technology that puts every other stealth program on the planet to shame. They are cleanly invisible to radar or electromagnetic detection. Second, they use a battery of energy weapons, not conventional projectiles: an electromagnetic pulse cannon can disable power sources and communications; alternating-phase particle beam lasers can punch through intervening clouds or smoke and destroy hard targets or vehicles; sonics can take out personnel; very low-frequency (VLF) sonic generators can rupture soft tissue and MASER (microwave) beams cook objects across a tremendous area of effect. All of its weapons are invisible and silent in application. The aircraft will remain at base until the second code is delivered. With PURGATORY, they will fly low over the quarantined area in dead of night, invisible to radar and nearly silent.

They are powered by adapted Grey technology, and they emit strange energy fields with a range of about a half mile: time and distances will be perceived very strangely for an instant, and mammals will be gripped by sudden anxiety, before all returns to normal; the same effect recurs as the craft leave the vicinity again. Flying in formation, the aircraft will sweep the area, bathing it in deadly, invisible VLF waves. Cover won't protect against the powerful radio waves; the players' only escape will be to use the NRO-Delta or BLUE FLY agents or communications to convince the pilots to cease the attack. Even if they succeed, some of the region might have already been wiped clean; give the players plenty of time to listen to the radioed screams of pain as other operatives are caught and killed before the action is aborted.

Eight hours after the first attack, the planes will scan the entire quarantined region with thermal- and motion-differentiation trackers. Any living thing found will be killed with the EMP and sonic weapons. They will fire on any centers of movement -- ordinary humans who appear on thermal imaging cameras are much more likely to be targeted than the cold Children of the Wendigo, however, unless the gunners are informed of the nature of the targets and take the information seriously.

The EMP (electromagnetic pulse) attacks will have little effect on humans other than momentary dizziness and

PURGATORY vs. Ithaqua?

The players may sensibly decide to try to use the firepower of the Majestic jets against the Wind-Walker. Their first challenge will be to get in contact with the PURGATORY pilots and convince them to do what is asked (whatever that may be); with Harris and Farrell in charge of the Willis operation, that may be much easier said than done. If, however, they manage to get Harris or Farrell on their side and convince all parties involved of the reality of the crisis, they might persuade the pilots to cooperate. Certainly the jets' sonics and lasers will be more promising weapons than the small arms and explosives possessed by the team; Ithaqua will particularly recoil at the

nausea, but they will ruin electrical equipment, especially the computers and electronics used by communications and surveillance equipment and most modern vehicles. The sonics will be invisible, vibrating targets with an intensity to turn internal organs to jelly while leaving the skin almost fully intact. Their power is dispersed for greater accuracy; each attack inflicts 6D6 damage, halved if the victim makes a CON x 5% roll. The only defense is evasion, hiding beneath cover thick enough to mask every trace of a heat signature: if a plane detects a target, the sonics will hit that target (and anything within six meters that fails to run like hell with a successful Dodge roll) unless the target makes 1/5 a Luck roll. They will be utterly silent to humans (but if any dogs survive in the region, they will howl and bray piteously), except for the sudden grinding and splitting of bones inside the targets if they inflict a serious wound.

intense heat of MASER attacks.

Of course, things should not be quite that easy. Radar will not respond normally to the Great Old One; even the rugged sensors of the Majestic craft will be garbled with the proximity of such an alien power, rendering long-distance attacks useless. As the pilots close to visual range to attack, their other systems will become unpredictable, the extradimensional energies of the Wind-Walker shorting out complex circuitry at a quantum level; and surrounded by a storm of wind and ice, Ithaqua is not an easy target. Each round, a pilot can fire at half skill (assign their skills at about 70%), with a hit inflicting 4D6+10 HP damage on a hit; each round, however, the pilot must make a Luck roll or have their aircraft's systems collapse, crashing the plane to the earth. If the pilot succeeds in a Piloting roll (with a skill of about 80%), the vehicle may not be totally destroyed, and the players might have some wreckage to examine after the fact, perhaps even enough to rig some desperate one-shot defensive weaponry. If the Piloting roll fails, the craft will land a shattered ruin.

The investigators have several alternatives, some more likely than others, for preventing PURGATORY. They could attempt to sabotage the NRO team's communications gear, but once the malfunctions have been noted a replacement set will be dropped by parachute within eight hours.

They could also attempt to talk them out of it; this may be the best option, but only a few avenues of persuasion are available. It will require Persuade as well as Psychoanalysis rolls, and possible confrontations between the NRO team may have to be resolved or exploited. Harris and his NRO-Delta agents are likely to be increasingly paranoid, seeing enemies everywhere, including Farrell's men. Clever investigators may instigate a confrontation using Farrell's Blue Team to capture or distract Harris' NRO-Delta team. Harris and his agents are no fools, however, and each of them is a streetwise and trained killer. Such a confrontation should be tense and deadly, almost certainly not to succeed without at least a little bloodshed. Such a gambit will be most successful, for instance, if the investigators stoke the paranoia of Harris' men until they decide on PURGATORY, then immediately arrange for Farrell's men to hear the plan so that they think they must neutralize the NRO-Delta team for their own safety. Keepers should reward clever investigator tactics, but they should not allow the NRO-Delta team or the Blue Team to be duped easily.

Finally, the investigators may attempt to convince "Alphonse Lewis" to call off the action by offering something important enough for him to seek another solution. This will be no easy task. "Lewis" is a cover identity for Adolph Lepus, Majestic's deadliest killer. He can never be moved by mercy, and he has seen just enough of the Mythos to know that genuine manifestations must be dealt with ruthlessly. He will only be given pause if the players convince him that they have truly useful intelligence on the paranormal manifestations which have occurred . . . or if they offer intelligence on Delta Green. The Keeper is encouraged to play any such negotiations tensely, allowing the players little time to consider as their companions and enemies mysteriously begin to die in the beams of the PURGATORY aircraft.

Ithaqua Rises: The Third Night

The third night will be the last night of Ithaqua's visitation. After the howling, the humans of Willis, frozen in the first pass of the Wind-Walker, will stir to unlife as Children of the Wendigo, all 819 of them. If they are stored in lockers in the command post or in transport vans they will break free with inhuman strength, seeking any living thing nearby to consume for its warmth. After killing every human nearby, or if

Children of the Wendigo

As described by John Crowe's epic, *Walker in the Wastes*, and Scott Aniolowski's "Cold War," a Child of the Wendigo is created by Ithaqua from humans (or, in this scenario, from any animal caught in his power). The victim becomes a powerful, bestial creature only generally resembling its former self, gaining even Ithaqua's power to walk the winds. The victim does retain, for a brief time, a shadow of its former personality, perhaps causing it to hesitate before committing the worst violence; but ultimately its hunger for the warmth of fresh flesh

will almost always overwhelm any lingering tatters of morality. Statistics for sample Children of the Wendigo are included at the end of this scenario.

overwhelmed with attacks from the Majestic team or the military police, the Children of the Wendigo will dart off into the woods in every direction, literally flying through the snowy skies over the heads of the stunned soldiers guarding the area. Fleeing before Ithaqua's final appearance, they would suffer the same as the investigators for fleeing the area, being cooked in place; but that effect will dissipate once Ithaqua has gone for good. Rumors and news of their attacks on hapless passersby and farmers will come from miles around and for months, possibly years, to come. Some of them may spawn other Children of the Wendigo from their prey. The creatures will be a threat, if small-scale, to linger in the region until the Wind-Walker descends again from the icy vaults of heaven.

During the rampage of the Children of the Wendigo, Harris or his commander, Adolph Lepus, will almost certainly call in the final airstrike: "BLUE FLY command," shouts Harris into his radio, his voice cracking and frantic: "JERICHO! PURGATORY! PURGATORY PURGATORY PURGATORY! God help us all!"

Any investigators or NPCs caught by Ithaqua in the first two nights will appear among the Children of the Wendigo, rising to attack and devour all warm life and flee wildly into the forests -- and, most likely, to the waiting guns of "Alphonse Lewis" and his security forces. Under the immediate influence of Ithaqua, the Children of the Wendigo lose their humanity much more swiftly than they normally would, but not all traces of humanity are immediately lost; the Keeper may allow a player to play such a changed investigator after his or her "awakening" as a Child of the Wendigo, with the appropriate SAN loss and enforcement of the character's ravening, cannibalistic hunger.

Defeating Ithaqua

There are a few ways the players can thwart Ithaqua and perhaps save a few lives from its ravening manifestations.

First, the players can use the Shrine to Dismiss the Great Old One. More than one victim must be sacrificed to do so, however, making it an unhappy option -- if the player-characters and NPCs are clumsy at the Lake, however, the Shrine might be activated whether they want it or not. Any victims sacrificed by the Shrine will be consumed, their POW completely drained, whether or not it succeeds in banishing Ithaqua.

The sacrifice must be conducted when Ithaqua has manifested again, most likely on the second or third night. When night deepens and Ithaqua strides across the region, the sorcery of the Shrine will take hold. The victims will be seized with strange energies, agonizing, tearing their very life-force from the roots of physical life and reality which have always identified it. The victims' power will be ripped away to manipulate the energies and forces in which the Wind-Walker treads. Treat the result as a simple Dismissal: use the total POW of the sacrificial victims against Ithaqua's POW of 35.

Outside, the shimmering aurora mists above Ithaqua change and are disrupted by other colors and shifting angles and perspectives and shapes, indescribable and impossible, as if from a glimpse into dimensions beyond the three given to sight. If the Dismissal succeeds, the Wind-Walker raises its arms and flies away for a last time, howling its wrath and despair into the heart of world. If it fails, observers will see Ithaqua writhe in apparent agony, until the colors and effects fade away, leaving the Wind-Walker behind. The sacrificed victim remains drained into the shrine, If the Third Night has arrived, the Wind-Walker's spawn rise and ravage.

If the characters miss the Shrine or avoid it, another option may be to learn the Dismissal ritual from some outside source: if a second team is investigating outside Willis, they might use their own resources to learn the nature of the manifestations and find the spell to dismiss Ithaqua when he next arises. This should not be easy. It will almost certainly mean one of two things: a trip to the "D" Stacks at the American Museum of Natural History (see ***Delta Green: Countdown***), or a deal with the Fate. The latter will be more likely to succeed, but at a cost to be dictated by the Keeper's caprice: such a bargain should certainly come back to haunt them. Finding the right spell without aid from the Fate will be all but impossible: the researchers must get access to the book (probably *Thaumaturgical Prodigies in the New English Canaan*), then they must weed out the proper ritual, requiring Occult, Cthulhu Mythos, or a Spell Multiplier roll, depending on the Keeper's preferences. The Fate will follow much the same process, of course, but they have the resources and skills to solve the problem very, very quickly.

Survival

The events of this scenario should proceed quickly and relentlessly. The investigators may be hard-pressed to solve its mysteries; indeed, it may take all their ingenuity simply to survive. Their surest chance will be to decipher the clues of the ghostly dead in the area and send lake-divers to the K'n-yani shrine, to enact the sacrifice and dismiss Ithaqua.

Failing dismissal, the investigators will be faced with Ithaqua itself on the second and third nights, a deadly danger to any near Crow Lake when the Wind-Walker descends. Even avoiding direct contact with Ithaqua and withstanding the massive sanity loss from encountering it, humans caught nearby will suffer the endothermic effects seen on the first night, if a Luck roll fails. (A simple Luck roll will suffice here, instead of a POW vs. POW roll; Ithaqua's powers are spread more thinly with the awakening of his spawn.) After these first catastrophic effects, survival will simply be a matter of running fast enough to get away from the Great Old One.

Next they will face the Children of the Wendigo, all 819 of the frozen townfolk arising as hunger-maddened monsters. Even if most of the monsters attempt to escape the region and are confronted by the NRO-Delta perimeter sentries, the investigators are unlikely to have the firepower to hold their ground in battle. Their best bet will be to find shelter stout enough to withstand the Wendigo-spawn and hide there until the Children of the Wendigo seek warm prey elsewhere; the vault of the Farmer's Bank would be ideal, if the players can hack through its security systems. (Electronics, Electrical Repair, Locksmithing, and/or Computer Use rolls would be in order.)

Finally, they will face the nearly-invisible aircraft of PURGATORY, sent to destroy the Wendigo-spawn and any humans who remain that might be tainted. The planes' VLF beams will penetrate physical cover easily. After annihilating anything that moves in the region and then scanning the area for 1D3 further hours, the planes will depart to allow the replacement Blue Team to enter and inspect the remains. The players' only hope will be to communicate to the pilots or (more likely to succeed) to Alphonse Lewis with some hint of valuable information which will be lost if they are killed.

If the investigators hole up in the region and survive all these dangers, they still may attempt to elude the Blue Team agents. The Keeper will largely have to play these final scenes by ear; investigators with plenty of stealth and woodcraft may elude the operatives, find food and warmth, and sneak past the perimeter to the relative safety of a nearby town, where they can perhaps steal transportation or contact their Delta Green handlers. This will be a hard road. Past the Blue Team there are patrols of Special Forces troops and river-based squads of SEALs to contend with. The investigators must move slowly, using Track or Navigate to conceal their passage and Hide and Conceal to stay clear of the patrols and their thermal imaging equipment. Investigators who are caught by a patrol and put up a fight should be in the proverbial world of hurt, facing troops with M-17 rifles and at least 60% attack skills. The Keeper should allow the investigators to plot their movements on a map of the area, but make Navigate rolls in secret to determine how well the investigators actually follow their well-laid plan through the frigid woods and streams. As a rule of thumb, the investigators should be required to make three Navigate rolls in a row, one per day of careful movement; a failed roll means another day in the woods, with the risks of frostbite and encounters with patrols. The Keeper might allow Luck rolls for the investigators to avoid patrols; otherwise, play out the encounters. The patrolling troops will be veterans at black operations, moving with stealth and speed and always setting up cover fire.

Clearly, most investigators are likely to be caught by the Blue Team, by the patrols, or by the NRO-Delta guards; depending on their actions, they may be shot or -- better still -- captured and brought to Adolph Lepus for interrogation.

Conclusions

If the players fail to escape cleanly they may encounter the leader of the men in black outside the perimeter, after the deadly sacrifice or the disastrous rampage of the Wendigo. Adolph Lepus, chief of security for NRO Section Delta, is on hand as FEMA bureaucrat "Alphonse Lewis." It is a sort of homecoming for Lepus, born and bred in Alabama cotton country. That will not make him any less ruthless in containing the situation: if the Children of the Wendigo

arise, Lepus will call in the order for PURGATORY if Harris and his agents fail to do so. If it is expedient, Lepus will sacrifice every living thing in the region (except himself, of course) with bioengineered plague in order to contain evidence of supernatural or alien activity.

Survivors of the Majestic/Delta Green mission will be debriefed brutally: any investigators so caught by Lepus will have their secrets revealed, one way or another. The Keeper should decide their fate: perhaps they simply vanish, or perhaps they are released after a few weeks in Majestic's mind-control laboratories in the OUTLOOK project, all memories of it erased in turn, perhaps to be programmed as a "plant" to collect further information from Delta Green operations and, eventually, to report to Lepus' agents once more. The agents may try to cut a deal with Lepus, or with Farrell and his superiors: Farrell might be favorably disposed to the players if they took steps to save the lives of any of his men, and he might be sympathetic if the players convincingly ask him to intercede on their behalf. This may be a good route for the Keeper to use if it's preferable to keep the player-characters out of the clutches of Adolph Lepus: once he hears how his BLUE FLY troops are being treated by Lepus, Colonel Robert Coffey might claim jurisdiction over all the characters, player characters included, pulling strings to have MJ-3 order Lepus to turn them over. This move will have the tacit approval of MJ-3 director Gavin Ross, who will plan to use the players as a source of intelligence in the future. What Coffey immediately does with them is up to the Keeper; but they should feel the urgency of going to ground and staying out of Lepus' sight for a long while afterward. Finally, the Keeper must determine whether the Friendly, the source of Delta Green's access to this operation, remains a viable asset or is discovered as Lepus cleans house.

What the Majestic group learns from the scenario is largely up to the individual Keeper. What reports did Farrell and Harris send to Colonel Coffey at BLUE FLY command? Did their reports conflict? Can they be interpreted as delusions or as products of Grey technology? Did the players conduct any effective disinformation? What reports did any survivors or captured investigators deliver to Lepus after the sacrifice or after Ithaqua's last manifestation? Some in the Majestic group (Lepus and Coffey, for instance) will believe reports of the supernatural, but their superiors may demand reports which are consistent with the Greys' activity and technology for presentation to the Majestic steering committee. The truth will be carefully recorded in the archives of MJ-3 and MJ-5, even if the others refuse to believe it.

What Delta Green learns from the scenario is largely up to the players. They should compile a report afterward to describe their debriefing, the details of which will be sent to cell "A" for analysis and archival. In the end, the players will likely have little explained to them. Intelligence analysis regarding the Great Old Ones is, after all, strictly need-to-know.

Sanity

Dismissing Ithaqua:	+3D6 SAN (but see the next entry)
Allowing a human sacrifice:	-1D6 SAN
Destroying ALL known Children of the Wendigo:	+1D10 SAN
Destroying most of the Children of the Wendigo:	+1D4 SAN
Providing useful intelligence to Delta Green:	+1D4 SAN

Characters

Lt. Colonel James Farrell
MJ-5 Operative and Blue Team Commander, age 46
Race: Caucasian
STR 12 CON 13 SIZ 12 INT 16 POW 14
DEX 10 APP 10 EDU 17 SAN 70 HP 13

Damage Bonus none
Education: B.S. American History, Air Force Academy; ARRS Training
Occupation: USAF Special Operations Command, Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service, detached to Project BLUE FLY
Skills: Climb 60%, Conceal 43%, Credit Rating 35%, Dodge 40%, Drive Auto 32%, First Aid 50%, Hide 40%, History 56%, Jump 40%, Listen 65%, Martial Arts (boxing and judo) 45%, Navigation 60%, Parachuting 60%, Sneak 53%, Spot Hidden 63%
Languages: English (own) 100%
Attacks:
Fist/Punch 65%, 1D3 + martial arts
Grapple 53%, special
H&K Special Weapons System (.45 handgun with laser sight) 50% (+10%), 1D10+2
Armor: Reinforced kevlar vest and helmet over HAZMAT suit, 12 points
Appearance: Farrell is on the short side and just getting old enough to lose some of the lean muscle of his youth. He can still keep up with the younger men of his unit, though, and none of them hesitate to follow his orders or example. He has greying crew-cut brown hair and a plain face, weathered from time spent in the air and in the field, with clear and stern blue eyes.
Notes: Farrell has taken many lessons from his commander, Colonel Coffey, the head recovery officer of operation BLUE FLY, on handling extraterrestrial investigations, but he is neither as experienced nor as xenophobic as Coffey. He is thrilled in a macho, self-serving way with the apparent remnants of alien forces. Lt. Colonel Farrell will deny that Ithaqua's howls are in fact biological: they are a transient and highly localized meteorological effect, a lingering side effect of an alien weapon. He and his men see the world through the lens of the information given by the Greys to the Majestic group; myths about monstrous deities have no place in their investigation.

Sample Blue Team Operative
Maroon and Grey, age 25-40
Race: varies
STR 16 CON 15 SIZ 15 INT 14 POW 13
DEX 13 APP 11 EDU 17 SAN 65 HP 15
Damage Bonus +1D4
Education: USAF Special Operations Training (ARRS)
Occupation: USAF Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service, detached to Project BLUE FLY
Skills: Climb 60%, Conceal 60%, First Aid 50%, Hide 50%, Jump 50%, Listen 55%, Mechanical Repair 50%, Navigate 55%, Parachute 50%, Sneak 50%, Spot Hidden 65%, Swim 40%
Languages: English (own) 85%
Attacks:
Fist/Punch 60%, 1D3+db
Fighting Knife 55%, 1D4+2+db
H&K Special Weapons System (.45 handgun with laser sight) 60% (+12%), 1D10+2
M-17 Assault Rifle 55% (+11%), 2D6+3 (with armor piercing rounds, 1/2 armor protection and -1 damage)
Attached grenade launcher (20mm HEAP) 45% (+9%), 3D6 explosive (2 m. radius)
Armor: Reinforced kevlar vest and helmet over HAZMAT suit, 12 points
Appearance: The BLUE FLY troops are crew-cut and tough, classic American special operations. Most of the time they wear grey camouflage-pattern fatigues. Most wear the maroon beret of USAF Pararescue; two wear the grey beret of USAF Special Forces Meteorologists. These last two may be the most baffled and disturbed of all at the influence of the Wind-Walker.
Notes: These men are veteran special operations troops, the elite of the elite, professional and wary. They have been trained to expect anything when dealing with alien technology; but when the Mythos is involved, training only goes so far. Faced with mounting encounters with the power of the Great Old One, the BLUE FLY troops may react in unpredictable ways. Some will revert instinctively and obsessively to training, focusing on concealment and security as they await normalization or a chance to bug out, while others will get more and more violently "proactive" in securing their environment. Confrontations with Harris' NRO-Delta agents might be very likely if they are manipulated skillfully by the investigators.

Major Elton Harris
Undercover NRO-Delta Commander, age 49
Race: Caucasian
STR 13 CON 11 SIZ 16 INT 16 POW 11
DEX 12 APP 13 EDU 19 SAN 44 HP 14
Damage Bonus +1D4
Education: M.S. Criminology; Special Agent training, FBI Academy
Occupation: "DIA Special Agent," actually a Major in the National Reconnaisance Office, Section Delta, for MJ-3 Project GARNET
Skills: Conceal 45%, Dodge 39%, Drive Auto 50%, Fast Talk 53%, Law 34%, Listen 54%, Martial Arts (karate and judo) 50%, Navigate 40%, Persuade 44%, Psychology 56%, Sneak 46%, Spot Hidden 66%
Languages: English (own) 95%
Attacks:
Glock-18 (silenced) 60%, 1D10
M-17 Assault Rifle 50% (+10%), 2D6+3
Kick 55%, 1D6+db+martial arts
Grapple 52%, special
Armor: Concealed kevlar vest, 5 points
Appearance: Harris is tall and lanky, still lean and agile from daily karate exercises and time in the field. He has short black hair not yet going to grey. His dark brown eyes bear traces of cruel humor and easy irony. He wears a black suit and tie as if they are required by regulation.
Notes: For good or for ill, "Major" Harris is more likely than Farrell to take seriously the bizarre supernatural effects of the Wind-Walker's manifestations. He has no inkling of the truth, of course, but he has seen some the more outre incidents of the Greys' activity, and he has reasons to suspect that more bizarre and malignant forces may be behind them than the Majestic committee will admit. This will be little help to the investigators; he has some idea how much he should fear the "supernatural" (for lack of a better description), and he will quickly become obsessively paranoid and dangerous as the scenario progresses and his SAN is depleted. The more he is convinced of some unstoppable alien power in the area, the more likely he will be to irrationally call JERICHO/PURGATORY to eradicate all traces of it.

OICW: THE M-17

The OICW (Objective Individual Combat Weapon) protocol in 1992 defined the next model of personal infantry weapon to be deployed by American armed forces. Many contractors produced prototypes for inspection by the Army and Marine Corps, with the intent to deploy the rifle generally in 2005. In "Jack Frost," the Majestic covert forces are equipped with advance models of the weapon.

The M-17 is a 5.56mm assault rifle (these troops use armor piercing [depleted uranium] ammunition) with modular infrared imaging gun camera and laser sighting, gas buffers to reduce recoil, and an attached 20mm explosive round launcher capable of direct or indirect fire (replacing the M203 grenade launcher). The weapon's ordinary maximum effective range would be 130 meters; taking a round to use the rangefinder and scope will increase effective range to 520 meters, with the standard skill bonus for laser sighting. The shoulder stock and accessories may be removed, if necessary, to reduce the weapon to an eminently concealable rifle no larger than a small submachine gun (the rifle's effective range should be halved without the shoulder stock; it is then fired using the Submachinegun skill). The 20mm shell can be set to explode on impact or mid-air, to aid in reaching covers behind concealment: it takes one combat round to program the range, but with a normal attack roll the explosive shell will negate the target's protective cover. The gun camera can also transmit wirelessly to a wrist or helmet-mounted viewscreen, enabling "blind" fire around corners at only half the normal skill chance (rather than unaimed).

In some testing models, the OICW has increased the killing efficiency of equipped troops by an order of 500% or more. Investigators would be wise to learn the Majestic team's weapons well before taking them on.

5.56mm NATO rounds: Rifle skill. Standard damage for the caliber. Base range 130 yards. ROF 2 or 30. Malfunction: 00.

20mm shells: Grenade Launcher skill. 3D6 damage/3 yard explosive burst. Base range 50 yards. ROF 1. Malfunction: 99-00.

Sample NRO-Delta Agents
24 more Men in Black, age 35-45
Race: Varies
STR 15 CON 14 SIZ 13 INT 15 POW 14
DEX 15 APP 11 EDU 18 SAN 70 HP 14
Damage Bonus +1D4
Education: CIA Operations Training, Camp Perry, or Special Forces Training, Fort Bragg
Occupation: Security Officer, NRO Section Delta
Skills: Climb 53%, Conceal 50%, Dodge 41%, Drive Auto 52%, Hide 55%, Jump 50%, Listen 61%, Locksmith 46%, Martial Arts 52%, Psychology 40%, Sneak 56%, Spot Hidden 61%
Languages: English (own) 95%
Attacks:

Fist/Punch 60%, 1D3+db+martial arts
Kick 50%, 1D6+db+martial arts
Grapple 50%, special
Glock-18 62%, 1D10
M-17 Assault Rifle 54% (+11%), 2D6+3 (armor piercing rounds, 1/2 armor protection and -1 damage)
Attached grenade launcher (20mm HEAP) 45% (+9%), 3D6 explosive (2 m. radius)
Armor: Concealed kevlar vest, 5 points
Appearance: The men who accompany Harris into Willis wear plain clothes: most of them wear black or grey suits, well-tailored but not flashy, and thick trenchcoats and fine leather gloves against the cold. Those assigned to the perimeter of this mission will be dressed and equipped as U.S. Army Special Forces, in fatigues and black berets. They are uniformly clean-cut and clean-shaven, with hard eyes and cold senses of humor. They are alert, savvy, and suspicious, and the investigators should be hard-pressed to fool them for long.

Dr. Fred Bimmel, Energy Department
MJ-6 Researcher, age 61
Race: African-American
STR 8 CON 8 SIZ 13 INT 17 POW 18
DEX 6 APP 11 EDU 21 SAN 90 HP 11
Damage Bonus none
Education: Ph.D. Nuclear Physics, MIT
Occupation: Nuclear Physicist, U.S. Department of Energy, and researcher for MJ-6 Project PLUTO
Skills: Accounting 40%, Astronomy 30%, Bargain 35%, Chemistry 60%, Computer Use 50%, Conceal 35%, Credit Rating 55%, Electrical Repair 50%, Electronics 60%, Fast Talk 25%, Library Use 55%, Persuade 45%, Physics 80%, Spot Hidden 35%
Languages: English (own) 105%
Attacks: none above base skill
Armor: none
Appearance: Dr. Bimmel was never in the best shape, and recent years have been hard on him. He smokes constantly, he eats poorly, and he sleeps infrequently. His skin is somehow both wrinkled and seemingly haggard, despite the paunch that graces his midsection and seems to grow every year. His kinky short hair is grey and white, and his eyes are a watery dark brown. He wears a typical white scientist's coat over a rumpled suit.
Notes: Bimmel is a distinguished physicist with past experience evaluating the bizarre effects of alien (called "foreign," but Bimmel knows better) technology. At first confident and arrogant, he will become easily rattled as Farrell's tests reveal none of the electromagnetic effects or radiation found in past "Grey" incidents; his reactions are more likely to be simple fear, however, not the irrationality that the others might suffer: Bimmel has an extraordinarily resilient personality. His working theory will be that some sort of weather-control device is being tested, using (unknown) quantum binding processes to dampen molecular activity. He has no hard evidence to that effect, though, and he will spend most of the scenario conducting laborious tests and recalibrations in his field lab, particularly around Crow Lake once he detects anomalous readings there. Bimmel might prove a useful ally to the investigators, if he becomes convinced that Grey technology in fact has nothing to do with the events around Willis, and his word will hold some weight with Farrell; smart players might use him as a means of protection against Harris' agents. Bimmel is accompanied by five assistants in this operation, each of them a PhD with similarly impressive credentials and classified background.

Dr. Lisa Howell, USARMIID
MJ-6 Researcher, age 48
Race: Caucasian
STR 12 CON 8 SIZ 9 INT 16 POW 12
DEX 12 APP 8 EDU 23 SAN 54 HP 9
Damage Bonus none
Education: M.D., Virology and Gene Therapy, University of California at Los Angeles
Occupation: USARMIID Field Researcher, MJ-6 Researcher (Project PLUTO, Sub-Project CORE)
Skills: Biology 80%, Chemistry 50%, Computer Use 40%, Credit Rating 45%, Drive Auto 50%, Fast Talk 35%, First Aid 70%, Library Use 55%, Listen 35%, Medicine 75%, Natural History 40%, Persuade 45%, Pharmacy 50%,

Psychology 35%
Languages: English (own) 115%, Latin 40%
Attacks: none above base skill
Armor: none
Appearance: Dr. Howell has never cared a great deal about her looks; she looks down her nose at fellow doctors who spend energy on such superficialities. She is asthmatic and nearsighted, with thick glasses and thick features and stringy blond-brown hair tied into a haphazard ponytail. She wears a physician's coat over a simple pantsuit.
Notes: A specialist in genetic medicine, virology, and chemical warfare, Doctor Howell has worked on alien biotech before, and she was terrified by the implications of what she saw: in past projects she has seen the mixing of genes, aggressive genetic structures, superviruses, and so on. She will cooperate fully with any secrecy or security arrangement, believing BLUE FLY to be working to protect humanity. She will not blink at detainment; she will only frown in discomfort at torture or murder committed in the name of operational security. She will act immediately and intelligently to inform Harris' agents of any hint of subversive activity by the players. Like Bimmel, Howell leads a small team of six doctors investigating the biological implications of the tragedy in Willis.

"FEMA Crisis Task Force Manager Alphonse Lewis"
A/K/A Adolph Lepus, Local Sadistic/Psychotic Hardcore Badass Made Good, age 50
Adolph Lepus is detailed in *Delta Green*. Born to poor Alabama farmers, Lepus knows this country and its people, even if he has never been to Willis County proper; more than ever, his easy drawl masks quick, decisive intelligence and a core of cruelty and ruthlessness. Lepus is posing here as the ranking FEMA officer, charged by law with authority over federal and local resources in this crisis. The chief of the Majestic group's wetworks section, Adolph Lepus knows that something is not right with the Greys, and he knows that there are unexplained powers out there that may be totally unrelated to them. Still, he sees Delta Green as a threat to MJ12's hegemony and an unnecessary risk of premature exposure, and he and his men have had several violent encounters with them; while his superiors have not yet decided to instigate direct confrontation with Delta Green, Lepus gathers what intelligence he can in the hopes of using an open conflict with the rival conspiracy to advance his own place in the Majestic project. Captured Delta Green agents can expect a long and unpleasant incarceration if Lepus gets his hands on them. But with the expert treatments of MJ12's OUTLOOK mind-control program (whatever shape it takes in the Keeper's campaign), agents may be released with no conscious memories of Lepus at all; only secret dreams of pain and the flash of golden teeth.

Typical Child of the Wendigo: Human
STR 30 CON 30 SIZ 17 INT 6 POW 10
DEX 10 APP n/a EDU 13 SAN 0 HP 24
Damage Bonus +2D6
Skills: Climb 75%, Hide 75%, Jump 75%, Listen 75%, Sneak 75%, Spot Hidden 75%, Track 50%, Sense by Smell (100' range) 90%; intellectual and communications skills will decrease at a rate of 1% per day.
Attacks:
Bite 30%, 1D4+db
Fist/Punch 50%, 1D4+db
Kick 25%, 1D8+db
Armor: 1 point of hide; minimum damage from physical attacks.
Special: While a Child of the Wendigo is not particularly impressed by most attacks or gunfire, it will flee from an impaling gunshot wound out of fear that the scaldingly hot bullet might melt its icy heart; it also fears deliberate fire attacks (not merely hanging lanterns or campfires) for the same reason.
SAN loss: 1/1D6
Appearance: A human Child of the Wendigo is typically over seven feet in height, with a heavily-muscled body covered with disturbing bluish-white skin. The face is bestial, with razor sharp teeth and eyes changed to ice blue. The hands bear nasty, short claws. It may still wear the torn remnants of its clothing before the transformation.

Typical Child of the Wendigo: Large Dog
STR 36 CON 30 SIZ 17 INT n/a POW 10
DEX 13 APP n/a EDU n/a SAN n/a HP 24
Damage Bonus +2D6
Skills: Climb 65%, Hide 75%, Jump 75%, Listen 75%, Sneak 75%, Spot Hidden 75%, Track 50%, Sense by Smell (2

mile range) 90%.
Attacks:
Bite 40%, 1D10+db
Armor: 1 point of hide; minimum damage from physical attacks.
Special: See Human Child of the Wendigo, above.
SAN loss: 1/1D6
Appearance: Its flesh will be the same dead blue-white as with human Children of the Wendigo, showing a sharp contrast against the fur which rapidly falls away in dead patches from the animal's pelt. Its fangs and claws are distended, and the animal itself is far larger and more vital and powerful than any of its sort previously encountered.

Typical Child of the Wendigo: Black Bear
STR 50 CON 39 SIZ 25 INT n/a POW 10
DEX 10 APP n/a EDU n/a SAN n/a HP 32
Damage Bonus +4D6
Skills: Climb 65%, Hide 75%, Jump 75%, Listen 75%, Sneak 75%, Spot Hidden 75%, Track 50%, Sense by Smell (500' range) 90%.
Attacks:
Bite 40%, 2D6+db
Claw 40%, 1D8+db
Armor: 1 point of hide; minimum damage from physical attacks.
Special: See Human Child of the Wendigo, above.
SAN loss: 1/1D6
Appearance: Its flesh will be the same dead blue-white as with human Children of the Wendigo, showing a sharp contrast against the fur which rapidly falls away in dead patches from the animal's pelt. Its fangs and claws are distended, and the animal itself is far larger and more vital and powerful than any of its sort previously encountered.

Handouts

Handout #13: The Deeper Ghostly Dream

The dreamer is part of a Creek tribe, one tribe of a far-flung people who live and thrive throughout the woods and hills and rivers of the land. It is winter, and the tribe is worried. People have begun to disappear. First it was thought to be but a normal part of the cold winter, but now five people have vanished, and the cold nights are sometimes filled with a terrible sound, a howling like the most mournful of spirits, lost in the stars; and when that howling is loudest, some people are filled with a terrible hunger for the flesh of the dead. The old shamans tell stories of the windigo, a giant spirit who could appear in any form, a winter spirit that hungered for human flesh. The shamans know a way to drive off the windigo, but it is a terrible way, a way they learned from an old and hated tribe long ago.

The dreamer is taken by the shamans to save his people. (The dreamer's dream-self is male, regardless of the dreamer's actual sex.) The shamans lead him up the red earth of Blood Hill, and he lies in a stony place atop the hill. The shamans then climb down the hill again, and from a distance they pray, singing songs with unknown words until the night deepens and the stars gleam in the cold black sky overhead.

Then the cold grows deeper. The gleaming stars turn from white to blue, then purple, then yellow, shifting in pastel hues and swirling, melding, knitting a beautiful mist of cold colors. The mist fills the sky. Then comes the howling, deeper, louder, filling not the sky but the soul, and black eyes peer forth from the glowing mist. The shamans' song has stopped. The dreamer is cold, so cold, and he knows the windigo by its terrible obsidian eyes, and the windigo looks on the dreamer with hunger.

Handout #14: Legends of North American Indians

From Internet files and books on Native American traditions:

In traditional native American beliefs, the snake is a symbol of creation, regeneration and rebirth; in a few isolated groups, however, it has been emphasized also as a spirit of death and destruction, with death and life occupying equally-celebrated places in the beliefs of some tribes.

The windigo is an evil spirit known by different names to many Native American tribes, from the Creek and Cherokee of the southern United States to the Inuit of the Arctic Circle. In each legend, the windigo comes in the cold, is enormous and powerful, and devours hapless people whom it catches in the open; some legends describe the windigo as having skin of stone, and others say that mosquitoes or biting black flies were originally the remnants of the hungry windigo after a tribe tricked it into falling into a firepit, which caused its stony heart to crack and explode.

From an interview with Edward Two-Bears Johnson, a chief of the Creek nation in Oklahoma:

The Blood Hill tribe was a terrible tribe that died out centuries ago. Among current Creek in Oklahoma, legend has the Blood Hill tribe conducting terrible ceremonies combining celebrations of life and death, following violent mass-rape with human sacrifice to living poisonous snakes on great spirit-mounds. The last known Blood Hill tribe lived in northern Alabama.

From files of the U.S. Air Force's operation BLUE BOOK, recently declassified according to the Freedom of Information Act:

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Case Report, 195408233A1X, Abstract
In February, 1954, two BLUE BOOK officers were sent to the Mackenzie
Drilling Works in northeastern Alaska, where a local worker insisted that
UFOs had appeared in the wake of a particularly dangerous drilling accident,
one in which nine workers were killed when a support pylon gave way and a
drill collapsed. The worker, a native Inuit, told supervisors that he saw an
"alien rainbow" with "stars for eyes" appear before the accident, and that
this "rainbow" caused the struts to collapse. The story was met with
derision by other workers, but the BLUE BOOK officers were sent when one
worker took the trouble to report the incident as a "UFO sighting." The
officers quickly determined the "sighting" to be groundless, and nothing was
reported of the "alien rainbow" again.
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Handout #15: Primal Gods of the Americas

Much of the confusion around the primal Snake spirit of prehistoric Amerinds stems from a bifurcation of belief which most researchers have failed to address. The primal Ig or Yigg of the central American plains is well-known, of course. Ig is a snake god, and hence is closely connected with Creation myths and the essential elements of primitive life, the weather and death and birth. However, another spirit known to the primal tribes was Igga or Ithka, the god of storms and winter, hence a god of death and the change of seasons. This duality of belief is integral to understanding the animism of the primordial Amerind tribes and the key spirits which they separately revered. Ig -- Snake -- became a common god of wisdom and medicine; but Igua was largely forgotten by all but a handful of remote tribes, isolated and warred-upon for their bloody practices in worship of their god's predatory power. It is worth noting that many of the images and carvings crafted regarding Igua were protective in nature, designed to guard the wearer against the great spirit's power; cf. Phillips, *Thaumaturgical Prodigies in the New English Canaan*.

(Drew Thomasin, *Primal Gods of the Americas*, introduction, Miskatonic University Press, 1939.)

Handout #16: Bimmel's First Notes

Bulletin #9901A33, Project PLUTO, "Secondary Summary: Willis County Anomaly"

In developing an analysis of the Anomaly, it is crucial to compare energy fluctuations in the region with those encountered in past anomalies and in past research by this and related Projects. Electromagnetic radiation levels in the area may not be direct consequences of the anomaly, but they may indicate quantum activity associated with past anomalies. Radiation levels within the Anomaly, covering roughly a diameter of 15 kilometers, and centered more or less around Crow Lake, seem to indicate the presence of such effects, though they do not precisely match effects studied before: the initial conclusion is that neither gate technology nor a "cold gun" is in effect here. [Ref: "Gate Technology and the Tillinghast Effect, Bulletin #7300Z00, Project RAINBOW; "Hypothermic Weapons of the EBE: Auroral Research and Xenotype 23X0201," Bulletin #9821Z39, Project COLD COMFORT).]

Maps

- Map #1
- Map #2
- Map #3

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