

MONGOOSE PUBLISHING PRESENTS



# Signs & Portents

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system

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Roleplayer

## Wandering Stars

The US Marshals in OGL Wild West

## The Staff of Ibis

Searching for an ancient relic in Conan: The Roleplaying Game

## 101 Character Backgrounds

For when the GM has killed off your character... again

Plus... Legend of the Rangers Part II,  
Paranoia Paperwork, Tales from  
Mongoose Hall, and much, much more.

S&P Roleplayer 37

October 2006

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Hello.

There's a pretty good chance that you have no idea who I am. That's okay, neither do two billion Chinese people. Since I have a lot of space to fill up in this column, I'm going to help you to get to know me by providing you with a selection of possible biographical fragments, some or all of which may be untrue.

1. I was hired about four months ago despite not having looked at a Mongoose product in five years after my first attempt at writing for them was rejected. Now I have Unlimited Editor Powers™ it may well make an appearance in the pages of this very magazine. Since my employment as the in-house dogsbody, I have, amongst other things, assembled wardrobes, taken the rubbish out, designed a poster and conquered a small nation - although the latter project was undertaken in my spare time. In the space of about a week I have been promoted from 'you'll be helping out with Signs and Portents' to 'you'll be the assistant editor of Signs and Portents' to 'you're the new editor of Signs and Portents: Roleplayer'. Career progression is a wonderful thing.

2. I spent several years living in a trailer park in the midwest USA - in Coralville, Iowa, to be specific - where I earned a surprisingly good living by sneaking into university lectures, writing up my notes as entertaining and educational dialogues, and selling them to students too lazy to attend their own courses. This form of education has given me wide-ranging knowledge of many topics from medicine (the correct term for a nosebleed is 'epistaxis') to zoology (scorpions glow when exposed to ultraviolet light) to philosophy (John-Jacques Rousseau was an idiot). I supplemented both my income and my diet by pig-rustling.

3. For my entire life, complete strangers have greeted me in a friendly manner under the mistaken apprehension that my name is Steven. I don't know who you are, Steve, but if you happen to be reading this please stop following me around.

4. I am Spartacus.

Chris

**Editor:**

Chris Longhurst

**Managing Editor:**

Ian Barstow

**Editorial Director:**

Matthew Sprange

**Production Director:**

Alexander Fennell

**Mongoose Studio Staff:**

Ian Belcher, Richard Ford,  
Adrian Walters, Nick  
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Kelly George

**Cover Art:**

Randy Nunley

**Artists:**

Marcio Fiorito, Chris  
Longhurst, Matt  
Thomason

**Contributors:**

David Underwood,  
Richard Farrese, Richard  
Ford, Stuart Taylor,  
Christopher Blackmoor,  
Bryan Steele, Daniel R.  
Robichaud, Matt Sharp,  
Carl Walmsley, Eric K.  
Rodriguez.



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# EYE ON MONGOOSE

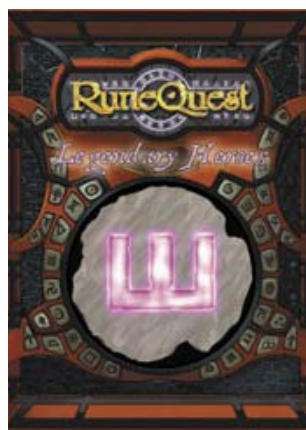
*Coming This Month*



## **RuneQuest: Monsters**

Depending on whether the adventurer is a hero or a villain, a miser or a spendthrift, a steadfast warrior for a noble cause or an opportunist out for nothing but gold, the details of the adventurer's story will change, but one thing remains a constant for all adventurers: they will all come face to face with monsters of every description.

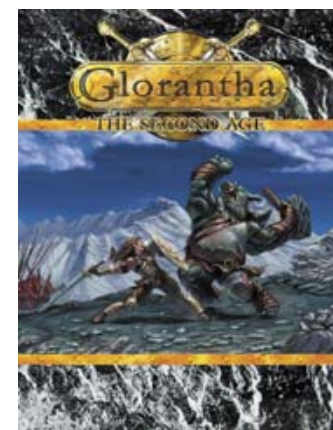
RuneQuest Monsters is much more than a simple listing of monsters. It provides information on how to create a full-fledged character using the various sentient races found within the book.



## **RuneQuest: Legendary Heroes**

Throughout the teeming masses of lives there are a handful of shining beacons of hope that show the rest what they are capable of. They walk amongst their fellows like giants of deed and duty, a living reminder that the world is shaped by the actions of the bold and powerful.

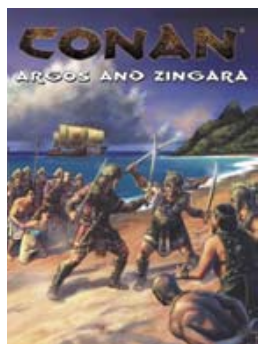
This book is a guide to creating and playing Legendary level heroes in the Runequest game. It contains all the tools needed to add Legendary Heroes to existing chronicles, or even to create a Legendary Campaign that should even challenge the previously unmatched characters of this level.



## **Glorantha: The Second Age**

In its glorious Second Age, Glorantha is the prize of warring empires. The God Learner Empire seeks to crack open and the very secrets of the gods, manipulating them to their own ends. The Empire of Wyrms' Friends works to transform its land and people into a mystical dragon, which will take flight and reshape the entire world.

The Second Age is a time of discovery and exploration. For the first time, trade and travel allows the interaction of far-flung cultures. Against this backdrop of unfettered progress, dark omens gather. Men have pushed the eternal laws of myth and magic to the breaking point. How long will it be before the world strikes back?



### Conan: Argos and Zingara

Welcome to Argos & Zingara, the maritime nations of the Hyborian age. Argos and Zingara are two of the most politically volatile nations of the world, where men's destinies are decided through wealth and sword. These are vibrant realms of bloody strife and darksome horror. The cities of these two nations have begun to throw off the shackles of feudalism and the nations shudder beneath the tread of the wealthy merchants, who are neither noble nor peasant. One's skills are as important as the circumstances of one's birth.

### Conan: Reavers of the Vilayet

The Turan empire has mighty armies and navies before which all the world must tremble, but the kozaks have the desperate cunning and audacity of men who have nothing left to lose save their lives. Between the kozaks and Turan is the wide sea of Vilayet, whose waters run red with blood.

When you are caught up in the struggle of empires across the sea, for which side will you raise your sword? Cut a path of death and steel through the bloody waters of the Vilayet Sea, hero, but remember - older civilisations once stood on the shores of that cursed ocean...



### Paranoia: Sector Zero

Just as 'Code 7' is Troubleshooter dispatchers' jargon for a mission that promises certain death, so 'Sector Zero' is Alpha Complex slang for punishment duty. Troubleshooters 'sent to Sector Zero' face a dispiriting assignment nobody else wanted... like the missions in this PARANOIA collection, Sector Zero.

'Bubblegum Run' sends the PCs on a couple of annoying errands into Junior Creches corrupted by Communist propaganda slipped into chewing-gum wrappers.

In 'The Dinner Party', a BLUE citizen recruits the Troubleshooters for a dire emergency, on which the fate of Alpha Complex itself - uh, doesn't depend at all. In fact, he wants the PCs to prepare an evening party for several high-clearance citizens. What could go wrong?

'Lightning Rod' sends the Troubleshooters out onto the immense dome over Alpha Complex to set up an R&D experiment. And then another experiment. And another. Hey, what's all that ominous-looking grey stuff gathering overhead?

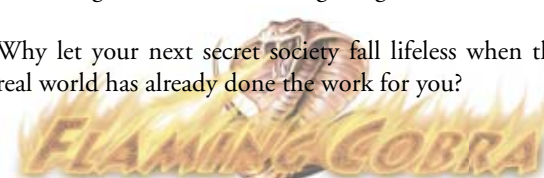


### Secret Societies

Every campaign setting has its cults, conspiracies, and secret societies. Find out what's worked for them in the real world and what's brought them down. Titans of conspiracy theory like the Freemasons, Knights Templar, and the Assassins rub shoulders with game-perfect organizations like Mossad, Aum Shinrikyo, and the Thule Society. Each of them is fully detailed, ready to serve as a source of inspiration or drop straight into your weekly game.

There's also advice on getting the most impact and realism out of your secret societies, examples of societies in different genres of d20 play, plot hooks to bring your PCs into the action, prestige classes, and details on other societies from our world for whenever you need something a little extra for tonight's game.

Why let your next secret society fall lifeless when the real world has already done the work for you?



# Tales from Mongoose Hall

Matthew Sprange

Star Wars IIa

## A Lost Hope

### The Story So Far...

A group of Jedi Padawans have been placed in charge of the defence of the Bothan world of Kothlis, under siege from the forces of the Separatists. The loss of this world would mean the entire Bothan Sector could fall to Count Dooku and the players, now masterless after their Masters were killed in a trap laid out by the cunning General Syphus, must marshal their forces while convincing a divided Bothan people to take up arms and join in the struggle.

The campaign is set to kick into high gear after the players made the decision to infiltrate a Trade Federation Battleship – but that is to come. First, plans had to be made as, for once, they decided that just blundering in would not be helpful...

Lots of debate took place about reprogramming battle droids, scouting out shuttles, and reinforcing defences while they were away. Alex, playing Jain Rha, the Padawan, ordered their remaining fighters and gunships to fly extended and constant patrol patterns, trying to hide what they were preparing to do under the appearance of increased activity round the capital, Botha'qwi.

Ian arranged for a meeting with the Bothan underworld and managed to bargain for shuttle schedules and schematics of a Trade Federation Battleship. Unfortunately, he offered what was in effect a 3 year get out of jail free card to one of the most notorious Bothan criminals to get this, a promise that caused his boss (the tough, permanently annoyed police Captain) to suggest that, after the war had been concluded, Ian might like to consider a 'long holiday'. Yes, he will be getting fired. The other problem here was that the schematics were not exactly detailed and the shuttle schedules applied to a single day – though they did not know which day.

This meant they had to move quickly – after all, the schedule might kick in within 24 hours. Saddling up in a couple of gunships, the Jedi and their friends (with a contingent of the Bothan militia in tow) head south to the now familiar enemy stronghold of Thundin'ar, and the shuttle launching pad they had seen in their last expedition there (see last issue).

So, we find our heroes at the edge of the jungle, looking down onto the landing pad, watching shuttles take off and land on a regular basis. They are soon able to match the launches with their schedule and realise that this is the day! They had already picked a couple of likely

candidates in terms of the shuttle they were intending to hijack, based on a not entirely correct reading of cargo codes. Ian, being the only Bothan, calmly stated that he had an idea on how to board a shuttle – and, thus, any plans they had made beforehand were deviated from, and the winging it began.

Making his way into Thundin'ar, Ian soon doubled back and marched up to the landing pad, pretending to be a maintenance worker. He was promptly arrested by two battle droids, who informed him that no Bothan workers were to be allowed near the shuttles unless they were in chains, then bundled into a shuttle. Not entirely what he had planned.

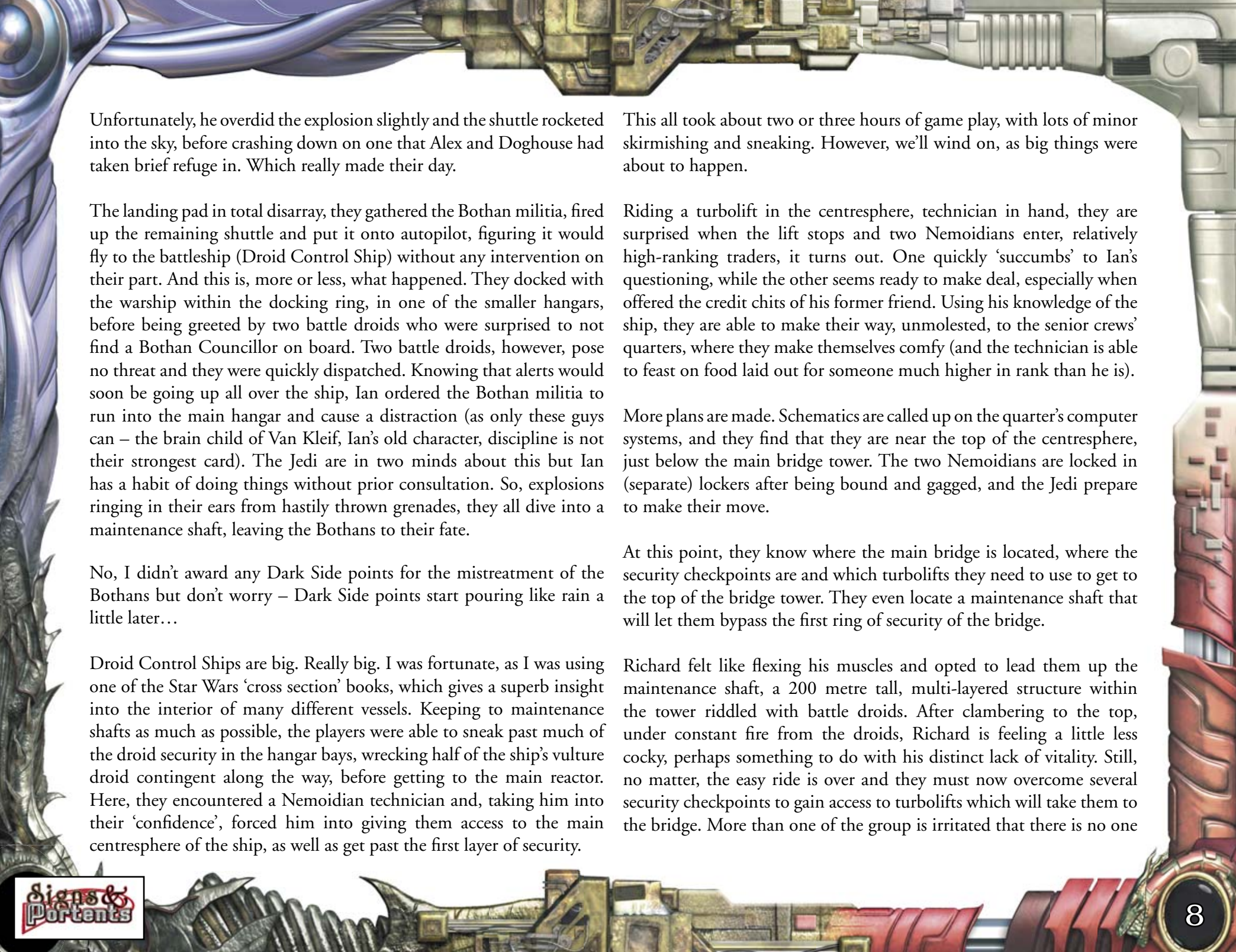
There then followed a mix up on the shuttle scheduling. Basically, the players were after a shuttle that was taking slave Bothan workers up to one of the four battleships in orbit above the planet. However, someone (to this day, I don't know who) mis-read a vital bit of timing information, and so they moved in as a completely different shuttle was preparing to launch – one that, as they would discover, would be taking

a Bothan Councillor to not just any battleship, but the main Droid Control Ship. So, that would be the headquarters of General Syphus, then.

Stealthily, they crept up to the landing pad – and then promptly blew their cover as the Bothan militia opened fire. Many droids fell under the first salvo, and the Jedi were soon in the thick of it, lightsabres twirling, as a nearby shuttle began disgorging battle droids (by the schedule, they knew there were 100 droids within).

Lots of things happened at once. They found a group of Bothan slaves in another shuttle, and quickly freed them. Ian broke free of his guards and began firing up the shuttle he was in (the one the Councillor was supposed to be in, and soon to be their getaway vehicle), sending a sheet of charged ions into the gathering battle droids outside. Richard, playing a Blood Carver infiltrator (who cannot open locked doors or climb, it turns out), planted a charge on the shuttle containing the droids.





Unfortunately, he overdid the explosion slightly and the shuttle rocketed into the sky, before crashing down on one that Alex and Doghouse had taken brief refuge in. Which really made their day.

The landing pad in total disarray, they gathered the Bothan militia, fired up the remaining shuttle and put it onto autopilot, figuring it would fly to the battleship (Droid Control Ship) without any intervention on their part. And this is, more or less, what happened. They docked with the warship within the docking ring, in one of the smaller hangars, before being greeted by two battle droids who were surprised to not find a Bothan Councillor on board. Two battle droids, however, pose no threat and they were quickly dispatched. Knowing that alerts would soon be going up all over the ship, Ian ordered the Bothan militia to run into the main hangar and cause a distraction (as only these guys can – the brain child of Van Kleif, Ian's old character, discipline is not their strongest card). The Jedi are in two minds about this but Ian has a habit of doing things without prior consultation. So, explosions ringing in their ears from hastily thrown grenades, they all dive into a maintenance shaft, leaving the Bothans to their fate.

No, I didn't award any Dark Side points for the mistreatment of the Bothans but don't worry – Dark Side points start pouring like rain a little later...

Droid Control Ships are big. Really big. I was fortunate, as I was using one of the Star Wars 'cross section' books, which gives a superb insight into the interior of many different vessels. Keeping to maintenance shafts as much as possible, the players were able to sneak past much of the droid security in the hangar bays, wrecking half of the ship's vulture droid contingent along the way, before getting to the main reactor. Here, they encountered a Nemoidian technician and, taking him into their 'confidence', forced him into giving them access to the main centrespere of the ship, as well as get past the first layer of security.

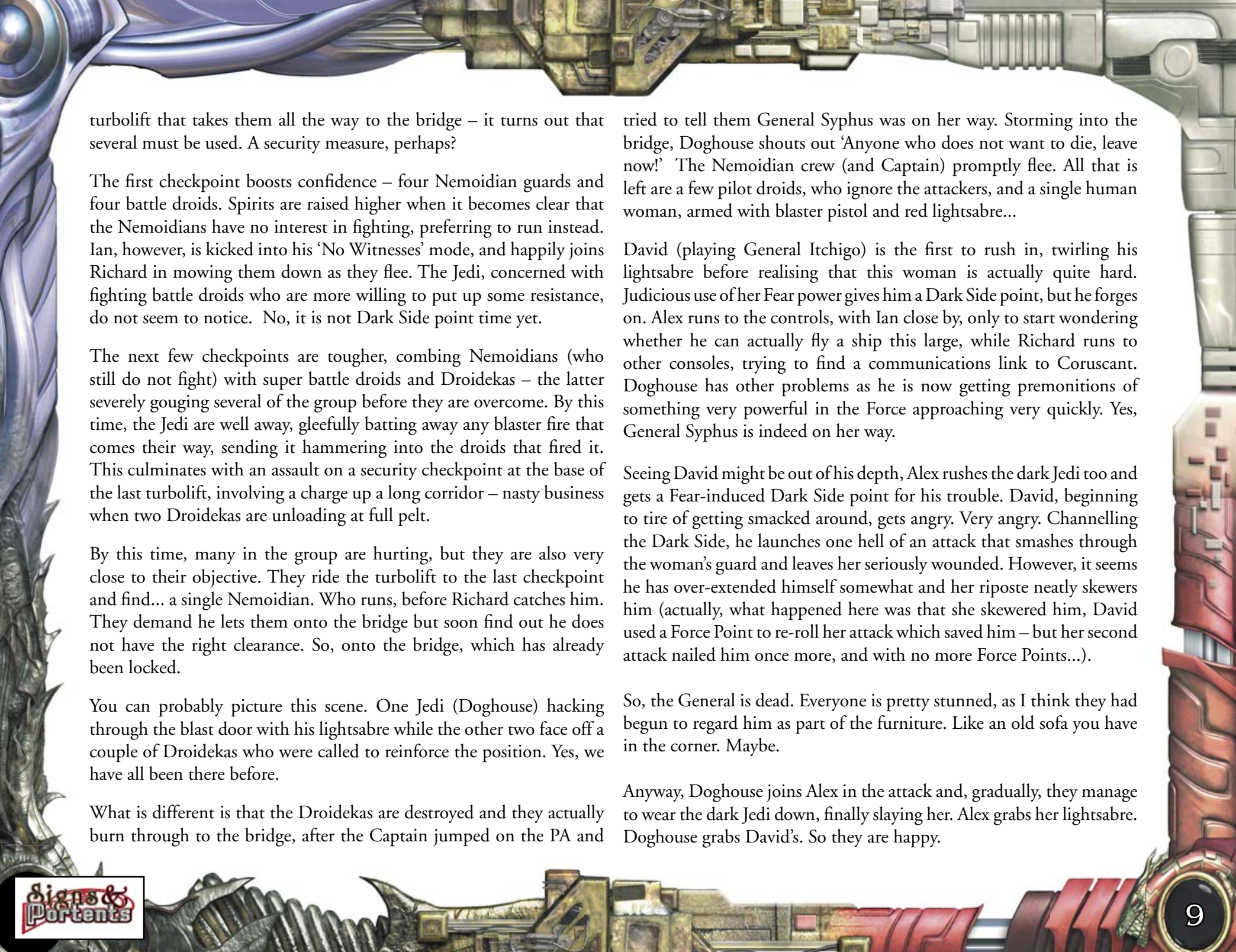
This all took about two or three hours of game play, with lots of minor skirmishing and sneaking. However, we'll wind on, as big things were about to happen.

Riding a turbolift in the centrespere, technician in hand, they are surprised when the lift stops and two Nemoidians enter, relatively high-ranking traders, it turns out. One quickly 'succumbs' to Ian's questioning, while the other seems ready to make deal, especially when offered the credit chits of his former friend. Using his knowledge of the ship, they are able to make their way, unmolested, to the senior crews' quarters, where they make themselves comfy (and the technician is able to feast on food laid out for someone much higher in rank than he is).

More plans are made. Schematics are called up on the quarter's computer systems, and they find that they are near the top of the centrespere, just below the main bridge tower. The two Nemoidians are locked in (separate) lockers after being bound and gagged, and the Jedi prepare to make their move.

At this point, they know where the main bridge is located, where the security checkpoints are and which turbolifts they need to use to get to the top of the bridge tower. They even locate a maintenance shaft that will let them bypass the first ring of security of the bridge.

Richard felt like flexing his muscles and opted to lead them up the maintenance shaft, a 200 metre tall, multi-layered structure within the tower riddled with battle droids. After clambering to the top, under constant fire from the droids, Richard is feeling a little less cocky, perhaps something to do with his distinct lack of vitality. Still, no matter, the easy ride is over and they must now overcome several security checkpoints to gain access to turbolifts which will take them to the bridge. More than one of the group is irritated that there is no one



turbolift that takes them all the way to the bridge – it turns out that several must be used. A security measure, perhaps?

The first checkpoint boosts confidence – four Nemoidian guards and four battle droids. Spirits are raised higher when it becomes clear that the Nemoidians have no interest in fighting, preferring to run instead. Ian, however, is kicked into his ‘No Witnesses’ mode, and happily joins Richard in mowing them down as they flee. The Jedi, concerned with fighting battle droids who are more willing to put up some resistance, do not seem to notice. No, it is not Dark Side point time yet.

The next few checkpoints are tougher, combing Nemoidians (who still do not fight) with super battle droids and Droidekas – the latter severely gouging several of the group before they are overcome. By this time, the Jedi are well away, gleefully batting away any blaster fire that comes their way, sending it hammering into the droids that fired it. This culminates with an assault on a security checkpoint at the base of the last turbolift, involving a charge up a long corridor – nasty business when two Droidekas are unloading at full pelt.

By this time, many in the group are hurting, but they are also very close to their objective. They ride the turbolift to the last checkpoint and find... a single Nemoidian. Who runs, before Richard catches him. They demand he lets them onto the bridge but soon find out he does not have the right clearance. So, onto the bridge, which has already been locked.

You can probably picture this scene. One Jedi (Doghouse) hacking through the blast door with his lightsabre while the other two face off a couple of Droidekas who were called to reinforce the position. Yes, we have all been there before.

What is different is that the Droidekas are destroyed and they actually burn through to the bridge, after the Captain jumped on the PA and

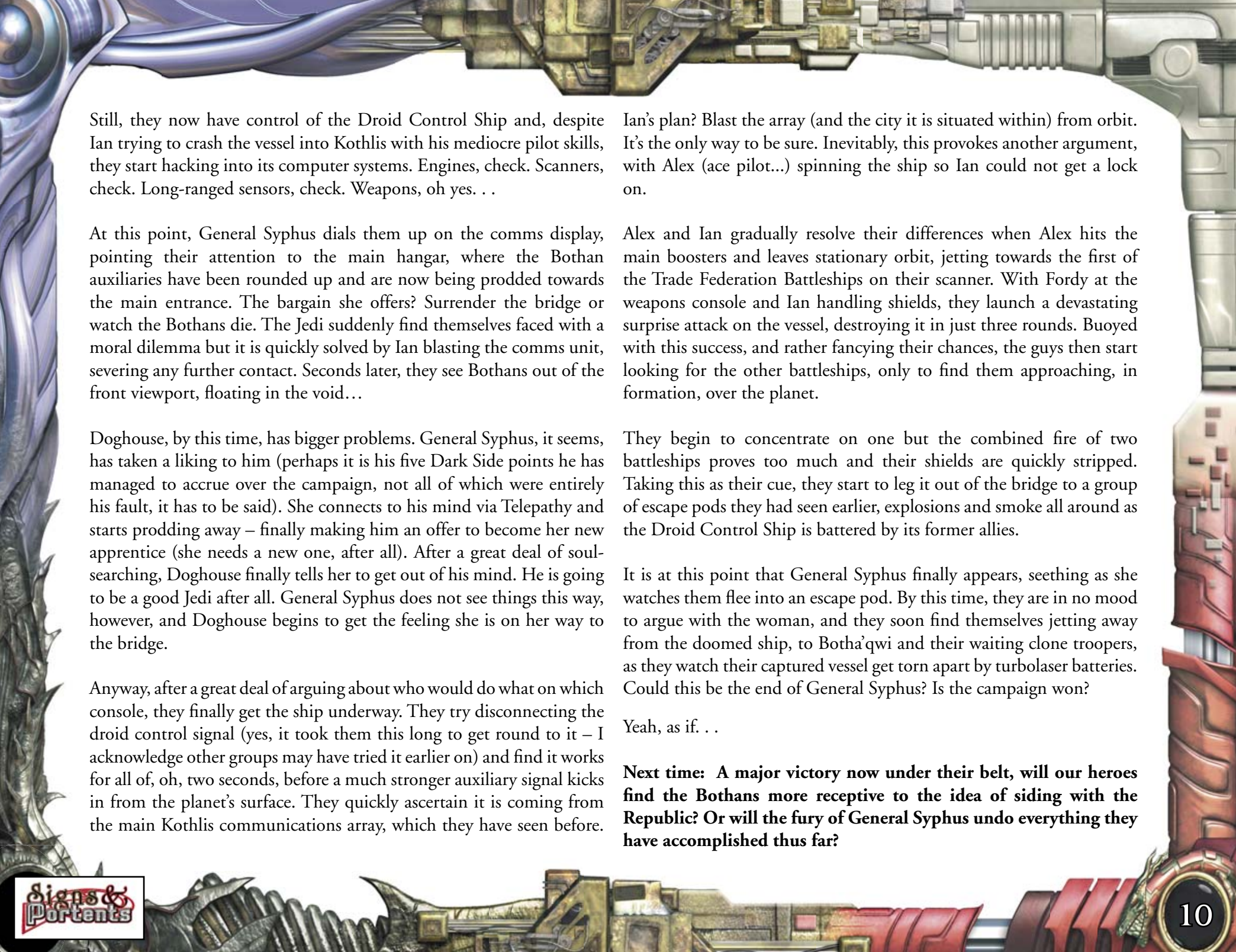
tried to tell them General Syphus was on her way. Storming into the bridge, Doghouse shouts out ‘Anyone who does not want to die, leave now!’ The Nemoidian crew (and Captain) promptly flee. All that is left are a few pilot droids, who ignore the attackers, and a single human woman, armed with blaster pistol and red lightsabre...

David (playing General Itchigo) is the first to rush in, twirling his lightsabre before realising that this woman is actually quite hard. Judicious use of her Fear power gives him a Dark Side point, but he forges on. Alex runs to the controls, with Ian close by, only to start wondering whether he can actually fly a ship this large, while Richard runs to other consoles, trying to find a communications link to Coruscant. Doghouse has other problems as he is now getting premonitions of something very powerful in the Force approaching very quickly. Yes, General Syphus is indeed on her way.

Seeing David might be out of his depth, Alex rushes the dark Jedi too and gets a Fear-induced Dark Side point for his trouble. David, beginning to tire of getting smacked around, gets angry. Very angry. Channelling the Dark Side, he launches one hell of an attack that smashes through the woman’s guard and leaves her seriously wounded. However, it seems he has over-extended himself somewhat and her riposte neatly skewers him (actually, what happened here was that she skewered him, David used a Force Point to re-roll her attack which saved him – but her second attack nailed him once more, and with no more Force Points...).

So, the General is dead. Everyone is pretty stunned, as I think they had begun to regard him as part of the furniture. Like an old sofa you have in the corner. Maybe.

Anyway, Doghouse joins Alex in the attack and, gradually, they manage to wear the dark Jedi down, finally slaying her. Alex grabs her lightsabre. Doghouse grabs David’s. So they are happy.



Still, they now have control of the Droid Control Ship and, despite Ian trying to crash the vessel into Kothlis with his mediocre pilot skills, they start hacking into its computer systems. Engines, check. Scanners, check. Long-ranged sensors, check. Weapons, oh yes. . .

At this point, General Syphus dials them up on the comms display, pointing their attention to the main hangar, where the Bothan auxiliaries have been rounded up and are now being prodded towards the main entrance. The bargain she offers? Surrender the bridge or watch the Bothans die. The Jedi suddenly find themselves faced with a moral dilemma but it is quickly solved by Ian blasting the comms unit, severing any further contact. Seconds later, they see Bothans out of the front viewport, floating in the void...

Doghouse, by this time, has bigger problems. General Syphus, it seems, has taken a liking to him (perhaps it is his five Dark Side points he has managed to accrue over the campaign, not all of which were entirely his fault, it has to be said). She connects to his mind via Telepathy and starts prodding away – finally making him an offer to become her new apprentice (she needs a new one, after all). After a great deal of soul-searching, Doghouse finally tells her to get out of his mind. He is going to be a good Jedi after all. General Syphus does not see things this way, however, and Doghouse begins to get the feeling she is on her way to the bridge.

Anyway, after a great deal of arguing about who would do what on which console, they finally get the ship underway. They try disconnecting the droid control signal (yes, it took them this long to get round to it – I acknowledge other groups may have tried it earlier on) and find it works for all of, oh, two seconds, before a much stronger auxiliary signal kicks in from the planet's surface. They quickly ascertain it is coming from the main Kothlis communications array, which they have seen before.

Ian's plan? Blast the array (and the city it is situated within) from orbit. It's the only way to be sure. Inevitably, this provokes another argument, with Alex (ace pilot...) spinning the ship so Ian could not get a lock on.

Alex and Ian gradually resolve their differences when Alex hits the main boosters and leaves stationary orbit, jetting towards the first of the Trade Federation Battleships on their scanner. With Fordy at the weapons console and Ian handling shields, they launch a devastating surprise attack on the vessel, destroying it in just three rounds. Buoyed with this success, and rather fancying their chances, the guys then start looking for the other battleships, only to find them approaching, in formation, over the planet.

They begin to concentrate on one but the combined fire of two battleships proves too much and their shields are quickly stripped. Taking this as their cue, they start to leg it out of the bridge to a group of escape pods they had seen earlier, explosions and smoke all around as the Droid Control Ship is battered by its former allies.

It is at this point that General Syphus finally appears, seething as she watches them flee into an escape pod. By this time, they are in no mood to argue with the woman, and they soon find themselves jetting away from the doomed ship, to Botha'qwi and their waiting clone troopers, as they watch their captured vessel get torn apart by turbolaser batteries. Could this be the end of General Syphus? Is the campaign won?

Yeah, as if. . .

**Next time: A major victory now under their belt, will our heroes find the Bothans more receptive to the idea of siding with the Republic? Or will the fury of General Syphus undo everything they have accomplished thus far?**

# Wandering Stars: The U.S. Marshals in OGL Wild West

By David Underwood

The history of the U.S. marshals is as old as the country they serve. By the time Wyatt Earp donned a deputy marshal's star to avenge his brothers in the wake of the Gunfight at the OK Corral; marshals had served the President, Congress and the federal courts for almost a century.

## The President's Men

The first U.S. marshals were appointed by President George Washington. Each marshal served for four years, although he could be dismissed at any time should his conduct warrant it. The post was unsalaried, the incumbent deriving income from charging fees for the services of himself and his deputies. In addition to functioning as the courts' officers by serving papers, making arrests and so forth, the marshals also administered them and each was given a budget in order to meet all their costs; from hiring premises to paying the janitor's wages. To keep him honest, a new marshal was required to post a \$20,000 bond which he would forfeit in the event of any financial improprieties on his part.

Originally tasked with expediting the legal orders of the government, the marshals soon found themselves burdened with extra tasks in the absence of any other nationwide federal infrastructure. These additional duties included the distribution of Presidential proclamations and the coordination of the national census.

The marshals and their deputies were perceived as the public face of the administration, and as such it was they

that attracted all the hostility and violence of an angry populace when they attempted to enforce unpopular legislation. Whether it was a whisky rebel, Abolitionist or Klu Klux Klan member they faced, the risk to the marshals was great, and the rewards poor.

## I Spy

During the War of 1812 with Great Britain, the marshals' responsibilities increased when they were tasked with the registration of all British nationals living in the country, and monitoring them for signs of collusion with the enemy. This was a mammoth operation and extra deputies were appointed specifically to deal with this situation. As the war progressed, the overworked lawmen were also responsible for the incarceration of POWs, the exchange of prisoners and the censorship of overseas mail.

A great deal of time and effort was expended by marshals and deputies alike in order to fulfil these tasks, but at the end of the hostilities the marshals only received a paltry seventy-five cents for each Briton registered in their district.

## Between the Wars

The marshals' responsibilities continued to expand in the years before the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861. Three areas in particular commanded their attention, placing further strain on their overstretched resources.

## All the Money That's Fit to Print

During this period there was no standard currency

in the US. Any bank with the inclination could issue its own currency. Consequently, it was child's play for counterfeiters, or coneymen, to produce and pass off counterfeit coins and notes as the real thing. One estimate suggests that at one time more than a thousand banks were issuing currency, and perhaps a third of the money in circulation by 1860 was bogus. In the absence of any other agency, the task of apprehending the counterfeiters fell to the marshals. Such operations were often time consuming and therefore of little financial reward to the marshals themselves as they were paid per conviction, not investigation. Unfortunately, they were

## First Blood

In 1794 Robert Forsyth, the first marshal for the District of Georgia, attempted to serve papers on two brothers, William and Beverley Allen. The marshal and his two deputies made their way to the brothers' location where – in order to save the Allens any embarrassment – Forsyth asked to speak to them in private. The brothers promptly fled upstairs and locked themselves in an empty room. When the bemused marshal approached the room, a single shot was fired through the door; it struck Forsyth in the head and he died instantly. His deputies arrested the brothers, but they later escaped from custody and were never punished for the killing. Marshal Forsyth was the first marshal killed in the line of duty.

not in a position to refuse any legal orders issued by their superiors.

In 1865 the US government established the Secret Service to combat counterfeiting, but initially the new agency was so small and inexperienced that the marshals continued to lend assistance in this matter until the Service found its feet.

### **Cuba or Bust**

The first half of the nineteenth century was the age of the filibuster: American mercenaries who – whether from altruistic motivations or the desire for excitement and adventure – sallied forth from the United States to participate in foreign wars and revolutions. South America was a hotbed of activity as the residents sought to cast off the yoke of Spain, and in 1837 an army of Canadian ‘Patriots’ launched an invasion attempt from American soil.

Any involvement in the affairs of a friendly sovereign nation was a violation of the neutrality laws of 1817

### **Aside From That, Mrs Lincoln...**

Ward Hill Lamon, U.S. marshal for the District of Colombia and a friend of Abraham Lincoln for 20 years, took it upon himself to protect the President during the war. It was an exasperating job because Lincoln was a fatalist, and remained blasé about his protection despite several attempts on his life.

On the fateful night that John Wilkes Booth made an unscripted appearance at Ford’s Theatre, Lamon was in Richmond at the President’s request. The marshal always maintained that he would have prevented the assassination. Failing that, he would certainly have prevented Booth’s escape. It was Lamon that transported Lincoln’s remains home to Springfield, Illinois. He resigned as a marshal less than two months later.

and ’18, and the marshals were obliged to prevent all such illegal expeditions. This was not an easy task, and the lawmen were often obliged to request military assistance when faced with a large force of armed belligerents. They also encountered difficulties during their investigations because the filibusters often enjoyed considerable sympathy and support from the public. Fugitives were often aided while evading arrest, and once in custody they could reasonably expect to be acquitted by a friendly jury. Unsurprisingly, filibusters slipped through the net and were then free to participate in the multitude of conflicts that arose in Central and South America during this period.

### **True Blue**

Those marshals that remained loyal to the Union after the outbreak of hostilities had two principal roles to play during the conflict: the arrest of traitors, and the seizure of assets intended for Confederate use. In a marked departure from pre-war procedure, marshals and their deputies frequently made arrests without warrants, and often at the instigation of local military commanders rather than the courts. Furthermore, when the accused eventually came to trial they usually faced a military court martial rather than a civil court.

During the war much of the normal legal process was suspended, not least that of habeas corpus – the right for the accused to hear the charges levelled against them in open court. The irony of this unfortunate situation was that those who sought to preserve the constitution were forced to ignore it for the duration of the conflict.

### **Go West**

With the war over, land-hungry settlers and mineral-greedy prospectors headed west, and the marshals went with them.

In newly designated territories the marshals were the only law and therefore empowered to investigate any and all crimes. As the populations in these territories grew, they elected their own administrations, town marshals

and county sheriffs; and the U.S. marshals reverted to their more traditional role of purely federal lawmen.

### **Indian Givers**

As the settlers encroached on Indian reservations, the marshals were responsible for enforcing the provisions of the Intercourse Act of 1834, especially those prohibiting the sale of liquor and guns to the natives. It was also their responsibility to investigate any crime that involved both Indians and whites, regardless of the race of the perpetrator. (Crimes between Indians fell under the jurisdiction of the tribe or tribes involved.)

Marshals were also tasked with preventing the theft of timber from Indian reservations. Wood for construction was in very short supply on the Great Plains and unscrupulous timber merchants had no qualms about sneaking onto a reservation and felling a tree or ten. Not surprisingly, the Indians were less than amused with these territorial violations and expected the law to do something about them.

Relations between the Indians and the marshals were never good; the Indians had suffered too often at the hands of corrupt agents to place too much faith in other federal employees.

### **Army Surplus**

The outlaws that travelled west did not respect anyone’s property, and so it is no surprise that they were prepared to steal from the army. Livestock proved particularly popular, but anything was fair game. As all army property was technically federal property all such thefts were investigated by the U.S. marshals.

### **Plains, Trains and Stagecoaches**

Whenever a train or stage was robbed its load of U.S. Mail was inevitably tampered with – a federal crime. Marshals had the responsibility of catching the culprits, but this was often no easy task. It was often time consuming, and therefore not much of an earner for the cash-strapped deputies. In cases that were likely to

take some time, a canny marshal would seek permission to retain a private detective. The investigator would do all the legwork, then warrants would be raised for the guilty parties for the deputies to serve.

Such criminals rarely came quietly and many deputies and members of their posses were killed and injured during arrest attempts.

### **The Cowboys**

A notorious group of desperadoes that preyed on folk on both sides of the Mexican border, this large gang (estimates range from 75 to 300 members) became a major concern for the marshals. Virgil Earp was expected to take action against them, but he was too busy raking in the money derived from his dual posts of deputy U.S. marshal and town marshal of Tombstone to risk himself against this sizeable and murderous band. Several Cowboys were killed during the Earp/Clanton feud, but their status as Cowboys was purely coincidental.

In the end, the marshals alone proved inadequate to the task of bringing the Cowboys to justice. The area they operated in was eventually deemed to be 'in rebellion' and this opened the way for the army to become involved; the Cowboys did not survive for very long after that.

### **Make That Two Chinese To Go**

The transcontinental railroad employed Chinese labourers to lay their rails. The immigrants worked for next to nothing, a trait that would not find favour with their white neighbours once the railroad released them and they were forced to seek employment elsewhere.

Such was the animosity that the industrious and clannish Chinese engendered amongst their peers, the U. S. government was obliged to prohibit further immigration of labourers for ten years, commencing in 1882. Customs collectors were responsible for enforcing the exclusion law and arranging the deportation of illegal immigrants, but they lacked the manpower to conduct

all the investigations required. The marshals took up the slack. Not only were they responsible for locating and arresting such illegals, they also had to transport their captives to the west coast and hold them until such time as they could be repatriated.

In order to save costs on the transportation side, a deal was negotiated with the railroads whereby one deputy would deputise railroad employees for the duration of the journey, and both he and his prisoners then travelled at a discounted rate. This procedure was not popular; it meant that only one marshal could make money out of each trip and – because the railroad's responsibility for the prisoners ended at their destination – there was only one man to see to the prisoners' needs while they awaited deportation. Not for the first time, cheapskates in Washington expected the marshals and their deputies to expend every effort to execute their duties, but were reluctant to foot the bill.

### **A Deputy's Lot**

On the face of it, a deputy's lot was not a happy one. While the marshal he worked for buffed a chair in the state or territorial capital, raking in the money from serving papers and other relatively harmless pursuits, it was the deputy who was at the sharp end of federal law enforcement. State and local officials seemed to delight in placing impediments in their way (this was especially true in the South once the Democrats had regained power following the Civil War); and they were severely restricted in whom they could arrest. Unlike their town or county counterparts it was very definitely a case of no warrant, no arrest. The marshals did have one useful tool in all this: John Doe warrants could be raised for specific crimes, and if a deputy could prove a suspect's guilt in said crime he could be arrested with this document, rather than obtaining another warrant from a U.S. attorney.

The pay was poor and the bean counters in Washington were apt to throw out every expense that they could – more than one deputy was dismissed for embellishing his returns. In order to earn more cash, a deputy was

often obliged to adopt more than one role; as can be seen from the Virgil Earp example above, a deputy marshal could also serve as a town marshal at the same time. He would then be in a position to pocket a percentage of any taxes levied against local businesses, in addition to fees earned from his federal work. Unfortunately, such a lawman could become too comfortable with his lot and therefore fail to pursue the more dangerous aspects of his job with any vigour.

### **Crime(busting) Doesn't Pay**

For all the responsibility they bore, and the risks that they undertook, deputy U.S. marshals were far from well paid. Unsalaries, a deputy was paid on results and any reasonable expenses incurred while executing his duties.

Deputies at Fort Smith, Arkansas received two dollars for every arrest or court paper served and six cents for every mile travelled outbound. They received ten cents per each mile of the return leg, but only when escorting a prisoner. Expenses for meals could be recouped, but only on production of a receipt.

In the event that a deputy failed to make an arrest he received nothing; and if he killed the person he was supposed to arrest he was obliged to bury him at his own expense!

To add insult to injury, a deputy was obliged to surrender a quarter of his earnings to the marshal that had employed him.

Clearly, an honest deputy was never going to become rich, though he could supplement his meagre income by claiming any reward offered by the railway or stage companies for the arrest of the criminals that plagued them.

### The Men Behind the Star

So what sort of men took on the onerous role of U.S. deputy marshal? By and large they were experienced characters – men who had seen a lot of life and had served in a variety of roles prior to donning the star: soldier, scout, muleskinner, cowboy, stock detective, or anything you can think of. It was not unusual for them to have been on the wrong side of the law, either, before becoming a deputy. No one could be under any illusions about the hardships and dangers that the job entailed, but they still took the role on. Some may have taken the job because they were tough men and it was a perfect, legal, outlet for their aggressive dispositions; others had a vested interest in the area that they policed, having family and property there; others' motives remain unclear. Whatever their motivation, these men were not averse to putting themselves in harm's way to get the job done: death in the line of duty was a common occurrence.

### They Are the Law

Despite the impediments placed in their way, there is little doubt that for anyone inclined to take the path of the lawdog, and who are more interested in bringing crooks to justice than increasing their bank balance, then the role of deputy U.S. marshal is not the worst option. They have the largest jurisdiction of any other tin star, and have the distinct advantage of having the backing of the federal government behind them. Without a doubt there will be people who will attempt to frustrate a deputy's work. Not least those individuals who bear a particular enmity for the government and will seize the opportunity to frustrate a deputy as a way of thumbing their noses at the current administration, but such obstacles are par for the course for any lawman.

Without a doubt, it is not a job for the faint-hearted: in order to succeed as a deputy U.S. marshal the would be lawman must possess that quality displayed in spades by Rooster Cogburn: True Grit.



### The Three Guardsmen

Active in the Oklahoma Territory of the 1890s, the deputy marshals dubbed The Three Guardsmen were largely responsible for wiping out organised crime in the territory. Though their activities fall just outside the so-called classic era of the Old West, they do provide good examples of the type of men that donned the star.

#### Chris Madsen

Christian Madsen was born in Denmark circa 1851. By the time he arrived in the U.S. in 1876 he was the veteran of numerous battles in Europe and North Africa. He transferred his martial prowess to the United States Cavalry, achieving the rank of sergeant before he quit the service in 1891. Madsen then accepted the post of deputy marshal, based first in El Reno, and then Guthrie, Oklahoma Territory.

#### 'Heck' Thomas

Henry Andrew Thomas was born in Georgia in 1850. During the Civil War he served with Stonewall Jackson's brigade as a courier. Before becoming a deputy marshal, Thomas served as an agent for both the Texas Express Company and the Fort Worth Detective Association. As a deputy he worked out of Fort Smith, Arkansas before moving to Oklahoma Territory. During a three year period he was personally responsible for arresting three hundred wrongdoers.

#### Bill Tilghman

Tilghman had the most varied career of The Three Guardsmen before becoming a deputy U.S. marshal. He was born in Iowa in 1854, and then moved to Kansas in 1856. First a buffalo hunter, then an army scout, Tilghman first wore a star, as a deputy sheriff, in 1877. He had a brief flirtation with the wrong side of the law before he got married and moved to Dodge City. He raised livestock near there and ran two saloons as well; he became city marshal in 1884. From Dodge he moved to Oklahoma and staked a claim near Guthrie. Following a stint as city marshal of Perry, Tilghman accepted the post of deputy U.S. marshal in 1892.

## U.S. Marshal

**Prerequisites:** Reputation +5 (good *or* bad), 4+ ranks in Knowledge (Civics), Simple Sidearms Proficiency, must be officially inducted.

**Vocation Skills:** Gather Information, Knowledge (Law), Sense Motive.

**Wealth:** Poor

**Reputation:** If the U.S. Marshal had a bad reputation, this is replaced with a good reputation equal to half his old reputation score. If the ex-black-hat ever returns to his life of crime, his reputation returns to what it was before. A U.S. Marshal who is discharged from his post immediately gains a neutral reputation, or bad if he was neutral before.

Whenever he brings in a criminal with a reputation bonus higher than his own, the U.S. Marshal gains reputation equal to half the criminal's reputation.

### Doing The Job Talent Tree

**Demand Aid:** As the Lawman ability on page 32 of OGL Wild West.

**Getting It Done:** When the U.S. Marshal spends a Luck point to get a bonus on a die roll, he gets a +6 bonus in place of the usual +4.

**Creative Accounting:** By cleverly embellishing his receipts, a U.S. Marshal can receive extra money from the government. By making a Knowledge (Civics) check with a DC equal to 30 - his reputation, the Marshal can raise his Wealth to Average for one interval. If he fails this check by 5 or more, he will be discharged for fraud. This talent ceases to operate if the Marshal stops being a Marshal.



# 101 Character Backgrounds

Suitable for characters of all fantasy games and settings

By Richard Farrese

One of the most important aspects of any character is his background. That is, the chain of events that marked the character's youth, that shaped his personality, which gave him doubts and fears and that defined his dreams and ambitions as well as so many other peculiarities of his complex psyche. After all, where would Bruce Wayne be had he never witnessed the murder of his parents?

Your character's background is as important as his personality. The events in his life that transpired before he actually set out to become an adventurer are at the core of his being, giving sense to every aspect of his personality from the way he looks at life to the way he interacts with the world about him. Furthermore, his background also explains the drive behind most of his actions and reactions. Bruce Wayne, for instance, put on the mask of the Batman because of his desire to right the wrongs of the world, having himself lost his parents to violence when he was a child. This single traumatic event shaped his personality, his drive, and his sense of justice. His background is an intricate and essential part of the person he grew up to become, and continuously fuels his ambitions.

Another interesting aspect of character background is that it also allows a Games Master to weave personalised plot twists into his campaign. A Games Master can easily insert aspects of his player characters' backgrounds into his game, and create truly unique and memorable events. These events may have profound meaning to the character whose ghosts have returned to haunt him, but they also affect all members of the adventuring party. If Han Solo had not owed money to Jabba the Hutt,

his companions would never have had to rescue him from Jabba's palace - and both Empire Strikes Back and Return of the Jedi would have been different movies.

Of course, not all backgrounds are as dramatic as Batman's or as central to the story's plot as Han Solo's. However, in a role-playing game, where the player characters are the heroes of the story, background is as important as in any novel, movie, or comic. Background can also be an asset to a Games Master who wishes to create memorable non-player characters. The Joker and Two-Face would never have become psychotic villains had they not suffered the traumas that turned them into what they became.

In role-playing games character background is, alas, frequently neglected because Games Masters and players often do not have time to create fully realised character histories before the start of a game session or campaign. So, for all of you who do not have the time or energy to come up with an intriguing hook in your character's past, here are 101 ready to use backgrounds for your player and non-player characters.



*This troll used to work as a clown.*

At first glance, some of these backgrounds will seem to fit certain character classes or races better than others (i.e. the soldier who became a slave who became a gladiator). Never be afraid to give an unusual background to your character.

A wizard forced into gladiatorial combat when he was younger (perhaps even before he learned the magical arts) could be an interesting twist to the usual gladiator warrior background idea. It could also explain your wizard's high Strength or Dexterity score as well as some combat related skills or feats he may have picked up.

A cleric wrongfully accused of murder and who escaped the law, thus becoming an outlaw, can be just as fun - especially if his ecclesiastical peers also believe he is a criminal. He would not only be wanted by the authorities but would also be banned from most temples of his deity. Of course, he would still retain the favour of his god since the deity would know the cleric is innocent.

A dwarf pirate, a halfling former highwayman, or a half-orc caught in the complex game of intrigue between feuding families could also be fun to play. There are a vast number of other unusual background/race combinations. Do not hesitate to experiment with or add to these ideas, or even mix two or three of them together.

## Simple Backgrounds

### 1. Peasant's Child

You are the child of a peasant, either freeman or serf, and are at home on a farm or ranch. Chances are you are curious about the world outside the community in which you grew up and fascinated by the wondrous things you discover on your adventures (and perhaps even overly proud of your status as an adventurer).

### 2. Merchant's Child

You are the child of a merchant who owns a modest but successful shop in a small town or city. You are at home in settlements resembling your hometown but know next to nothing about the wilderness and its ways. Like your parents, you are probably a charismatic individual who prefers to avoid the dark forests and uncivilised mountains.

### 3. Artisan's Child

You are the child of an artisan (any kind) and lived in a city or small town (or very close to one). You were trained in your father's craft but decided that the profession, although noble, was not for you after all.

### 4. Warrior's Child

You are the child of a warrior, probably one that served in your hometown's militia or as a guard for one of its nobles. You admired your warrior parent all your life, and he (or she) was the inspiration that drove you to become an adventurer.

### 5. Landowner's Child

You are the child of reasonably wealthy landowners and may inherit your parents' estate someday. In the meantime, you set out to prove that your family is good enough to be recognised as a noble one (or take some other step up the social ladder).

### 6. Knight's Child

You are the child of a knight who swore allegiance to one of the local rulers. You may even be a descendant of a long line of knights and will do anything to continue this proud tradition.

### 7. Noble's Child

You are the child of nobles and very proud of your family, its history, and perhaps even what it stands for. You became an adventurer to make your parents proud and prove to them (and perhaps to yourself) that you are worthy of their noble heritage.

### 8. Adopted Peasant's Child

Your parents died when you were an infant and your aunt and uncle, who had many children of their own, raised you. Most of your 'siblings' made you feel as though you did not belong in the family, so you were glad to say your farewells when you set out to prove that you were better than the lot of them. (See also number 1.)

### 9. Adopted Artisan's Child

You never knew your real parents and were raised by your aunt and uncle, who never could produce a child of their own. To them, you were all that mattered and they gave you everything a child could have. Still, there is a void in your life and you wish you would have known, even for a little while, your biological parents. (See also number 3.)

### 10. Adopted Noble's Child

You were born into the nobility but your mother died while giving birth to you. You never knew your father, who died at sea when you were an infant, so your grandfather raised you alone. He gave you everything you ever demanded, but when he died his estate passed on to your uncle, who forced you to leave the premises. (See also number 7.)

### 11. Kitchen Help

You spent your adolescence working as a cook's helper for either the local tavern, a large inn some distance from your hometown, a major local temple, or a nobleman's mansion. Chances are you know how to clean, prepare, and cook any game into a delicacy people would actually pay good money for.



### 12. Serving Boy/Maid

You worked as a serving boy/girl at a local tavern or large inn some distance from your hometown. There, you learned to always keep your ears open, but more importantly when to keep your mouth shut. You are probably skilled at gathering information.

### 13. Stable Hand

As a youth, you worked in the stables of a popular inn, your hometown's militia, or a noble's castle. You are at ease with horses and enjoy caring for them. You are probably also a skilled rider.

### 14. Lumberjack

During the winter months of your youth, you worked as a lumberjack. You are at ease in the forest and rarely lost in it. Chances are you can wield an axe better than the average person.

### 15. Trapper/Hunter

You were trained as a trapper or hunter. You are at home in the wilderness, you know how to use a rope, and have learned a thing or two about animal life, which you greatly admire and respect.

### 16. Librarian

In your youth, you worked as a librarian for the local temple or another place housing a library. You enjoyed the quiet solicitude of the librarian's life and the opportunity to become knowledgeable in many different fields, but you felt you were missing out on real life and decided to become an adventurer.

### 17. Noble's Servant

You worked for a noble family, tending their gardens, cleaning their manor or castle, serving their meals, helping them dress, and/or repairing their buildings. You know when to smile politely, when to say 'yes, sir,' and when to look away.

### 18. Carpenter's Apprentice

You were trained as a carpenter, either by your father or someone else in your community. You learned how to raise solid structures and know how to handle a hammer (which can be quite useful at times).

### 19. Fisherman

You were born and raised on a coastal settlement and trained as a fisherman, either by one of your parents or someone else in the community. You know how to handle small boats, how to read weather patterns, and perhaps even how to navigate by the stars.

### 20. City Guard

Before you set out to become an adventurer, you served as a city guard in your hometown or in a larger city close to it. While in the militia, you learned local law, honed your combat skills, and perhaps even arrested a criminal or two – who may hold a grudge against you should they ever again cross your path.

## Uncommon Backgrounds

### 21. Barbarian's Child

You hail from a barbarian tribe and have embraced your people's traditions and ways, which others often do not understand. You are proud of your heritage and would go to great lengths to help preserve your people's lifestyle.

### 22. Cleric's Child

You are the child of a cleric and the local temple has always been your home. Though you may or may not be as devoted a follower of your parents' deity as they are, you harbour a deep respect for the god and its priesthood.

### 23. Wizard's Child

You are the child of a wizard and always feel at home in libraries and laboratories. Though you may or may not have developed the ability to wield magical forces yourself, you have learned many of the intricacies associated with the arcane art.

### 24. Mercenary's Child

You are the child of a mercenary and visited a lot of strange places in your youth. You never had a home, but your parents always provided you with everything you ever needed. You retain the sense of wanderlust from your youth.

### 25. Caravan's Child

You are the child of a merchant who owns a caravan or the child of someone working for such a person (a guard, a cart driver, etc.). In your youth, you visited many places and travelled halfway around the world. You want to see some of those places again.

### 26. Troubadour's Child

You are the child of entertainers (acrobats, poets, musicians, actors, etc.), and travelled most of your life, never staying in one place for long. Like your parents, you are at home anywhere and make friends easily.

### 27. Illegitimate Child

You are the illegitimate child of a local noble, who may or may not be aware of your existence. Because this noble never married your parent, you grew up a commoner and lost the heritage that, in your heart, should be rightfully yours.

### 28. Abandoned Orphan

You were abandoned at a young age and have no idea who your parents were. You lived as a rural vagabond, moving from small town to small town and working on various farmsteads for most of your childhood and adolescence.

### 29. City Orphan

You have lived in the streets of a major city for as long as you can remember. You never knew your parents and have no clue as to who they were. You are a resourceful individual who knows every dark alley and rat hole of the city in which you grew up.



*Even the mightiest dread warrior grew up somewhere...*

### 30. Squire

Although not necessarily of noble blood or the child of a knight yourself, you served under a knight in your youth. During that time, you learned to honour the knightly virtues, even though you may not have followed the path of knighthood.

### 31. Royal Soldier

From a very young age, you were trained as a soldier and served the rulers of your kingdom in their personal guard. You fought in various battles, perhaps even in wars - traumatic experiences that either hardened your heart to violence or sent you on a path of peace.

### 32. Temple Guard

You spent most of your adolescence guarding one of the local temples of your community. You either learned to respect the cult you served or decided that the god and its clergy were a bunch of liars and thieves who did not deserve your respect.

### 33. Parental Debt

Your parents owed an important sum of money to a banker, rich landowner, merchant, or noble. Since they were unable to repay him, they agreed to work for the man. However, they are being treated unfairly and have very little freedom - in fact, they are almost slaves. You set out to raise enough money to clear their debt, and thus buy back their freedom.

### 34. Initiate

You served as an initiate in one of the local temples. While there you learned the ins and outs of the cult and became quite learned in the faith. You still adhere to this religion and often pay tribute to its god.

### 35. Evil Wizard's Aide

Although you may not have the gift yourself, you served a wizard in your youth and picked up quite a few skills from him. The man, however, was evil and made your life a living hell so you were glad to escape from him. Your experience has left you naturally wary of arcane

spell-casters in general, and you have yet to learn to trust one.

### 36. Sewer Rat

You grew up in the sewers of a large city and the labyrinthine underground has always been your home. Although poor, dirty and dressed in rags, you made a good life for yourself there until you finally decided to leave.

### 37. Thief in Training

You were raised or trained by one of the city's greatest pickpockets (according to him) and learned how to live by your wits among the throngs of the city. You committed many thefts in your time and may either be proud or ashamed of them - in which case you could be repentant and dedicated to right the wrongs you once committed.

### 38. Mason's Apprentice

You were trained as a mason, either by your father or by someone else in your community. You have a good head for engineering and solving mathematical problems. You may also be stronger than average, having spent many years bricklaying.

### 39. Sailor

You spent most of your youth serving aboard the ship of a local trader, nobleman, or the navy of your kingdom. You are at home on the great seas but have eaten so much fish you vowed never to taste one again.

### 40. Former Thug

As a child, you were part of a band of thugs in the city where you grew up. You lived by your fists and to this day believe the strongest wolf should lead the pack. Although you came to regret the felonies you once committed, you are still a boorish and intimidating individual.

## Exotic Backgrounds

### 41. Wild Child

You grew up in a cave by the hillside or in an abandoned shack in the woods with your mother, who was feared as a witch by the neighbouring population. You are at home in the wilderness and fail to see the point behind good manners and social graces.

### 42. Outcast

Your parents were cast out from their people and have never been allowed to return home. Although you are aware of the reasons why they were banished, you believe they were sentenced wrongly and want to prove their innocence (even though they may have passed away). One day, you will clear your parents' name and be allowed to return home.

### 43. Household Slave

You grew up as a slave working in a nobleman's manor - cooking, serving food, cleaning, etc. Although you were well treated, you were glad to finally buy your freedom and start a life for yourself. Now, you want to help slaves win their freedom.

### 44. Field Slave

When you were a child, you were kidnapped by raiders and sold into slavery. You then became the property of a rich and evil man who treated his slaves badly and forced them to work in his fields. You escaped, and vowed you would never be owned by anyone again - but you know your 'master' wants you back.

### 45. Galley Slave

You were taken away from your parents by a band of pirates. For years, you were chained down and forced to follow the cadence of a drum as you rowed and rowed. Taking advantage of an attack on the ship, you were able to escape. You swore you would one day have your revenge on these pirates.

#### 46. Gladiatorial Slave

You are the child of a slave and grew up in a gladiatorial school. There, you learned to use exotic weapons and peculiar pieces of armour. You also learned to draw enough blood to please a crowd. Although your skills allowed you to survive this long, the life of a gladiator was not for you, and you were happy to finally win your freedom and move on with your life.

#### 47. Pirate's Child

You are either the child of an infamous pirate or one of his lesser-known crewmates. You lived aboard a ship all your life and are at ease on the high seas. Even though you may have taken another path, you still respect the 'profession' and fail to see piracy as something to be frowned upon - after all, it takes great courage to be a pirate.

#### 48. Sea Rat

You are the adopted child of a pirate and his crew. You developed solid bonds with these pirates and mourned them when the royal navy seized the crew and hung every one you knew. Since then, you have never fully trusted soldiers and government officials.

#### 49. Former Highwayman

You were part of a band of highwaymen that preyed on caravans, rich nobles and peasants alike. Since then, you grew up to realise the errors of your former ways and every day you work to correct the mistakes committed in your youth.

#### 50. Druidic Circle Orphan

You were abandoned in the forest when you were an infant and adopted by the members of a druidic community. You learned to respect nature as well as the men and women who dedicate their lives to protect it. Though you may not have become a druid yourself, you do your part to preserve the environment.

#### 51. Monk's Adopted Child

You never knew your real parents and grew up in a

monastery, where you have always been happy among the kindly monks who became friends, teachers and parents to you. Now, you are eager to see the world for yourself.

#### 52. Thieves Guild Protégé

You were raised and trained by members of an important thieves guild from a major city. You learned their craft, committed many crimes, and may even be wanted by the local authorities. You have since then moved on from that life, but you know that your past actions, or perhaps even some of your former associates, will one day cause you great trouble.

#### 53. Gypsy's Child

You hail from a gypsy clan and have been a wanderer all your life. Although you have left your tribe, you continue to follow their strange traditions and way of life.

#### 54. Evil Priest's Child

Your father was the cleric of an evil deity and always treated you fairly - as fairly as an evil man could - but you grew up to hate his god and clergy. You were glad to leave home and hope never to see your father or his priestly friends again.

#### 55. Witch's Child

You are the child of an evil witch who ceaselessly abused and tormented you. You grew up to hate your mother and learned to fear her kind. When you were old enough, you ran away from home. You now wish your path will never cross your mother's again.

#### 56. Sewer Society

You hail from a secret underground society living in the sewers of an important city. Your people, although good-hearted, live in poverty and are considered a nuisance and a shame by the other residents of the city. In fact, they are not even recognised as a group or protected by the local law. In your heart, you know they deserve better and wish you could do something concrete to change their plight.

#### 57. Adopted by a Different Race

You never knew your real parents and were adopted by a race different than your own. Although you look nothing like those who raised you, you embraced the culture and attitudes of your adoptive race (i.e. you are a dwarf but act and think as an elf or a halfling).

#### 58. Humanoid Tribe Protégé

You were abandoned by your parents and raised by a tribe of orcs, goblinoids, or other 'non-standard' humanoids (though you are not one of them). You learned to respect the ways of your adopted tribe and harbour a deep respect for their kind.

#### 59. Famous Gladiator

You have been a gladiator for as long as you can remember and you delight in entertaining crowds. Although you may have been a slave before, you have long ago bought your freedom and continue to risk your life in gladiatorial combat for gold, glory, and the thrill of it all. Your face is well known in the town where you usually fight.

#### 60. Animal Companion

When you were very young, you befriended an animal. This animal has always been your friend, and you were there for it as much as it was there for you. You would go to great lengths to protect your companion and all members of its species.

### Mysterious Backgrounds

#### 61. Foreign Child

You hail from a land far, far away but have been unfortunate enough to walk through a magical portal that brought you to this foreign place where you became, almost by obligation, an adventurer. None here knows how you can return whence you came, but you are dedicated to finding a way home.

#### 62. Unknown Parents

You never knew your real parents and everyone around

you always refused to talk about them. From their evasive comments and whispered conversations, you gathered that your parents were notoriously feared. One day, you might learn why.

### 63. Lost Parent

One or both of your parents (or perhaps a sibling or other relative) disappeared in a desolate wilderness area, at sea or in a far away land. When you were old enough, you set off to find them - and that desire fuels every moment of your adventuring life.

### 64. Wrongfully Accused

When you were younger, you were accused of a heinous crime. Although you were proven innocent, the people in your hometown still treated you as if you were a criminal. You felt that you would never be welcomed there so you left, vowing never to return.

### 65. Murder in the Family

Someone in your family was murdered. The murderer was never found, but you are driven by the desire to uncover the person responsible for the crime and hope to discover the motivation behind it.

### 66. Strange Birthmark

You were born with a strange birthmark with a distinctive shape (eye, tree, bear paw, dragon, etc.). You know this mark is significant, for many told you to hide it, but you have yet to figure out what it means.

### 67. Former Evil Doer

You committed some great evil when you were younger, perhaps even murder. You have seen the errors of your ways since then and have dedicated your life to truth, justice and the protection of the innocent. However, no matter what you do, you know what you have done will one day return to haunt you.

### 68. Former Thief

You were once part of an important thieves guild. One day, you refused to steal an artefact from the temple of



a deity you respect. When you later learned that other members of the guild had stolen it anyway, you stole it back from them and returned it to its owners. You have been on the run ever since.

### 69. Sentenced to Death

You were tried and sentenced for a crime you may or may not have committed. The sentence was death, but you managed to escape before the execution. Now, you are on the run and desperate to prove you are innocent (or fabricate evidence to that effect).

### 70. Witch Fire

When you were a child, your mother was accused of vile witchcraft and sentenced to death. She was burnt alive

in front of your very eyes, but you were too young, too weak and too terrified to stop it. Shortly after, you left your home vowing never to return.

### 71. Amnesiac

You do not know who you are or from where you came from. You do not even remember your parents or if you had any siblings. Your past is a total mystery - one that you will gradually uncover...

### 72. The Sins of the Father

You are the child of a man who was sentenced to death. For some reason, the authorities that executed him are now looking for you. Perhaps they believe you know something that might put them (or the kingdom) in jeopardy; perhaps they simply wish to exterminate your entire family. Whatever their reasons, they are hunting you down.

### 73. Family Quest

One of your parents was a former adventurer. On his deathbed he whispered a name to you (a name that you had never heard before). Since then, you have been obsessed with finding out what this name means (is it a person, a place?) and you strive to understand what your parent wanted you to uncover from this single clue.

### 74. A Familiar Face

On several occasions, you noticed someone following you. You saw this person many times, but you never spoke to him. On the rare instances you tried to approach him, he disappeared. Now, you are wondering what this person wants with you, and why he keeps stalking you.

### 75. Stolen Heirloom

You hail from an ancient family that has lost its proudest symbol or talisman (i.e. an amulet, a bracelet, a royal crown, a great sword, a mithral breastplate, a golden rod, an ancient ring, a wooden totem, etc.). This heirloom, undoubtedly magical, has been in your family for generations before an unknown party stole it. When

you set off to discover the world, you vowed to recover your family's stolen heritage.

#### **76. Great Secret**

Someone close to you died in your arms. With his dying breath he revealed the location of a hidden treasure, which only you know about. Since then, many strangers have been following you, and some may even have tried to capture you. You know they want to know the location of this treasure, and you realise that you cannot venture there without being followed... One day, however, you will.

#### **77. Blood Feud**

You hail from a rich or noble family that has been feuding with an important clan over an intricate affair for decades, possibly even centuries. Though you do not grasp all the intricate details of the feud, you grew up to hate your family's blood-enemy. Before you do anything drastic, however, you decided to shed some light on the affair and now struggle to uncover the truth behind it.

#### **78. Mistaken Identity**

You resemble someone that is notoriously famous or infamous (a prince, an evil wizard, a sadistic warlord, etc.) and, for good or for ill, people often treat you as if you were that person. You have yet to discover who that person is, but one day you will find out.

#### **79. Bounty of the Hunters**

When you were a young soldier, you disobeyed your lord and showed mercy to a man who had been sentenced to death. You put your life at risk to liberate this man, whom you believed innocent of the crimes he was accused of. Your former lord offered a reward for your capture and you are now desperate to avoid the many bounty hunters who, on several occasions, have almost captured you.

#### **80. Secret Heir**

You were raised by peasants and lived in the country for most of your life. Unbeknown to you, however, is the fact that the people who raised you were not your

real parents, but rather loyal servants of your country's monarch. In truth, you are the child of this monarch and the heir to the kingdom. Many people would pay dearly to see you dead.

## **Fantastic Backgrounds**

#### **81. Royal Heir**

You are the child and heir of a great ruler. One day, you will inherit your parent's country, but in the meantime you want to prove to the world (and to yourself) that you deserve to be crowned king. You travel in disguise, without bodyguards or councillors, but with friends and companions instead.

#### **82. Prophesised Birth**

Your birth was prophesised and you are destined to do great things. Although you do not yet know what you are meant to do, you suspect that one day you will face great adversity - and that your future actions may have a direct impact on the fate of the entire world.

#### **83. Slayer's Child**

You hail from a long line of 'slayers' (demon, dragon, giant, orc, or some other race) and your family is reputed for its many great deeds. Your forefathers offset the plans of many evil minions in their time, and you gladly continue in this proud family tradition. However, you fear that you will one day pay the ultimate price for your family's actions as well as your own.

#### **84. Last Heir of a Fallen House**

You are the last heir of a noble family murdered by assassins or slaughtered in a brutal raid or war. Although you lost everyone and everything you ever loved, you vowed to one day restore your family's proud name. You may even be obsessed with revenge or desperate to discover the people responsible for your family's death.

#### **85. Deal with a Devil**

When you were a child, your family perished in a fire from which you almost lost your life. However, while in

the inferno, you prayed and a devil (or another evil and powerful creature) answered. The fiend agreed to save your life, but in return you promised to do him a great service later. When the times come, he will call upon you. You dread this day.

#### **86. Blessed by the Gods**

When you were an infant, you survived an accident that should have killed you. Since then, the people in your tribe or village are convinced that a god has blessed you and that you are, somehow, destined for greatness. You hope not to disappoint them, but you suspect there is nothing special about you.



### 87. Out of Time

You hail not from another place, but from an entirely different time. You were born and raised over three hundred years in the future and you are familiar with some of the major events currently unfolding - events you once considered history. Now, history is being made before your very eyes, and you are an active participant in it. One day, perhaps, you will find a way back to your own timeline.

### 88. Protector of a Sacred Place or Relic

The protector of a sacred place or relic raised you. Like your parent or mentor, you played the role of guardian before setting off on adventure. One day, if this place or relic becomes endangered, you may be called upon to resume your guardianship role - at least for a while.

### 89. Special Birthright

A minor artefact was given to you when your parents passed away. You have yet to discover its powers, but, like your father and grandfather before you, you will one day be forced to use this relic to oppose great evil. You do not look forward to this day.

### 90. Sacred Mission

You were given an important mission by a high-ranking member of the religion you follow. This quest is not one you can complete easily or right away, for it will take you years of research and investigation to uncover the clues that will eventually lead you to the lost temple or sacred relic you were asked to find.

### 91. Political Agenda

Your family has always played an important role in your tribe or hometown politics, or perhaps even at the court of a king or queen. You inherited your family's ambition and decided you would one day take the place of the current ruler - and would gladly oppose him should he show any sign of weakness or if he proves to be unjust or cruel.

### 92. Dragon's Adopted Child

You were raised by a good dragon (or another highly intelligent and powerful creature) and learned to think as one. You came to respect dragons for the cunningly intelligent creatures that they are, but also learned to avoid, and perhaps even dread, the evil ones.

### 93. Scarred

When you were a child, your family was attacked and you bear the marks of this event. Although you do not know the warlord responsible for the brutal raid that killed your parents and scarred your face, you remember his insignia. One day, you will have your revenge.

### 94. Famous Adventurer's Child

You are the child of a famous adventurer and your father's name and reputation precedes yours. However, that is the least of your problems since a powerful enemy is seeking revenge upon your father - and that enemy plans to use you as bait...

### 95. Great Handicap

You were born with an important physical handicap, one that impairs your strength, dexterity, or stamina. Because of this, you stand or walk in a peculiar manner and are easily recognised, but you learned to cope with it and have developed other talents. Your magical aptitude is unsurpassed.

### 96. Raised by Animals

Your parents died in the wilderness when you were an infant and an animal or a pack of animals (such as wolves) raised you. You developed a keen affinity with this type of animal and have never been comfortable in 'civilised' settlements. You may even have a speech impediment.

### 97. Blast from the Past

You were born five hundred years ago and somehow travelled to the future. Instead of seeking a way to return home, however, you are determined to uncover the cause of your people's downfall, which, as you learned, happened hundreds of years ago. Perhaps one day, if you return to your own time, you will be able to change history and save your people.

### 98. Mythical Beast Companion

You once saved the life of a magical beast. Although you have little control over it and sometimes spend weeks or months without seeing it, this beast has been your truest friend and greatest ally.

### 99. Boon from a Greater Power

Long ago, your mother sacrificed her life to aid a greater power (a god or another powerful entity). Now, this entity feels it owes you something (since you are your mother's heir). One day, it will repay you.

### 100. Unearthly Advisor

A guardian angel (e.g. a ghost, a fey, a creature from another plane, etc.) has taken an interest in you. Although this 'angel' rarely (if ever) intervenes directly on your behalf, it does give you counsel - its advice may not always be perfect, and it may have its own mysterious agenda, but it is there should you need it.

### 101. Godly Parent

You are the product of the union between a mortal and a god. Although you inherited little (if any) of your godly parent's unearthly powers, you feel you are destined for a better life, and perhaps even believe that you deserve a place alongside your godly parent. However, this parent may not be too keen to accept you among its kind, and may even see you as a potential threat.

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# CODENAME: ARMOURED FURY

## PART 2

BY RICHARD FORD

Thrower ground his fist into the comms panel. He found it difficult to suppress the list of choice words that were coming to mind.

'Sorry Sir, can you repeat,' he said through gritted teeth.

'I've made it clear Thrower,' answered Matiz. 'Bug activity on the surface is too busy for us to make an immediate extraction. Just sit tight until we can send another ship. We've monitored your immediate vicinity and it all seems quiet enough. Just relax and enjoy the amenities. It shouldn't be more than a few days.'

'With all due respect, Sir—'

'This conversation is over Lieutenant. I can't risk any pilots or MI trying to make an extraction under bombardment. You know as well as I do it's not worth it. Make yourself comfortable. You're in for the long haul. Matiz out.'

Thrower stood back from the comms panel trying to calm himself before he lost it and smashed the desk to pieces. He turned, looking for the nearest vent for his ire. Doctor Scialli stood watching, an open grin of disdain smearing his smug features.

'So tell me again Scialli, why has this facility been on silent running for the past week?'

'As I've already explained,' replied Scialli in his nasal brogue, 'we had no idea that our comms unit was unable to pick up incoming transmissions. We didn't even know you were trying to contact us.'

'So my men and I risked our lives to come rescue

you for nothing?'

'It would certainly appear so.'

Thrower clenched his fist at Scialli's nonchalant attitude. He was a typical civilian, didn't give a damn about the body politic, especially the military. He didn't have the spine to sign up and become a citizen but he was quite happy for others to risk their lives and keep his ass out of the fire.

'I expect there to be a full investigation,' Thrower said, not even attempting to disguise his anger. 'Heads will roll over this one.'

Scialli remained silent. Not even Thrower's menacing tone could wipe the smile from his face.

'If you'd like a tour, Lieutenant,' said a female voice. Thrower glanced to his side, suddenly forgetting the tirade he was about to launch himself into as he saw a sleek figure smiling at him. 'I'd be happy to show you and your men our facility.'

Thrower was lost for words.

'I'm Doctor Hendricks,' said the woman, stepping forward and holding out her slender hand.

Thrower took it and gave a curt smile of greeting. Hendricks beamed back at him.

'If you'd like to follow me, we'll collect your men and begin the tour.'

Thrower followed the doctor as she left, unable to stop himself noticing the way her white lab coat clung to her wholesome figure. Maybe I do need some R&R, thought Thrower as he strode after her, instantly

forgetting all about Doctor Scialli.

Thrower's men were waiting idly in the corridor. Like Thrower, they had already stripped off their bulky armour and stored it in the facility's spacious hangar. As Thrower and the Doctor approached, Sergeant Kains quickly snapped to attention, the rest of the men slavishly following suit.

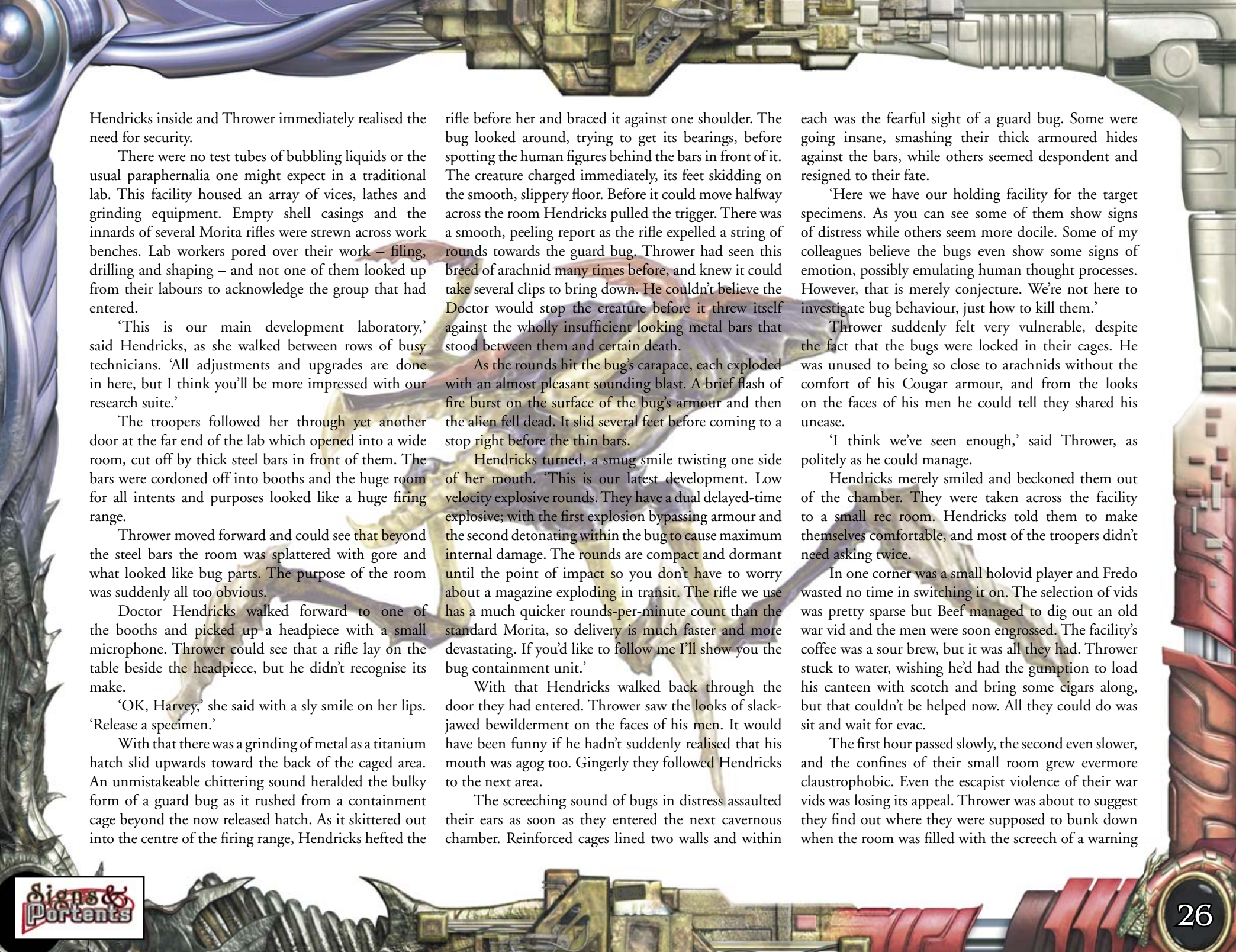
'At ease,' said Thrower. 'It looks like we'll be here a while. May as well make the most of it. Doctor Hendricks here has agreed to show us around.'

Thrower instantly regretted his statement as he saw the lascivious looks on the faces of his troopers. Luckily the Doctor seemed not to notice, simply smiling cheerfully and leading them along the stark metal corridor.

As they proceeded through the maze of passages, Doctor Hendricks began her commentary, seemingly oblivious to the hulking visitors hooked on her every word.

'The facility itself is completely enclosed and self sustaining. The outer walls are two metres thick and consist of a plascrete-titanium alloy. We're completely soundproofed from the outside, which is probably why none of us could hear the fire fight you were in before you arrived.'

Hendricks reached a sealed metal door and swiped her ID card along a small control panel. With a hiss of pressure valves the door slid upwards, revealing a huge laboratory within. Thrower and his men followed



Hendricks inside and Thrower immediately realised the need for security.

There were no test tubes of bubbling liquids or the usual paraphernalia one might expect in a traditional lab. This facility housed an array of vices, lathes and grinding equipment. Empty shell casings and the innards of several Morita rifles were strewn across work benches. Lab workers pored over their work – filing, drilling and shaping – and not one of them looked up from their labours to acknowledge the group that had entered.

‘This is our main development laboratory,’ said Hendricks, as she walked between rows of busy technicians. ‘All adjustments and upgrades are done in here, but I think you’ll be more impressed with our research suite.’

The troopers followed her through yet another door at the far end of the lab which opened into a wide room, cut off by thick steel bars in front of them. The bars were cordoned off into booths and the huge room for all intents and purposes looked like a huge firing range.

Thrower moved forward and could see that beyond the steel bars the room was splattered with gore and what looked like bug parts. The purpose of the room was suddenly all too obvious.

Doctor Hendricks walked forward to one of the booths and picked up a headpiece with a small microphone. Thrower could see that a rifle lay on the table beside the headpiece, but he didn’t recognise its make.

‘OK, Harvey,’ she said with a sly smile on her lips. ‘Release a specimen.’

With that there was a grinding of metal as a titanium hatch slid upwards toward the back of the caged area. An unmistakeable chittering sound heralded the bulky form of a guard bug as it rushed from a containment cage beyond the now released hatch. As it skittered out into the centre of the firing range, Hendricks hefted the

rifle before her and braced it against one shoulder. The bug looked around, trying to get its bearings, before spotting the human figures behind the bars in front of it. The creature charged immediately, its feet skidding on the smooth, slippery floor. Before it could move halfway across the room Hendricks pulled the trigger. There was a smooth, peeling report as the rifle expelled a string of rounds towards the guard bug. Thrower had seen this breed of arachnid many times before, and knew it could take several clips to bring down. He couldn’t believe the Doctor would stop the creature before it threw itself against the wholly insufficient looking metal bars that stood between them and certain death.

As the rounds hit the bug’s carapace, each exploded with an almost pleasant sounding blast. A brief flash of fire burst on the surface of the bug’s armour and then the alien fell dead. It slid several feet before coming to a stop right before the thin bars.

Hendricks turned, a smug smile twisting one side of her mouth. ‘This is our latest development. Low velocity explosive rounds. They have a dual delayed-time explosive; with the first explosion bypassing armour and the second detonating within the bug to cause maximum internal damage. The rounds are compact and dormant until the point of impact so you don’t have to worry about a magazine exploding in transit. The rifle we use has a much quicker rounds-per-minute count than the standard Morita, so delivery is much faster and more devastating. If you’d like to follow me I’ll show you the bug containment unit.’

With that Hendricks walked back through the door they had entered. Thrower saw the looks of slack-jawed bewilderment on the faces of his men. It would have been funny if he hadn’t suddenly realised that his mouth was agog too. Gingerly they followed Hendricks to the next area.

The screeching sound of bugs in distress assaulted their ears as soon as they entered the next cavernous chamber. Reinforced cages lined two walls and within

each was the fearful sight of a guard bug. Some were going insane, smashing their thick armoured hides against the bars, while others seemed despondent and resigned to their fate.

‘Here we have our holding facility for the target specimens. As you can see some of them show signs of distress while others seem more docile. Some of my colleagues believe the bugs even show some signs of emotion, possibly emulating human thought processes. However, that is merely conjecture. We’re not here to investigate bug behaviour, just how to kill them.’

Thrower suddenly felt very vulnerable, despite the fact that the bugs were locked in their cages. He was unused to being so close to arachnids without the comfort of his Cougar armour, and from the looks on the faces of his men he could tell they shared his unease.

‘I think we’ve seen enough,’ said Thrower, as politely as he could manage.

Hendricks merely smiled and beckoned them out of the chamber. They were taken across the facility to a small rec room. Hendricks told them to make themselves comfortable, and most of the troopers didn’t need asking twice.

In one corner was a small holo vid player and Fredo wasted no time in switching it on. The selection of vids was pretty sparse but Beef managed to dig out an old war vid and the men were soon engrossed. The facility’s coffee was a sour brew, but it was all they had. Thrower stuck to water, wishing he’d had the gumption to load his canteen with scotch and bring some cigars along, but that couldn’t be helped now. All they could do was sit and wait for evac.

The first hour passed slowly, the second even slower, and the confines of their small room grew evermore claustrophobic. Even the escapist violence of their war vids was losing its appeal. Thrower was about to suggest they find out where they were supposed to bunk down when the room was filled with the screech of a warning

klaxon. A small red light in one corner of the room winked on and off in time to the klaxon's grating beat.

As his men jumped to their feet Thrower was already at the door. Before he opened it he fingered the holstered Peacemaker pistol at his side and wished he had refused Doctor Scialli's demand that they remove their Cougar armour.

He opened the door and the whining sound of the klaxon took on a different timbre as its whine echoed down the corridor. As he stepped out there was a sudden crackle from the internal comms system as someone attempted to sound a message.

'Evacuate! All facility personnel evacuate!' came the beleaguered cry. There was a sudden crackle and then a high-pitched scream of pain reverberated from the corridor's speakers.

'One of the guard bugs must have escaped,' shouted Thrower over the din of the alarm. 'The rest of you get to the hangar and get suited up. I'll head to the bug containment unit and see if I can help any survivors.'

'But Lieutenant, without your armour what can you do?' asked Kains.

'I have to try, and time is short, Sergeant. People are dying. Get to the hangar as quick as you can, get suited up and come find me.'

With that, Thrower headed north along the corridor, safe in the knowledge he would not have to repeat his orders to the Sergeant.

As Thrower moved through the maze of corridors there was another crackle as the internal comms was switched on once more. This time there was no cry for help, only a cry of pain and the squeal of bugs, as one of the facility's personnel was torn apart.

He moved through several internal doors, each time his Peacemaker was held at the ready, for all the good it would do him. The further on he moved the nastier the scenes of violence. This was what he had expected to see when he first arrived, not after he and his men had been resting here for hours.

Dismembered bodies lined every room and as he passed through the main lab and its adjoining firing range the carnage only got worse. All the guard bug cages were opened. Thrower counted ten in all and their trail of devastation was easy to follow. However, it seemed strange that all the internal hatches had been opened, making their escape route all the easier. Someone within the facility must have released them!

It was obvious anyone in their path would be dead, but Thrower had to check for survivors, his inbred sense of honour would not let him leave any of the scientists to such a grizzly fate if there was any chance one of them lived.

As he moved further through the complex a cold breeze rushed towards him. Thrower was in a corridor he didn't recognise but it was obvious it led to the exit on the north side of the facility. Moving forward he came out in a second hangar, similar to the one they had entered by. The large hatch entrance was fully open but there was no sign of any bugs. Despite that there was blood everywhere and the body of a scientist, his torso rent in two, lay in one corner. His glasses were skewed across his face and he still gripped one of the facility's prototype weapons in his dead hands. From the colour of the gore that was spread across the hangar, Thrower guessed he had managed to get a few shots off before the guard bugs had sliced him in half.

He moved forward, holstering his Peacemaker and reaching for the weapon. The man's fingers clutched rifle tightly and Thrower began to loosen them one by one. As the last digit came free Thrower heard a telltale sound behind him.

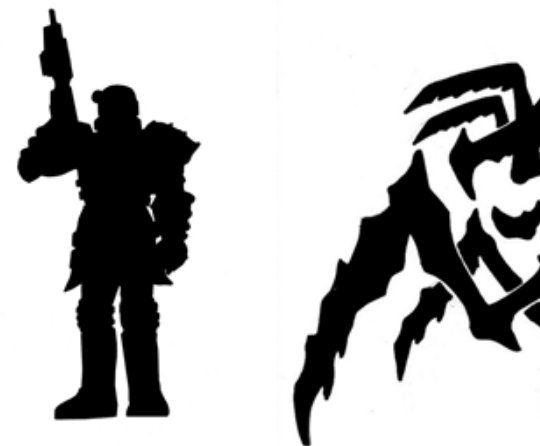
As he leapt to one side, Thrower felt the air part inches from his head. He landed on his back, sliding across the floor on slimy entrails. The guard bug stood well over nine feet, its body a mass of armoured bone and wickedly sharp claws. Thrower could see it was wounded, a fact that had probably just saved his life.

Gritting his teeth, Thrower pointed the rifle and squeezed the trigger, hoping it was as effective in combat as it had been in the previous demonstration. There was a dread sound of hollow clicking as the rifle's discharge hammer clicked against the empty magazine.

The guard bug skittered towards him, and Thrower dropped the rifle, pumping his legs to put as much distance between them, hopefully giving him chance to draw the Peacemaker. Both of them slid on the gooeey floor, the bug losing its footing and falling on its belly. Thrower drew his pistol, fumbling with blood soaked fingers, and flipped off the safety. It took him less than six seconds to empty the fifteen-round clip at the approaching beast. Every shot hit – Thrower would have struggled to miss from such a close range – but the bug's thick armour deflected most of the rounds.

There was no time to load a second clip, the creature was nearly on him. Again Thrower tried to retreat along the slippery floor but it was no use. The guard bug raised one mighty claw and all Thrower could do was yell defiantly as it struck down...

To be continued...



# The Heavy Weapons Specialist

MEN AND WOMEN WHO STRETCH THE DEFINITION OF 'PERSONAL FIREARMS'  
IN YOUR STARSHIP TROOPERS ROLEPLAYING GAME

BY STUART TAYLOR

One of the most popular and successful tactics found within the Mobile Infantry for dealing with virtually anything hostile is as follows:

1. Shoot it.
2. If problem persists, shoot it again.
3. If problem STILL persists, hit it with the biggest artillery you can find.
4. Problem solved.

Although tactics are generally seen as a good method of winning a war, minimising casualties and reducing ammunition expenditure, there are those that would always rather throw everything they've got at something... and then throw some more, regardless of the risks. The latter group are some of the most dangerous men in the entire Mobile Infantry, capable of laying waste to entire armies when handed the right gun, given the right ammunition and given the permission to fire at will. These 'heavy weapons specialists' are a complete antithesis to the snipers, scorning the use of stealth to accomplish goals and instead opting for doing what they do best: causing havoc with the biggest gun they can find.

Although this sounds less like a specialised trooper and more like a psychopathic tendency, the position of the 'big-gunner' is a tough one to fill due to the immense weight of the equipment and the ever-present need to watch ammunition – the last thing any trooper wants to hear is the harrowing click of an empty gun as the trigger is pulled, especially when that gun is the heavy support. Not only does a heavy weapons specialist need to be able to shoot his weapons of choice with the utmost skill and precision, they must also be rigorously trained to be able to look after, maintain and fix their equipment under the stresses a war can bring

## Game Rule Information

Mobile Infantry heavy weapons specialists have the following game statistics:

### REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to become a Mobile Infantry heavy weapons specialist, a character must fulfil the following criteria.

**Base Attack Bonus:** +5

**Abilities:** Strength 14+ (unmodified)

**Skills:** Repair 8 or more ranks, Survival 8 or more ranks.

**Feats:** If the heavy weapons specialist focuses on Heavy-type weapons, he needs Exotic Firearms Proficiency (in a Heavy weapon), Weapon Focus (in a Heavy weapon), and Physical Adept. If he focuses on Mounted-type weapons, he needs Mounted Weapon Proficiency and Weapon Focus (in a Mounted weapon).

### HIT POINTS

Mobile Infantry heavy weapons specialists gain two hit points per level, adding this to their total gained from previous levels.

### CLASS SKILLS

The Mobile Infantry heavy weapons specialist's class skills, and the key abilities for each skill, are as follows: Athletics (Str), Demolitions (Int), Drive (Dex), Perception (Wis), Repair (Int), Survival (Wis), Technical (any).

**Skill Points at Each Additional Level:** 2 + Int modifier

## Class Features

The following are class features of the Mobile Infantry heavy weapons specialist.

**Dedicated Killing Machine (Unique):** When the trooper enters into training for this specialist class, they choose to specialise in vehicle- and fortification- mounted weaponry (of the 'Mounted' type) or man-portable heavy weapons (of the 'Heavy' type). The trooper gains +1 to hit and +1 damage per class level with the chosen type of weapon but, due to lack of practice in other firearms, takes a -1 per class level penalty to all other firearms' to hit and damage rolls. If the trooper has the Weapon Focus feat in a particular weapon, this penalty is negated and Weapon Focus provides its benefits as normal.

**'You've got three seconds to live':** It is a generally accepted fact that a trooper is most likely to be wounded in battle while reloading. Although this isn't such a problem with smaller weapons, it can and will be an issue with the bigger guns in the Mobile Infantry arsenal as a larger gun and a larger clip generally heralds a long and potentially very painful reload time. In light of this, a heavy weapons specialist trains day in, day out to reach maximum efficiency in this respect. The time it takes him to reload a weapon of his chosen type is reduced to a free action.

**The Big Guy:** The heavy weapons specialist is commonly seen as the 'big guy' of the squad and is capable of rousing the rest of the squad to greater feats by following his example. Each time a heavy weapons specialist makes a full attack with a weapon of his favoured type, the awe-inspiring nature of his attack and conduct grants all within 30 feet of him a +2 bonus to all Will saves vs fear.

**Heavy Weapons Master:** At 3<sup>rd</sup> level, the trooper has truly mastered the use of his weapon. If he spends an action point, the trooper may apply his level in this class (+3) in additional damage on each damage die rolled by the weapon in question.

*Example: Private Rupert 'the Fridge' is a heavy weapons specialist. He really, really wants to take out that brain bug, right now. He loads his Javelin with a Holepunch missile (6d10 base damage), spends an action point to activate Heavy Weapons Master, and opens fire. If he hits, the Holepunch missile will do 6d10 + 3 (from his Dedicated Killing Machine class ability) + 18 (+3 for each die of base damage). Bang.*



| Class Level     | Base Attack Bonus | Fort Save | Ref Save | Will Save | Class Features                                                | Defence Bonus | Prestige Bonus |
|-----------------|-------------------|-----------|----------|-----------|---------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|----------------|
| 1 <sup>st</sup> | +1                | +2        | +0       | +1        | Dedicated Killing Machine, 'You've got three seconds to live' | +0            | +0             |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> | +2                | +3        | +0       | +1        | The Big Guy                                                   | +0            | +0             |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> | +3                | +3        | +1       | +2        | Heavy Weapons Master                                          | +1            | +1             |

# The Support Fleet of the Anla'Shok

## Ranger ships from Legend of the Rangers

By Christopher Blackmoor

2nd Edition conversion by  
Bryan Steele

Especially in the early days of the rejuvenated Anla'Shok, shortly after the arrival of Jeffrey David Sinclair on Minbar, the Rangers struggled for equipment to do their work. The former heads of the Rangers had done their best, but the Rangers were viewed as little more than a historical (and often troublesome) footnote, allowed to exist solely in tribute to Valen.

Whilst waiting for the construction of the White Star fleet, primarily due to the slowness of the Vorlons to commit in giving over some of their technological secrets, Jeffrey Sinclair was forced to accept whatever ships were available. In effect, the Anla'Shok had to depend for the most part on donations and hand-me-downs, even using vessels provided by or loaned from other races.

After the departure of the last of the Ancients to the Rim and the defeat of President Clarke, it became apparent that there were jobs that the noble White Star simply was not suited to. It would become necessary to construct other vessels in time, particularly the Victory-class Destroyers that would be able to handle the bigger jobs which even multiple White Stars would struggle to cope with. At the same time, there were many jobs that the White Stars were simply overqualified to handle. There was also a problem where a level of discretion was required – the presence of a White Star in any system was a clear sign that the Rangers were around, which sometimes went against the nature of their work. Handling matters covertly could become impossible,

and handling matters covertly was an essential aspect of keeping the Interstellar Alliance safe and secure.

Therefore, other vessels were required to do the work that the White Stars could not. Many of the roles were not as glamorous, but still necessary. The actual number of these vessels was kept a closely guarded secret – whilst the members of the Interstellar Alliance would feel content knowing the size of the White Star fleet, there was simply no need for them to know how much was going on 'beneath the surface'. The release of such knowledge could hamper the efforts of the Anla'Shok in support of the Interstellar Alliance.

### Nolo'Tar-class Ranger Frigate Simple, Reliable, Respected

An easily manufactured and reliable design, the Nolo'Tar class has been manufactured by the worker caste for centuries. Designed as a cheap patrol boat, the Nolo'Tar, like the larger Troligan-class armoured cruiser, was disliked by the warrior caste, whom it was originally intended for. The other castes were more favourable in their opinions of the patrol boat.

Visually, the Nolo'Tar can be easily identified as having a Minbari pedigree. It has the trademark Minbari curves and fins common to their vessels, with an unusual mottled hull colouring that is a distance apart from the steel or painted hulls of the other younger races. Small weapons turrets adorn the upper hull, with the same

number beneath the vessel. This brings potent weapon arrays against any target to the fore of the vessel, no matter which vector they are in.

One design aspect of the Nolo'Tar which caused much dissension amongst those who flew it and vocal derision from some members of the warrior caste, was the fire control. Based around a zero-gravity gunnery pod, the primary fire control officer would effectively float, with a projected holographic environment around her fed directly from the Nolo'Tar's sensor arrays. This had the effect of placing the gunner directly into what seems like open space, which some sentient races found disconcerting. Those crews that liked the gunnery pod environment professed that it placed the fire control officer directly in the midst of combat, and their hand-to-hand combat skills were translated into the Nolo'Tar's equivalent. The physical attributes of the gunner are continually monitored and the weapons array responds accordingly, changing targeting priorities at amazing speeds. For system alterations, booting and configuration, a holographic control panel can be summoned.

The Nolo'Tar does not have a power plant large enough to support traditional neutron laser weaponry. Many in the warrior caste saw this as a tremendous design flaw, although in fairness the Nolo'Tar is not intended as a front-line military vessel. The aim was for this craft to above all be fast and manoeuvrable, evading enemy fire and neutralising small to medium sized threats as it did

so. It has the advantage of a powerful gravitic drive that is not tied to the power sources of the weapon systems, meaning that in evasive manoeuvres the majority of the Nolo'Tar's firepower is still available for use. An indirect benefit is that the Nolo'Tar, in certain circumstances, can make an excellent minesweeper. Some in the warrior caste believe that this is a perfect use for the Nolo'Tar class, as to them it is not a great loss if the vessel is disabled during this particular endeavour.

Despite its small size the Nolo'Tar has a jump engine. Whilst the recharge time is ludicrously slow compared to other Minbari vessels, the fact that such a vessel possesses a jump engine at all gives it strategic manoeuvrability equivalent to its tactical agility. The drive is mounted in the rear section of the vessel, unfortunately where it can be knocked out by a single well-placed shot. The intent is that the rearward firing weaponry, as well as the active chaff, discourages any attempt by an adversary to knock out this critical component.

The Interstellar Alliance, as of the time of *Legend of the Rangers*, has sixteen of these vessels left in its ranks after those lost in the Shadow War. They are easily deployed and modified in any shipyard, and are still used by the worker caste for couriering items between distant worlds on the borders of the Minbari Federation, as well as by some members of the warrior caste for patrolling the Minbari Protectorate.

Perhaps the most notable example of the Nolo'Tar class was the *Liandra*, whose crew mysteriously perished before the appointment of David Martell as captain. Some in the worker caste, who checked the state of the vessel when it was recovered, believed that the vessel was aunted by the spirits of the dead.

For a vessel under the control of Minbari or Ranger characters in a campaign, the Nolo'Tar class is an excellent choice. It is of a moderate power level, agile enough to stay out of harms way, and has a small enough crew size to make the Players feel in control without causing the Games Master to worry about micro-managing the rest of the crew.

### Internal Features

The Nolo'Tar class takes its name from the Nolo'Tar design philosophy, that of fusing artistic design with function and practicality. Despite having an interior relatively muted in colour, something in the décor makes the vessel seem spacious despite having little in the way of free space. The aesthetic approach in the Nolo'Tar philosophy even applies down to consoles and control panels, with a layout both intuitive and easy on the eye. The application of this approach makes a vessel of this class in well-maintained condition remarkably easy and stress-free to fly.

The Nolo'Tar class ranger frigate has living space for nineteen crew members, and all crewmembers have their own personal quarters, even the lowliest ensign in charge of general maintenance. It is this small crew complement that makes it perfect for the Rangers, and the personal space perfect for meditation. All crew quarters have a small shrine, which have a place for candles and religious artefacts.

The bridge is a large command environment, with all of the command functions based around a large control desk located in the middle of this room. At this desk all six of the command personnel may sit, from the designated officer in charge down to the helmsman,

gunner (when not in the gunnery pod) and first officer. This has the bonus of ensuring fast communication between these individuals, as well as fostering a sense of comradeship between the command staff. Information is relayed to all parties simultaneously by a holographic display, and a brief read-only summary of any station can be displayed on any terminal.

Whilst the Nolo'Tar does not have medical relief in its mission profile, it does have a minor medical facility. In reality, this domain is only suitable for the healing of small wounds, not major injuries or operations. A crewmember that suffers serious injury or sickness can be patched up in a Nolo'Tar's medical facility, but often only enough to make them stable until a better facility can be reached. Often, it is the abilities of the ship's doctor or lead medic that will keep an injured crewman alive rather than the facilities carried on board.

A small armoury exists on board the standard configuration of a Nolo'Tar class. Given its size and manoeuvrability, it is highly unlikely that a Nolo'Tar will ever be targeted for a boarding action. This vessel has been used in troop deployments as a dropship, although this is rare. Even so, every Nolo'Tar in the service of the Anla'Shok contains a dozen sha'an, as well as a crate or two of mixed grenades.

The Nolo'Tar has a cargo hold, but only large enough to hold the supplies necessary to support an extended operation. At a push, this space can be extended to function as an emergency dormitory, but this would tax the air recycling system to breaking point if sustained for long periods.

### Special Feature: Virtual Reality Targeting

The VR Targeting matrix allows the specific crewman placed in command of the weapon systems to use their base attack bonus as the Targeting Computer bonus instead of that listed after the trait. The Weapon Focus (unarmed) or Martial Arts feat grant a +1 bonus.

## Enfalli-class Patrol Cruiser

*'The damned Raiders have been preying on Alliance shipping lanes for months, and we have to send them a message.'* – Bart Gregg, Captain of the *Enfalli*.

### A Stopgap in Easier Times

In the aftermath of the Shadow War and the Earth Civil War, the Anla'Shok found themselves struggling to maintain the peace fostered by the Interstellar Alliance. The death of many experienced crewmembers and officers during those two struggles had given many

junior officers the chance to rise into positions faster than they would have done otherwise.

For these junior officers and crews, a vessel to suit their needs and abilities was required. The solution was a training vessel that had been decommissioned by the warrior caste over eighty years earlier. The Shoquran design had never seen front-line combat, save some infrequent incidents in the Minbari Protectorate where it spent the bulk of its time. It had a modest amount of weaponry, and was designed to operate with around

## Liandra Battle Frigate

The following statistics represent the *Liandra*, which is a stock example of the Nolo'Tar class, as seen in *Legend of the Rangers*. Other models of that class would have a similar profile to the statistics below, with no changes necessary. Although the *Liandra* actually possesses more than four fusion cannons, these statistics represent the *Liandra's* limited ability to fire multiple weapons per turn in any given arc.

Large Spacecraft

**Defence Value:** 12 (-2 size, +4 Handling); **Armour:** 22; **Handling:** +4; **Sensors:** +6; **Stealth:** 16; **Stress:** 7; **Features:** Atmospheric Capable, Gravitic Engine, Jump Point, Minbari Flight Computer, Virtual Reality Targeting, Targeting Computer (+5)

**Crew:** Anla'Shok Line (+5 BAB, +9 Training); 1 Officer, 2 Pilots, 1 Sensor Operative, 9 Crewmen, 100 Passengers

**Construction Spaces:** 54 (Armour 6, Cargo 5, Control 6, Crew 6, Engine 13, Hangar 4, Weapons 14)

*Fore Arc Weapons*

Heavy Laser Cannon (Long, Offence 30, Beam 1d6, 2 weapon spaces)

Twin-linked Fusion Cannon (Close, Offence 30, 2 weapon spaces)

Twin-linked Fusion Cannon (Close, Offence 30, 2 weapon spaces)

*Turret Weapons*

Advanced Neutrino Blaster (Long, Offence 50, 4 weapon spaces)

Advanced Neutrino Blaster (Long, Offence 50, 4 weapon spaces)

**Craft (3):** 3 Flyers

## Enfalli Patrol Cruiser

Huge Spacecraft

**Defence Value:** 14 (-4 size, +8 Handling); **Armour:** 22; **Handling:** +8; **Sensors:** +6; **Stealth:** 32; **Stress:** 5; **Features:** Gravitic Engine, Jump Point, Minbari Flight Computer, Minbari Jamming Suite, Targeting Computer (+5)

**Crew:** Anla'Shok Line (+5 BAB, +9 Training); 6 Officers, 12 Pilots, 8 Sensor Operatives, 65 Crewmen

**Construction Spaces:** 84 (Cargo 20, Control 5, Crew 10, Engine 31, Hangar 2, Weapons 16)

*Fore Arc Weapons*

Twin-Linked Neutron Laser Cannon (Long, Offence 75, Beam 2d8, 4 weapon spaces)

Twin-linked Fusion Cannon (Close, Offence 30, 2 weapon spaces)

Twin-linked Fusion Cannon (Close, Offence 30, 2 weapon spaces)

*Port Arc Weapons*

Twin-linked Fusion Cannon (Close, Offence 30, 2 weapon spaces)

Twin-linked Fusion Cannon (Close, Offence 30, 2 weapon spaces)

*Starboard Arc Weapons*

Twin-linked Fusion Cannon (Close, Offence 30, 2 weapon spaces)

Twin-linked Fusion Cannon (Close, Offence 30, 2 weapon spaces)

**Craft (2):** 3 Tishat Medium Fighters, 2 Flyers

eighty crewmembers. The Shoquran was reclassified as the Enfalli-class patrol cruiser, and placed on loan to the Anla'Shok. The first of these vessels, bearing the same name as its new class, entered service with the Anla'Shok in 2263. It would be damaged beyond repair two years later by a concerted effort from raider forces.

The Enfalli may not have anywhere near the prestige of a White Star, but it does its work without fuss and at less than a third of the cost to produce a new White Star. In time, the Enfalli will surely once again become a footnote in military history, but for now it has a chance to shine. At the time of *Legend of the Rangers*, there were eighteen Enfalli-class patrol cruisers in service, although as of the time of *Crusade* this had been reduced down to seven, all of which were engaged in patrols along the borders of Minbari space.

### Undergunned and Underpowered

The Enfalli has a similar offensive profile to the Sharlin war cruiser, but drastically reduced in power. The primary weapon of the Enfalli is a forward facing array of Neutron Lasers; while not powerful enough to destroy a larger vessel from the major races, they are capable enough of vaporising a corvette or anything smaller. The warrior caste insisted that the power output on the neutron lasers be reduced before they were loaned to the Anla'Shok – the Rangers could do nothing but accept this condition as they badly needed additional vessels to fill their ranks.

The secondary weapon array on the Enfalli is a pair of fusion cannon arrays port and starboard. These ensure that any target that evades the main weaponry of the Enfalli is able to be tracked and destroyed – typically these weapons target enemy fighters or larger craft that are attempting a strafing run on the Enfalli. Aside from these, the Enfalli has no other offensive weaponry. This causes some concern, as the lack of agility that

the vessel possesses in this configuration could only be negated by advanced weaponry. The warrior caste does not particularly care, having paid lip service to the Anla'Shok.

Three elderly Tishat fighters provide some relief to the limited offensive capability of the Enfalli. These are primarily anti-fighter craft, and see frequent use in anti-raider actions. As piloting vessels is a common requirement for a Ranger, these ships see almost continual use. This would be a problem were the design not proven with a long history of service. Despite not being as advanced as the Nial or Shial designs, the Tishat is still on par with the front-line fighters of most of the other main races. The problem is that the Enfalli only carries three of these fighters, which can be easily dispatched if swarmed by the forces of an adversary.

The one item of note that stands the Enfalli apart from other vessels in its class is the lack of a jump engine. As the vessel was intended for training duties originally, it was decided that the vessel would be working within known locations within the Minbari Protectorate and so a jump engine would be excessive.

### Monotonous Service

One particular Minbari of note, who would go on to challenge Delenn for the position of Entil'Zha and then by his sacrifice end the Minbari civil war, once said that the Shoquran design was little more than 'a flying barracks with gun ports'. In many aspects, Alyt Neroon was indeed correct. There are few crew comforts on board a vessel of this design, with barrack rooms for all crew members save the Alyt and immediate support staff. Training space in the physical arts also suffers on board this vessel, with only limited space available for the number of crew to practice against one another.

As a counterpoint to this lack of space, the original Shoquran design was well laid out from an engineering perspective, and the ship was relatively straightforward to keep flying. To this end, the vessels were excellent for junior crews, allowing them to gain experience of handling a starship without overcomplicating the issue.

### Valen-class Assault Cruiser

*'You know, things in space don't have to be aerodynamic. You could put a really big engine on a brick, which looks pretty much what they've done here, and it would be fast.'*  
– David Martel

### Best of Intentions

Officially designated as an assault cruiser, the ill-fated Valen class prototype only ever participated officially in one operation, and that was carrying a group of alien diplomats and dignitaries to an undisclosed security meeting on Beta Durani. It was hit in the rear quarter, and such was the ferocity exhibited by its attackers it never stood a chance.

Whilst the *Excalibur* and *Victory* were the two shining examples of integrating Minbari and Human technologies, the first such prototype was the Valen-class Assault Cruiser. At the time of its inception, it was not known how successful Minbari engineers would be in retrofitting the technology behind the first generation of White Stars into newer designs, and something was needed in case the ability to handle Vorlon technology was beyond them. In truth, even when the second generation White Star was developed there were still many aspects of Vorlon technology that the Gales of the worker caste did not understand: it was enough for them that the technology simply *worked*. A private fear in the minds of some of the worker caste is how to sustain the living technology in such vessels, should the organic technologies require maintenance work to keep them operating at the peak of efficiency.

The Valen class was designed to carry a powerful punch in a moderately sized package, with the majority of it in the forward arc. It was judged as an acceptable risk that the bulk of its offensive firepower is located in such a way, with reasoning that the Valen class would hardly ever operate alone. With other vessels covering its flank, the vision was of the Valen class leading a charge. To this end, the Valen class was fitted with some of the most powerful engines fitted to any capital ship in the Interstellar Alliance. Whilst the Valen has an impressive speed ratio in space, its atmospheric performance is not as great, where the ungainly hull causes significant problems.

The naming of the Valen class, and the first instance of the design, is unsurprising given the heritage behind the vessel. It was designed by a combination of Minbari and Human designers, but the resulting ship was ungainly looking and bereft of the elegant, dangerous beauty of traditional Minbari designs. Although the shape of the vessel looked more Minbari, the colouring and stature was definitely EarthForce. It was seen as a shining example of how far both races had come since the Earth-Minbari War, but like most symbols of that kind was doomed to failure, despite the best of intentions.

The Valen class was never able to return fire during its only combat. The weaponry presented here represents the projected firepower of such a vessel, based off the strong forward-focus of the design and the inability to return fire from the craft's rear arc.

## An Intensification of Firepower

Whilst none of its forward facing weapons are of a power level comparable to a Sharlin war cruiser or the Victory-class destroyer that followed it, the sheer volume of firepower that the Valen could theoretically put out owed more in terms of comparison to the broadside of a Nova class dreadnought than any other known vessel configuration. Whilst neutron lasers and fusion cannons could be brought to bear on any vessel in front of the Valen class, if the assault cruiser could gain a bore sight on a foe then an array of heavy fusion cannons could literally pummel the luckless target into pieces with concentrated energy fire.

A critical weakness that would cripple the Valen was the location of the fire control circuitry. As the majority of the firepower of this design was focused in the forward arc, the fire control systems were integrated into one distinct processing centre. Whilst the Hand was lucky with the placement of their shots, this highlighted a real deficiency of the Valen's design.

Of course, such a massive transference of power in a ship's systems often shows up on sensor readings like a lighthouse in the pitch black of night. For a vessel with at least a partial Minbari heritage, the Valen class had a low stealth rating, as it was simply unable to mask the

## Valen-class Assault Cruiser

Huge Spacecraft

**Defence Value:** 14 (-4 size, +8 Handling); **Armour:** 24; **Handling:** +8; **Sensors:** + 6; **Stealth:** 12; **Stress:** 5;

**Features:** Gravitic Engine, Jump Point, Minbari Flight Computer, Targeting Computer (+5)

**Crew:** Anla'Shok Line (+5 BAB, +9 Training); 6 Officers, 8 Pilots, 8 Sensor Operatives, 75 Crewmen, 50 Marines

**Construction Spaces:** 94 (Cargo 10, Control 5, Crew 20, Engine 31, Hangar 2, Weapons 26)

### Fore Arc Weapons

Twin-Linked Neutron Laser Cannon (Long, Offence 75, Beam 2d8, 4 weapon spaces)

Twin-Linked Neutron Laser Cannon (Long, Offence 75, Beam 2d8, 4 weapon spaces)

Heavy Fusion Cannon (Long, Offence 30, 2 weapon spaces)

Heavy Fusion Cannon (Long, Offence 30, 2 weapon spaces)

Tri-linked Fusion Cannon (Close, Offence 40, 3 weapon spaces)

Tri-linked Fusion Cannon (Close, Offence 40, 3 weapon spaces)

### Port Arc Weapons

Twin-linked Fusion Cannon (Close, Offence 30, 2 weapon spaces)

Twin-linked Fusion Cannon (Close, Offence 30, 2 weapon spaces)

### Starboard Arc Weapons

Twin-linked Fusion Cannon (Close, Offence 30, 2 weapon spaces)

Twin-linked Fusion Cannon (Close, Offence 30, 2 weapon spaces)

**Craft (2):** 4 Flyers

energy output without a major financial expenditure. It was judged that this was not a major concern, as the aim of the Valen was to get in there and hit hard; the usual Minbari subtlety of design and purpose were traded in for bullishness.

Structurally, the Valen was one of the most physically robust designs to emerge from Minbari shipyards in recent years. The application of gravitational forces to test the resiliency of the Valen's frame showed a remarkable ability to withstand physical stresses. With such a powerful engine behind the Valen, in some other existence it may have been an excellent deep space explorer, capable of charting hyperspace whilst fending off the effects of gravitational inclines.

### Legacy of the Valen

It would be easy to dismiss the Valen as a failure, but important lessons were learned by the loss of that vessel

with all hands. The initial integrations of Human and Minbari technologies had gone surprisingly well, with human structural benefits proving that even though without firepower the Valen stood up to a considerable hammering before initiating a ramming action on one of the Hand's ships. The knowledge gained, although not complete, was passed back to Michael Garibaldi and to his chief engineer Samuel Drake, to ensure that the Victory-class Destroyers did not suffer from the same weaknesses that had afflicted the Valen.

At the same time, the Valen was intended to be the first off the assembly line, and as such the potential exists to build other instances of this class. As of the time of *Legend of the Rangers*, the Valen-class assault cruiser was the one and only example of her kind.

## The Anla'Shok Fleet, 2262 to 2265

The ships used by the Anla'Shok at the various points of their history fluctuated as much as their fortunes. No time was more of an example of this fluctuation than their change of profile at the end of the Earth year 2261, when their reason for existence changed. A life working in the shadows was gone, replaced by the responsibility for the safety and integrity of a largely benevolent alliance of races.

After 2265, with the advent of the second iteration of the White Star, these fleet patterns were no longer used. Years before, Jeffrey Sinclair had argued that to fight a war, the Rangers needed a fleet of ships. The new versions of the Interstellar Alliance's flagship craft allowed the White Stars to propagate to a level that

### Rapid Deployment Fleet

Intended to go somewhere and get there quickly, Rapid Deployment Fleets were intended to be the Interstellar Alliance's presence anywhere within their domains. Whilst not necessarily indicative of the full power of the Ranger fleet, these vessels were able to at least 'hold the fort' until a greater intensity of firepower could be diverted to their deployed location. The concept of this fleet was relatively unchanged as new models were added, and existing vessels swapped out.

- (3-6) Enfalli patrol cruisers
- (9-18) Tishat fighters (full complement)
- (1) Morshin carrier
- (24) Shial fighters
- (1-3) White Stars WSC-1 (one serving as a command vessel)



### Homeworld Fleet

Minbar was the crown jewel of the Interstellar Alliance. It was the home to both the Rangers, now a known quantity to a galaxy that had been scarcely aware of them for a thousand years, as well as the government of the Interstellar Alliance. Therefore, Minbar needed to be protected from those who would make a strike against this nexus of freedom and peace. In time, this fleet would be broken into two as it expanded to become the Final Line Force during the later years of the Interstellar Alliance.

- (25-30) White Stars WSC-1
- (1) Sharlin cruiser (serving as a command vessel)
  - (12) Shial fighters (full complement)
  - (12) Nial fighters (full complement)
- (2) Tinashi frigates / Troligan armoured cruisers (availability from Minbari sources permitting)
- (3-6) Enfalli patrol cruisers
- (6) Tishat fighters (full complement)

would have made the only individual to ever serve as Entil'Zha twice very proud indeed.

In times of war after this time, it is entirely possible that these fleets could be recreated to take on support roles, should the Ranger fleet be required to do other work. In the timeline of Crusade, the Ranger vessels in this chapter have a second chance for glory, as they are used to help search for a cure to the Drakh Plague. This includes some of the WSC-1's that had previously been earmarked for support duties and religious caste work.

These fleet structures are intended to fill the gap between the Era of Shadow and Era of the ISA fleet lists as published in *The Rangers*. They deal with the period of transition between the establishment of the Interstellar Alliance and the limited availability of the WSC-2, beginning with the maiden voyage of the *Sheridan* in late 2265. This is the era when the White Stars were still a precious commodity, and the dream of a new fleet of vessels equipped with Minbari, Human and Vorlon tech still in the preliminary stages.



## Stabilisation Force

Where a system or world was in trouble from natural or inflicted causes, a Stabilisation Force would be deployed. This was also if the system was identified as being under a prolonged threat by a military power, such as Raiders or a hostile alien power. The White Stars would consolidate around the target system, with the Enfalli patrol cruisers and Nolo'Tar Patrol Boats taking up operations in expanding 'rings' around the target world or system. This fleet would become a Planetary Intervention Force later in the Interstellar Alliance's existence, utilising more advanced craft as and when they became available.

- (1-3) Nolo'Tar ranger frigates
- (3-6) Enfalli patrol cruisers
- (9-18) Tishat fighters (full complement)
- (1-3) White Stars WSC-1 (one serving as a command vessel)
- (0-2) Morshin carriers (no fighters, to function as emergency evacuation transports only)

## Assault Group (Intended)

Favoured in Valen's fleet structure, the aim of the assault group was to simply to demonstrate a massive level of power. This could in some cases discourage a course of action from being taken, but also encourage decisions to be taken that Valen desired – a threat, thinly disguised as a request.

It was this fleet group that was to be the intended place for the Victory-class destroyers that were due to be ready in late 2266, equipped with Thunderbolts and the common Anla'Shok fighter, the Shial. That never actually transpired, with the delays that plagued that project (primarily due to the chief designer Samuel Drake being in collusion with the Drakh), followed up by the two prototypes being called into active service.

- (9) White Stars WSC-1 (to be upgraded to WSC-2's where feasible)
- (2) Valen assault cruisers
  - (to become White Star WSG gunships when the Valen was eventually classified as a failure in its defined role)
- (1) Victory Destroyer (serving as a command vessel)
  - (24) Thunderbolts (full complement)
  - (12) Shial fighters (full complement)

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So, you have chosen your game, but what do you actually write about? Scenarios are good. In fact, we love them. Give me a scenario to edit and I am a happy camper. Perhaps you want to discuss the philosophy of a game. That's good. We encourage intellectual thought process around here. If you have something meaningful to say, then try us out. If we don't like it, we *will* tell you. Think hard before you try humour though. With guys like Jonny Nexus about, you will need to be sharp if you want to break in. If you think you have what it takes, though, then feel free to try your hand. Just be prepared to be told you may not be as funny as you think you are.

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It is a painful fact that whatever you write, it will get edited. That is why editors exist, after all. Even this passage will have been edited. If you can get over this hurdle you are well on your way to attaining the mentality needed to be a writer. It will help if you can handle criticism as well. Take it from us – writing is a tough business. Just ask any author doing the rounds looking for a friendly publisher.

We have various house styles that we use and you do not need to know them. As long as your submission is literate and tidy, we will do the rest.

## Little Details

If you are not sure how long your article is, assume around 800 words fit on one page. Do not use the word processor's page counter as a guide. By the time it has been edited, laid out and had artwork added, it will look nothing like that screen of text in front of you.

Remember to run the article through a spell checker before you send it in. It will still get proofread, but it shows willing. Anything not spell checked will be rejected straight away.

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# Paranoid Paperwork

By Daniel R. Robichaud

Ah, paperwork. Forms in triplicate, certified documentation and time stamped correspondence materials...

Some fellow citizens claim that a packet of pages connected along one edge by a millimeter of SpiffyGlue and separated by micron thin layers of carbon is one of the greatest threats to the life and sanity of the average citizen. Sounds like treason to me.

Where would Alpha Complex be without the security found amongst the comforting confines and niggling details of bureaucracy? Our very way of life would be destroyed. Oh, I'm sure nothing would please the Commie Mutant Traitors more. So, to best annoy them, we should flaunt the Computer's generosity.

I have accepted the honor of editing and distributing this, the first issue of a regular Department of Form Processing and Processed Forms Department (a Division of HPD&MC) monthcycle report on the best of the fresh line of forms emerging from our new central offices, overlooking beautiful IRS sector.

Who am I, you might ask? Why, I am form distribution clerk Hip-Y-TTS-3. I am one of the four hundred and seventy-six workers in the three cubic kilometer warehouse underneath our new office building. Above my head, even now, our busy staff of document checkers, factualization officers, team assistants, project managers and project management managers are enjoying the spacious cubicles and work environments graciously provided by Friend Computer. No longer are four clones sharing 27 cubic meter workspaces; now they have the luxury of a whole 30

cubic meters! My fellow clones assure me additional headroom makes for better productivity!

Around me are expert teams of movers, shippers, receivers, deliverybots and mail routers ready to use our warehouse to store and send the dispatches to come! Current shipments are brief, as our workers upstairs acclimate to their new location and surroundings, but I'm sure they will have the production lines running strong in no time!

Home Processing and Development and Mind Control has received several suggestions about streamlining and improving the efficiency in filling out the paperwork. Again, sounds like treason to me. However, Friend Computer, ever wiser than I, has authorized a batch of new EZ Happiness Worksheet forms to accompany the documents, as a response to this concern. Friend Computer always keeps your best interests in the forefront algorithms of its thought processes! Therefore, each shipment case contains allotments of 10 copies of the individual document as well as 10 attached EZ Happiness Worksheets. Note the stamped seal on each box, indicating The Computer's guarantee of satisfaction!

Stay Alert! Should these documents fall into the wrong hands, Alpha Complex's way of life may be disrupted! To prevent this, this department maintains detailed records of each delivery point, including the identities of clones intended to receive these documents! Investigations will be conducted and the guilty parties punished with greater efficiency than ever before!

At your service!

## Special Section for Non-Paranoia Games Masters

The evil that is paperwork is not merely restricted to *Paranoia XP* games. Heavens, no! With creativity and a little tweaking, these forms are pretty good for a variety of games.

For example, envision an *OGL CyberNet* situation, where some employer demands the characters account for their ammunition (bullets aren't cheap, you know). Likewise, the proper paperwork can allow teams to bluff their way into locations they might not have access to otherwise. Once the combat grunts spill forth, this tactic might not work. However, using the right combination of real and counterfeited pages might blindside the corporate drones/artificial intelligences and prevent said grunts from arriving before the team vacates the scene.

How about a near future *OGL Horror* session, where the characters discover someone has filed official reports (with a shadowy organization) accusing them of performing unspeakable acts, for a period of hours the characters have no memory about (cue *X-files* music)... Maybe the characters can account for those lost hours, maybe they have to break into the organization's headquarters to steal or destroy the documentation.

The possibilities are endless for the use of fun forms like these...

## AoT-71F

To: Office of Internal Security  
Department of Treasonous Actions  
Subdepartment of Identification and Accusation  
SubSubdepartment of Document Maintenance  
SubSubSubDepartment of Filing

This document ensures that the undersigned, \_\_\_\_\_, herewith identified as The Witness, did see and does accuse \_\_\_\_\_, herewith identified as The Traitor, of treasonous actions, herewith identified as Treasonous Activity, performed in violation of the sanctity and security of Friend Computer, herewith referred to as Friend Computer, Alpha Complex, herewith identified as The Location, and all the loyal citizens found therein, herewith identified as The Citizens.

The Witness has appended a log of the specific Treasonous Activity observed, including dates and times of said Treasonous Activity, as well as identities of accomplices to or victims of said Treasonous Activity. The Witness shall provide a brief summary of said Treasonous Activity in the following space and will not exceed the space allotted or negligently leave space unfilled, while still obeying the laws of grammar, punctuation and clarity.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

The Witness does not refute these charges, provide evidence to the contrary, or indicate the wrongness of said Treasonous Activity and does, therefore accept the punishment for partaking in actions that violate the sanctity of The Location, the security of The Citizens and the well being of Friend Computer.

This document is legally binding to an individual clone and is non transferable to any clones associated with or related to The Traitor or Witness. Indicated guilty parties will present themselves to nearest Termination Booth or Organ/Limb Donation Center for summary hearing and punishment.

Have a nice daycycle!

Signed,

\_\_\_\_\_  
Witness

## Form AoT-71F

**Hip-Y-TTS-3 says:** Citizens sometimes complain about the annoyance of alerting authorities to the treasonous activities in their fellow clones. Even after these lazy citizens are subsequently assigned to spend weekcycles in R&D Redevelopment and Education Voluntary Gulags, their suggestion remains. The clones upstairs have tackled this suggestion. Developing a more streamlined and effective method of citing treasonous acts is valuable! Efficiency can result in ten times improvement in the identification, pacification and elimination of traitors! Therefore, we are proud to present our AoT-71F.

## AoT FORM 71F EZ Happiness Worksheet

To fill out AoT FORM 71F completely:

- 1) Write or type name into The Witness blank,
- 2) Write or type name into the Traitor blank,
- 3) Provide a brief summation of Treasonous Activities on provided lines.
- 4) Attach a copy of full record of specific Treasonous Activity, incorporating time, date, actions, accomplices and victims.

Note: knowledge of specifics of treasonous activity is potentially treasonous.

- 5) Sign form. Note: Name in The Witness blank must match the name in the signature. To do otherwise would be falsifying documents, and that is treason.

### Revised Security Clearance Form, Draft 9871

**Hip-Y-TTS-3 says:** Who can deny the elegance and efficiency of this next form? A piece of perfection, suggested by Friend Computer, realized by loyal citizen's hands! Make certain neither unworthy eyes, nor unworthy hands dirty it with their attention! This is a marvel of Alpha Complex design (and cleanliness is mandatory, after all).

### Revised Security Clearance Form, Draft 9871 EZ Happiness Worksheet

**To fill out //BREAK//ALT TAB STOP//OK**

//Reroute to alternate Pathways

//uploading

//upload complete

- 1) Write or type name into The Witness blank,
- 2) Write or type name into the Traitor blank,
- 3) Provide a brief summation of Treasonous Activities on provided lines.
- 4) Attach a copy of full record of specific Treasonous Activity, incorporating time, date, actions, accomplices and victims.

Note: knowledge of specifics of treasonous activity is potentially treasonous.

- 5) Sign form. Note: Name in The Witness blank must match the name in the signature. To do otherwise would be falsifying documents, and that is treason.

### Attention! Attention! Attention! Revised Security Clearance Form, Draft 9871

By suggestion of Friend Computer/High Programmer/\_\_\_\_\_-\_-\_\_\_\_\_- (circle one),  
effective as of \_\_\_\_\_ Date and \_\_\_\_\_ Time,  
the hallway/room/warehouse/quarters/food vat/power supply plant/cafeteria/place/\_\_\_\_\_- (circle one)  
located at \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_ sector, is declared to be no longer of  
\_\_\_\_\_ security clearance, but now of \_\_\_\_\_ security clearance.

This security clearance revision will last for a period of 12/24/48 (circle one) hours after the time stamp on this document. All personnel of insufficient security clearance should avoid this area until the allotted period of time has elapsed.

We are confident all loyal citizens will agree in the wisdom of this action, as it is performed out of necessity for  
**Deleted for Security Reasons.**

Signed,

\_\_\_\_\_-\_-\_\_\_\_\_-

In the presence of

\_\_\_\_\_-\_-\_\_\_\_\_-

Observed by:

\_\_\_\_\_-\_-\_\_\_\_\_-

### Clearance ULTRAVIOLET

There is no EZ Happiness Worksheet for the Revised Security Clearance Form, Draft 9871. It is a duplication of the EZ Happiness Worksheet for the AoT Form 71F. Bringing this fact to the attention of a superior is treason, as it suggests a mistake on the part of The Computer, who provided the seal of approval – although the seal was physically applied by one of any number of overworked, INFRARED peons with rubber stamps in the bowels of the HPD&MC building in IRS sector.

## Attention! Attention! Attention!

**To:** All personnel licensed to discharge weapons

**From:** Office of the Preservation of Unnatural Resources

SubDepartment of Production, Logistics and Commissary

**Subject:** AfAE-001v1

The latest performed inventory of supplies on hand and supplies being manufactured has revealed a shortage of documentation for weapon discharges. As this is a subject that affects us all, this memo is being issued to countermand this oversight.

Effective immediately, all personnel licensed to use plasma, laser, slug projecting, explosive projecting, rocket projecting, explosive detonating or other similar weapons, will need to fully document each discharge/detonation of said weapons. This information is to be recorded and filed immediately after each discharge/detonation. Inability to account for the usage of our produced resources gives the Enemies of Alpha Complex an unfair advantage. Also, not accounting for valuable Computer property is treasonous.

Therefore, each troubleshooting team will be granted a single pad of AfAE-001v1 forms. Each form requires only a moment of time to fill out and requires a specific amount of detail to prevent this inability to account for ammunition Expenditure from ever acting against our personnel in their constant efforts to keep Alpha Complex safe from the hordes of Commie Mutant Traitors that seek to destroy our way of life.

Stay Alert!

Trust No One!

Keep Your Laser Handy!

Account for every use of said Laser!

**The Department of PLC**

**Hip-Y-TTS-3 Says:** It is very important to maintain our resources! Waste is one of the most hideous forms of treason! Our brothers and sisters in PLC bring us this most important message.

## AfAE-001v1 EZ Happiness Worksheet

The actual AfAE-001v1 documentation forms, to be filed accounting for each discharge of a weapon, have been indefinitely delayed, due to sabotage enacted by Commie Mutant Traitors.

Note: this does not preclude the necessity of filing usage of said weapons, which is still provided for under this Memo. However, the form is, as yet, forthcoming. Inability to account for every discharge of indicated weapons is treason.

Have a nice daycycle!

### Clearance **ULTRAVIOLET**

If GMs wish to give the characters a running chance of being able to actively follow this mandate (*Why?*), provide them a pad of paper (yellow or blue sticky notes work nicely, as these are usually beyond the security clearance of most troubleshooting teams), whose “documentation” is written in the same color ink as the paper (all very official, no?). They look blank, but are they? Proper bootlicking team members may be able to convince authorities that they filled out the forms in similar ink, but this raises a whole level of alternate problems.

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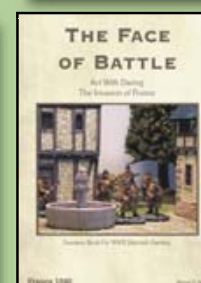
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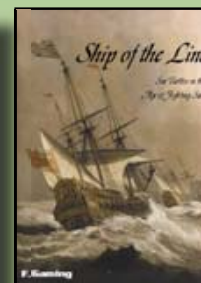
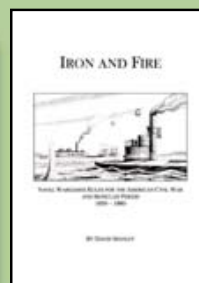
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# Mega-City One's Most Wanted

## Judge Giant (I)

By Matt Sharp

**Real Name:** John Clay Jnr.  
**Class/Level:** Street Judge 12  
**Hit Points:** 97  
**Initiative:** +7 (+3 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)  
**Speed:** 30 ft.  
**Defence Value:** 24 (+13 Reflex, +1 Dodge)  
**Damage Reduction:** 6 (body suit uniform)  
**Attacks:** +15/+10/+5 melee, +16/+11/+6 ranged  
**Damage:** By weapon  
**Saves:** Fort +12, Ref +13, Will +8  
**Abilities:** Str 16, Dex 17, Con 15, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 15  
**Skills:** Balance +7, Bluff +8, Climb +6, Craze (jetpacking) +9, Drive +10, Intimidate +12, Jump +6, Listen +4, Medical +6, Ride +15, Search +5, Sense Motive +12, Spot +6, Streetwise +10, Technical +3 and Tumble +7.  
**Feats:** Bike Leap, Bike Wheelie, Dodge, Drive-by Boot, Emergency Stop (ride), Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Lightening Reflexes, Lightening Reload, Menacing Presence, Speed Roll, Weapon Focus (lawgiver) and Weapon Specialisation (lawgiver).  
**Possessions:** Standard issue Justice Department equipment

John 'Giant' Clay was well into his seventies when he had his first son in 2079. Clay had at one time been a famous sporting hero, captaining the Harlem Heroes aeroball team to their world cup victory and later joining the Harlem Hellcats to play the suicidal sport of inferno. But he knew that sporting glory was fleeting and always wanted something better for his son. Cadet Clay was enrolled into the Academy of Law at the age of five. He soon became the Academy's star pupil, possessing his father's natural agility and a razor sharp wit, although despite extensive training he was never able to shake off his New Harlem accent. Before long, he had adopted his father's old nickname of 'Giant' – the name was to stick with him for the rest of his life.



Giant qualified with honours from the Academy in 2099, his chest swelling with pride as Judge Principle Griffin pinned on the half eagle badge and issued him with the white helmet of a Rookie Judge. All that remained before he joined the elite ranks of the street judges was his Final Assessment Test, a patrol with a senior judge to assess his performance in a real life situation. Unfortunately, he was assigned to the notoriously stern Judge Dredd. Giant knew that Dredd had only ever passed one Rookie before, but was determined to do his absolute best.

However, things did not go as well as Rookie Giant wished. Called to apprehend a futsie who was running amok in a nearby diner, Giant's nervousness led him to

make several mistakes and Dredd was prepared to fail him. A report of a kidnapping forced Dredd to postpone his decision – Giant had been given another chance. Giant drew on all his training to put aside his nerves and tracked the kidnappers to the old Harlem Heroes aeroball stadium in Sector Three, where his father had played many times. He was able to eliminate the kidnap gang and save the victim using a combination of Justice Department and aeroball manoeuvres. Impressed, Dredd decided to forgive his earlier mistakes and passed Giant with honours. Following his initiation ceremony, Judge Giant proudly embarked on his first patrol.

A series of high profile cases followed, where Giant's lightning reactions served him well. He was able to save the victim in the Jones kidnap case when the boy and his abductor fell from the top of a City Block, grasping the young Billy's wrist as he tumbled past a walkway, and his Lawmaster skills were instrumental in stopping the Mega-City 5000, a lethal motorcycle race held on the streets and pedways of Mega-City One. He was responsible for apprehending the notorious biker Spikes 'Harvey' Rotten in a deadly game of chicken.

After a year on the streets, Giant was granted a month's leave. Giant took the time to visit his family, but free from the strict regime of the Justice Department for the first time his discipline failed him and he embarked on a brief but passionate affair with a young and beautiful interior designer, Adele Dormer. His leave over, he returned to duty to find the Justice Department in chaos – Chief Judge Goodman had been assassinated and the head of the SJS, Judge Cal, had taken his place. Like most judges, Giant had no liking of the harsh Cal but began to suspect something was wrong when a goldfish was appointed to the position of Deputy Chief Judge. He was even more shocked and alarmed to find that his fellow judges were prepared to accept the situation without protest. When Cal decided to execute Judge Dredd, who Giant had come to regard as his friend and mentor, the young judge knew he had to act against the lunatic tyrant. He rescued Dredd, and along with the Judge Tutors from the Academy of Law began a guerilla war, even though their cause seemed hopeless. Eventually, the resistance were able to counteract Cal's brainwashing and order was restored to the streets of Mega-City One.

By 2102 Giant had risen to the rank of Senior Judge. He last worked with Dredd on a 'Hotdog Run' into the Cursed Earth, where a group of twelfth-year Cadets are assessed in an actual combat situation for the first time. This particular run faced Scabby Hayes and his mutant marauders, although the team also found themselves facing the deadly Gila Munja. Although one of the Cadets was killed during the mission, two of the seven passed – as Giant remarked, Dredd must have been getting lenient in his old age!

Only a few weeks after this, the whole Mega-City was once again plunged into chaos. This time, Block Wars were rising to epidemic proportion as whole Sectors turned on each other. The judges had found that the water supply had been poisoned with a contaminant that brought mankind's primitive, tribal attitudes to the fore. When an intruder was spotted interfering with the water at the Atlantic Purification Plant in East Sector 29, it seemed the cause had been found. However, the perpetrator – a heavily muscled, scar-faced man – gunned down the squad of judges sent to apprehend him and made his escape. An APB was put out, and it was Judge Giant who spotted the criminal attempting to escape on foot along the Booker T. Parkway. After a short but brutal fire fight, Giant was able to disarm the saboteur and had him at his mercy, but the lightening speed that had served him so well in the past was to be his downfall on this occasion. Suddenly hearing an East-Meg accented voice threatening him, Giant whirled round and put a shot through the target in a second – however, the victim was no gunman, but a small, hovering robot called a satellat. Giant may have been fast, but his prisoner was even faster – the young judge never knew that he was facing the East-Meg Assassin Orlok, one of the deadliest men alive. While Giant was distracted by his satellat, Orlok needed less than a second to recover his gun and put a single shot straight through Giant's heart, killing him instantly.

Many years later, in 2124, an alternative incarnation of Judge Giant made an appearance in the Mega-City. Native to an alternative world where Chief Judge Cal had never suffered defeat, this Giant had killed his reality's Judge Dredd on Cal's order and had become the lunatic's right-hand man. However, a quarter of a century of decadent living had dulled this Giant's reactions and Dredd was able to easily defeat him, although he knew that this twisted version of Giant was nothing more than a pale shadow of his former colleague and friend.



# LESSER KNOWN FAUNA AND FLORA

Some unusual plants and creatures for your RuneQuest game, by Carl Walmsley

## Gas Bloater

Suspended on a cloud of hazy, foul-smelling mist, gas bloaters resemble swollen jellyfish with translucent purple skin. Drifting about in search of organic matter which they can digest and transform into gas, these tentacled monstrosities are the bane of all who reside near the swamps and marshes where they live.

Cushioned by the gas constantly emitted from the pores in their leathery skin, the movement of a gas bloater is entirely silent. Flaps and pouches on the underside of their bodies trap the buoyant gases, allowing them to glide along. By adjusting the rate at which gas is expelled, 'bloats' can shift between higher and lower altitudes. There are reports of them climbing high enough to glide over trees. When sneaking up on potential prey, they can hug the terrain, remaining only inches above the ground.

Voracious eaters, bloats can consume their own body weight in a single day – and a fully grown adult can weigh 200 lbs. Just about any organic matter will do, but bloats seem to favour animals over plants. At a pinch, they can live on an entirely vegetarian diet.

Moving with unparalleled stealth, gas bloaters will often try to surprise their victims. There is little they can do to hide their stink, however. The gas that allows them to move through the air reeks of decay. Amidst the stench of methane and other swamp gases, they are sometimes able to conceal their presence but even then it is difficult.

Though not bright, bloats do possess an animal cunning and will always take advantage of the surrounding terrain. Added to this, they have a number of unique abilities. Whilst much of the gas produced by bloats is non-flammable, they can emit smaller pockets of explosive chemicals. By producing a mild electrical charge in the tips of their tentacles, bloats can detonate these flammable pockets, producing a flash of phosphorescent light. This can disorientate and even blind prey, allowing a bloat to move in and ensnare victims with its tentacles. These slithering appendages are covered in thousands of tiny barbs, each loaded with paralyzing venom.

Gas Bloaters reproduce asexually. In the depths of winter, they lay hundreds of eggs within the damp mud of swamps and bogs. These lie dormant until the temperature rises, the young finally emerging with a belch of gas that launches them into the air. Most bloats will never touch down again until the day they die.

## Characteristics

|     |       |      |
|-----|-------|------|
| STR | 3D6+3 | (13) |
| CON | 3D6   | (10) |
| DEX | 3D6+3 | (13) |
| SIZ | 2D6+6 | (13) |
| INT | 7     | (7)  |
| POW | 2D6+3 | (10) |
| CHA | 5     | (5)  |

## Gas Bloater Hit Locations

| D20   | Hit Location   | AP/HP |
|-------|----------------|-------|
| 1     | Tentacle one   | 1/5   |
| 2     | Tentacle two   | 1/5   |
| 3     | Tentacle three | 1/5   |
| 4     | Tentacle four  | 1/5   |
| 5     | Tentacle five  | 1/5   |
| 6     | Tentacle six   | 1/5   |
| 7     | Tentacle seven | 1/5   |
| 8     | Tentacle eight | 1/5   |
| 9-18  | Body           | 1/9   |
| 19-20 | Head           | 1/6   |

## Weapons

| Type      | Weapon skill | Damage         |
|-----------|--------------|----------------|
| Tentacle  | 50%          | 1D6+1D2+poison |
| Gas Flare | 90%          | Special        |

## Special Rules

*Combat actions:* 3

*Strike Rank:* +10

*Movement:* 5m (flying only)

*Traits:* Gas Flare (1/minute), Poison (sting, see below for details of Gas Bloater Venom)

*Skills:* Athletics 40%, Dodge 40%, Perception 50%, Persistence 35%, Resilience 45%, Stealth 90%\*

*Typical Armour:* Hide (AP 1, no skill penalty)

\*Gas Bloaters receive a -40% penalty to stealth tests when not in a stinking bog or similarly foul-smelling location. This represents a victim's chance to smell a gas bloaters approach.

## Gas Bloater Venom

**Type:** Smear

**Delay:** Immediate

**Potency:** 40

**Full Effect:** 1D3 hit point damage to location struck, applies -3 penalty to victim's DEX (upon reaching 0 DEX victim becomes paralysed)

**Duration:** 2D10 minutes

## Gas Flare

When a gas bloater ignites a portion of the gas surrounding it, all creatures within 3m of the flare must make a Resilience test or be blinded for 1D4 rounds.

## Rava

A rava is a snake-spirit that manifests in the material world by occupying a serpent form made entirely of crystal. Under the influence of the spirit, the crystal becomes pliable, mimicking the naturally agile body of a snake. However, it remains transparent, giving the rava the ability to blend in with its surroundings. Furthermore, when a rava eats, the contents of its stomach are entirely visible.

The crystalline form of a rava is both expensive and difficult to make, and the method of fashioning one is a closely guarded secret, known only to those cults which revere snakes and reptiles. Ravas are often used as protectors for high-ranking members of a cult or as guardians of sacred sites and temples. Ravas will only agree to serve mortals for so long, however; after a time - usually no more than a year - the spirit will expect to be freed or will take it upon itself to destroy its material form, which releases it.

A rava's bite is not venomous, but its fangs are crystal daggers capable of inflicting grievous injuries. A rava is also able to constrict prey, crushing the life out of it. Whilst they have no need to eat, ravas may choose to do so. This often proves an effective way of disposing of an enemy; within a rava's stomach, a trapped creature suffocates and is slowly dissolved by carbolic acid, secreted from the gemstone gut. This process effectively dissolves organic matter, but can leave other substances rattling around inside a rava's gut for some time.

## Characteristics

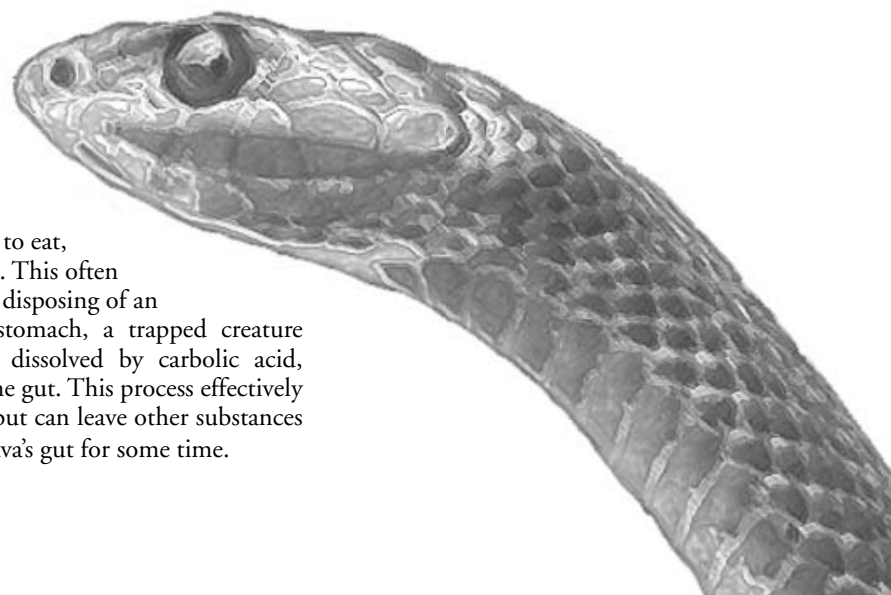
|     |       |      |
|-----|-------|------|
| STR | 3D6+6 | (16) |
| CON | 3D6   | (10) |
| DEX | 4D6   | (13) |
| SIZ | 2D6+9 | (16) |
| INT | 3D6   | (10) |
| POW | 3D6+3 | (13) |
| CHA | 3D6   | (10) |

## Rava Hit Locations

| D20   | Hit Location | AP/HP |
|-------|--------------|-------|
| 1-6   | Tail         | 5/6   |
| 7-14  | Body         | 5/8   |
| 15-20 | Head         | 5/6   |

## Weapons

| Type      | Weapon skill | Damage    |
|-----------|--------------|-----------|
| Bite      | 65%          | 1D6 + 1D4 |
| Constrict | 55%          | 2D8       |



### Special Rules

*Combat actions:* 3

*Strike Rank:* +11

*Movement:* 4m

*Traits:* Excellent Swimmer

*Skills:* Athletics 80%, Dodge 60%, Perception 50%, Resilience 55%, Stealth 85%\*

*Typical Armour:* 5 (crystal scales, no skill penalty)

\*A rava receives a -20% penalty to Stealth tests if it has a victim within its stomach.

## Corpse Flies

With a name like this, and a black, inch-long insectoid body, a corpse fly sounds like a creature to be avoided at all costs. However, contrary to popular opinion, these ferocious looking flies are actually the bane of undead rather than living creatures.

Drawn to the stink of death, and the unique necrotic energy of the restless dead, corpse flies feast on the flesh of zombies and other undead. A swarm of corpse flies can destroy a walking corpse as surely as a regiment of soldiers.

A number of cults that make war upon the undead have learned about the usefulness of corpse flies and actively search for the larval young. Unfortunately, they are both difficult to find and dangerous to handle. The skills required to harvest corpse fly weevils, and the knowledge of the pools where they reside, can earn someone a good living.

Growth from larval form to adult form takes about a month. Certain temples contain air-tight rooms where this process can take place under the watchful eye of trained 'weevilers'. When fully grown, a jar full of corpse flies may be handed over to a cultist who is anticipating

a confrontation with the undead. He need simply smash a jar within 5m of a zombie or similar creature, for the flies to close in and attack.

### Combat

Individual corpse flies are too small to have characteristics, and attempts to engage them in battle are pointless. They can be destroyed with fire or driven off using smoke but most other attacks are useless.

An undead creature attacked by one jar's worth of corpse flies suffers 1 hit point of damage to each location for 1D6+1 rounds. After this time, the flies dissipate. Any armour worn by the victim offers no protection against these burrowing insects' vicious bites. However, an undead creature with 3 or more AP on a location cannot be injured in that location by corpse fly bites.

## Fire Stems

This rare plant flourishes in the most unpredictable of places; they have been known to spring up on dusty plains and in desert hollows, but are equally likely to be found within a swamp or sprouting from a shady forest floor. Whatever conditions govern the growth of fire stems, it is not the environment – at least not in any conventional sense. This peculiar distribution has led some alchemists to theorise that these plants feed on magic. Others speculate that they were created by a 'pyromancer' long ago, and others still that they come from another world.

Fire stems consist of two distinct parts – the plant itself and the bright orange and red berries they produce every spring. The plant, if ingested, has a spicy flavour, reminiscent of chillies. The berries have a rich, tangy taste. Most animals find both too potent to eat, though there are exceptions; goats seem extremely fond of fire stems. When eaten individually, neither ingredient is

noteworthy, but when consumed together the result is, quite literally, explosive.

A minute or so (2D6 rounds) after a creature eats a mixture of stems and berries, it develops a swollen stomach. Shortly after that (the following round), the creature begins to belch. As the gas leaves the creature's mouth, it bursts into flame. Most creatures find this extremely alarming.

It is possible to aim a fiery belch at a target up to 3m away. The attack is considered to have a 50% chance of hitting. The target may attempt to avoid the attack with a Dive reaction. A creature struck by the flaming burp suffers 1D6+2 damage to a random location. The consumption of a single fire stem results in 1D6 flaming burps, with each occurring in consecutive rounds.

Plucked fire stems lose their potency after 1 day. This may be extended to two days with a successful Lore (Plant) test.

A Lore (Plant) test with a -20% penalty successfully identifies a fire stem.



## Glow Root

By day, the stems of glow roots curl up tightly, closing their lantern-like heads; as soon as night falls, they unfurl their leaves and emit a pale greenish glow, comparable in brightness to a candle.

It is said that the light of a glow root has saved many a lost soul. Clusters of them line the paths and tracks through forests and plains in the quiet places of the world. Whether the plants were planted along such routes or the routes became popular because of the presence of the glow roots, few can say for certain. Whichever, traveller's blessing – as this root has come to be known – is a most useful plant.

When plucked, a glow root continues to glow for up to an hour (1D6 x 10 minutes), providing the same illumination as a candle.

A Lore (Plants) test is required to successfully identify a glow root. At night, this check receives a +40% bonus.

A Lore (Plants) test with a -10% penalty enables a character to double the lifespan of a plucked glow root.

## Viper's Tongue

These tall, reedy plants are notoriously difficult to find, and take root in only the most verdant soil. With a bitter taste, few animals will choose to eat them, though humanoids have learned that they possess a useful property.

A creature that consumes a viper's tongue gains a +2 bonus to his Dexterity. This lasts for 3D6 minutes. At the end of this time, the character feels lethargic and confused (1 level of fatigue and a -2 penalty to Intelligence). The confusion lasts for 1D6 minutes. The fatigue may be recovered normally.

A successful Lore (Plant) test identifies a Viper's Tongue plant.



# THE STAFF OF IBIS

AN ADVENTURE FOR 9<sup>TH</sup> LEVEL CHARACTERS, BY ERIC K. RODRIGUEZ.

*'Our god takes in all that would be faithful.'*

*- Hsis'Arul, High Priest of Set.*

*'Aye, as a snake takes in its meal.'*

*- anonymous citizen of Khemi.*

## WHAT CAME BEFORE

Recently, a High Priest of Set, Hsis'Arul, has learned that priests of Ibis have gathered in the ruins of the Dead city of Kaetta along the border of Shem and Stygia, in an attempt to recover an artefact of their god. Hsis'Arul has received permission from King Ctesphon IV, Stygia's ruler, to take a large company of Stygian soldiers down the river Styx, cross over into Shem and stop the priests of Ibis before they recover whatever it is they are looking for. Hsis'Arul has gathered Stygian war chariots and Shemite mercenaries mounted on Stygian warhorses.

The priests of Ibis have gathered in the dead city of Kaetta in the hopes of recovering a sacred artefact known as the 'Staff of Ibis'. Six staffs are known to exist, but the only known owner of a Staff of Ibis is Kalanthes, High priest of Ibis. The staff is said to be made of solid gold, capped with an intricate carving of Ibis' head. Kalanthes has sent one of his pupils, Ishlan of Ibis, and about 30 followers to the dead city of Kaetta to search through the ancient ruins and discover the location of

the lost Staff of Ibis. The characters can be brought in as mercenaries, friends of the god Ibis or actual followers. Ishlan has managed to find a large cache of opals buried within the ruins of Kaetta that he planned to take back with him for the temple's coffers. However, he can be persuaded to pay these out to the adventures for their services if money is what they desire.

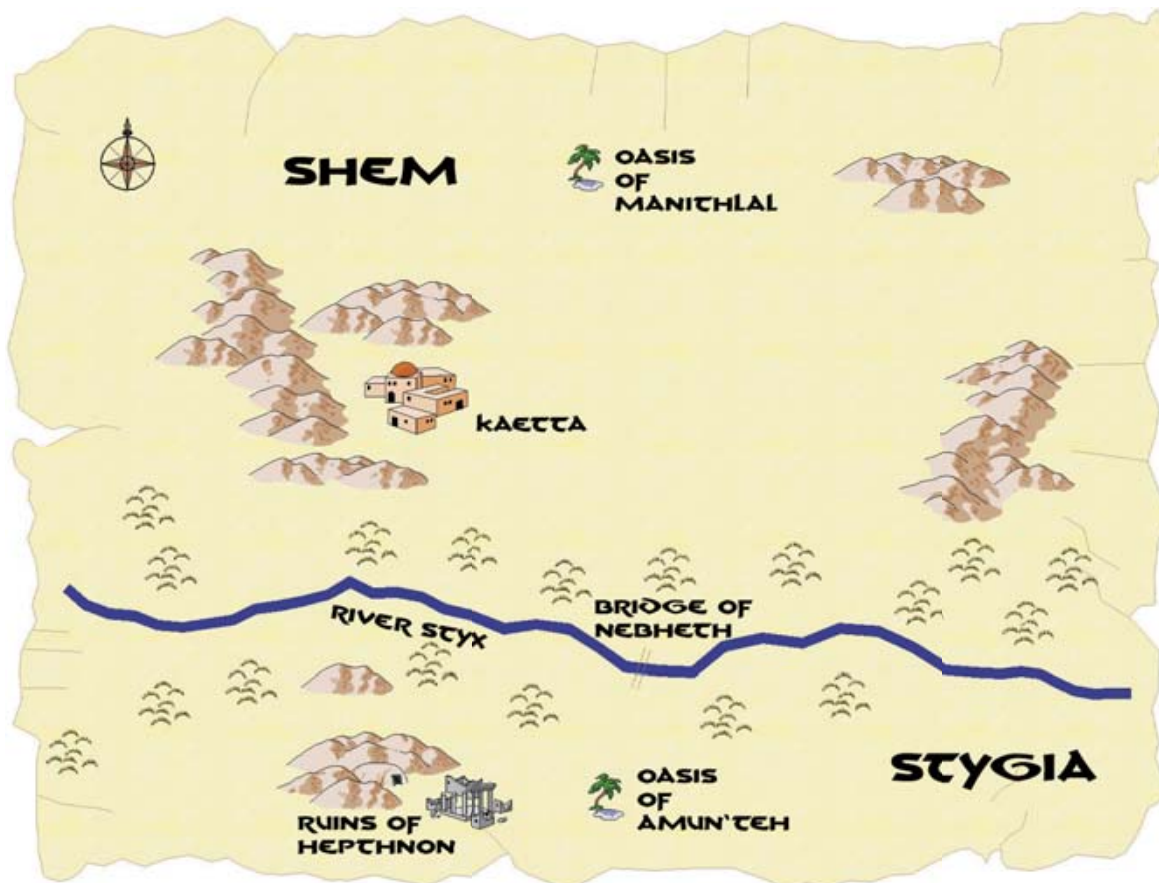
The adventures could have several encounters on the way to Kaetta – one is provided as an example. When they arrive they can assist Ishlan and his followers with searching the ruins underneath the desecrated temple of Mitra. Eventually they find an ancient rectory of the temple of Ibis that is semi-intact. Inside they will find crumbling, ancient scrolls that state that the staff was taken by an ancient Stygian lord known as Hepthnon. Hepthnon raided the lands now known as Shem generations ago and used the stolen wealth to build his burial tomb. Hepthnon's tomb lies across the River Styx in Stygia proper and is almost completely buried by the desert. Ishlan will implore or even bribe the characters to get them to go across the river and recover the Staff of Ibis.

Once the characters accept Ishlan's offer they will leave Kaetta and travel south to the River Styx. Again, a sample encounter is provided to keep them busy. When the characters reach the ancient bridge of Nebheth, Hsis'Arul and his soldiers should be close behind. If the

characters can get across the bridge and destroy it, they will slow Hsis'Arul down significantly, since none of his men will be willing to ford the river with so many giant crocodiles present.

The ruins of Hepthnon's tomb can still be seen rising from the burning sands. A search will reveal a weakened section of stone that can be broken apart and provide access into the tomb. Once inside, the characters will face few traps or encounters until they reach the burial chamber of Hepthnon himself. Hepthnon has been gifted with the 'Kiss of Set', a process that changes a human into a serpent-man of Set. Hepthnon has been magically preserved and sealed within his tomb and he will rise to destroy all who attempt to steal his treasure or violate his earthly remains. He is assisted in this venture by his one-time consort, Sasshia, who has also been transformed into an unaging magical beast.

Once Hepthnon is defeated, the characters can search the burial chamber and find several valuable items along with the Staff of Ibis. On the way out of the temple, they will encounter Hsis'Arul and his men, who have finally caught up with them. Hopefully the characters survive to give Ishlan the Staff of Ibis. With another staff in the possession of the clergy, the cult of Ibis will be more powerful and will be able to defend itself more adequately against the priesthood of Set.



## OASIS OF MANITHLAL

A sample encounter of the sort that the characters could have as they travel to the dead city of Kaetta. The Games Master is encouraged to adjust the quantity and tone of these incidental encounters to suit his group.

After several days of hard riding across the savannahs of Shem and the desert that borders the River Styx, the group should come upon the Oasis of Manithlal. Once, when the city of Kaetta was a thriving waypoint for merchant caravans and traders, the Oasis of Manithlal

saw hundreds of travellers pass beneath its green palm trees every day. However, with the destruction of Kaetta and the abandonment of the old trade routes, the Oasis of Manithlal has become a watering hole for bandits, brigands and criminals seeking to avoid civilised contact. As the group nears the oasis, they will see the remains of ancient outbuildings and way shelters, half covered by the desert sands. As they approach closer, the characters will notice several white tents and the braying of camels.

At the edge of the oasis, the group will be confronted by four men, armed with scimitars and spears. All of the men are dressed in desert robes and kaftans, and appear to be of Shemite descent. One of the armed men will step forward and begin speaking in Shemite. If none of the characters are fluent in Shemite, then he will try Stygian and Kothic. The large man speaking introduces himself as Barouz and claims that he is a Shemite trader from the city of Shushan. Barouz tells the characters that he and his three sons were on their way to the city of Yamman, when bandits waylaid their caravan and they were forced to flee into the desert to avoid being murdered. Barouz remembered the old stories his father had told him about an oasis near the dead city of Kaetta and had risked the burning desert in hopes that the stories were true. He and his sons have been at the oasis for the last six days and were planning on leaving soon. Barouz offers the use of his camp and his hospitality to the adventures, as long as they mean him and his sons no harm. If the characters agree, Barouz and his sons will lower their weapons and welcome the group into their camp.

Barouz and his sons are not what they appear to be. As the group relaxes at the oasis, they will begin to see that some things that Barouz has told them do not seem to be the truth. Characters that make a successful Survival check (DC 20) will notice that Barouz's camp seems to be more permanent than just six days. There is a strange smell that occasionally blows through the camp with the desert breezes, but the source of it is unknown. Characters may also notice that Barouz and his sons will keep their distance and become more and more withdrawn as night approaches. As the sun sets and the lengthy shadows begin to creep across the desert dunes, Barouz and his sons will disappear without a trace. Characters that try to track Barouz and his sons will notice that the desert sands seem to swallow up any track or trace of them.

If the group decides to stay the night in the camp, they will notice a full moon rising over the desert dunes, providing a faint, silvery illumination. Around midnight, Barouz and his sons return to the camp, wearing their true forms. Barouz and his sons are were-hyenas and have been waylaying travellers to the oasis for months. Barouz lures wayfarers to the oasis with whatever story is needed and then he and his sons murder them while they sleep. The strange smells that have been wafting through the camp are coming from a small outcropping of stones about a mile from the oasis where Barouz has been storing the corpses of his victims. Barouz and his sons will fight in their animal forms with their natural weapons. If Barouz is killed, there is a 30% chance that his remaining offspring will flee into the desert. A successful search of Barouz will find that he does not have anything of value on him, except a bronze key with moon and star carvings upon it. A difficult Search of

Barouz's tent (DC 30) reveals a strongbox buried under the tent floor, covered by a thin layer of sand. A character with the Disable Device skill should be allowed a check (DC 23) to find a poisoned needle trap within the lid of the chest. Characters that attempt to open the chest, without the key, must make a successful Reflex save (DC 20) to avoid the trap. Characters that fail their saving throw will be struck by the needle, which is covered in Barouz's lycanthropic blood. An infected character will not notice any symptoms until the next month's full moon, at which time he will be transformed as if struck by an *awful rite of the were-beast* spell.

Inside Barouz's strongbox is a collection of all the valuables and trinkets that he has taken from his victims over the last few years: 155 gold pieces of various mints, 246 silver pieces, 2 jewelled talismans of ancient Zamoran design covered in spider images, 3 gold necklaces, 22

semi-precious stones, 3 rare stones, 2 jewelled daggers with gold scabbards, a dark blue robe made of Khitain silk, one set of thieves tools made in Arenjun, and one onyx prayer statue of Derketo.

Barouz's sons use the statistics for werehyenas as given on page 329 of *Conan: The Roleplaying Game*. Barouz himself is a stronger specimen, and uses the statistics in the box on the next page:

Given Barouz's increased movement in the desert and his ability to Hide even without cover or concealment (although not while directly observed), it is entirely possible that he will escape the initial confrontation and continue to dog the party with hit-and-run tactics as they travel through the desert.

## THE DEAD CITY OF KAETTA

The dead city of Kaetta has been abandoned for over 150 years. A century and a half ago a large earthquake shook the Kaettan plateau, causing catastrophic damage and destruction. Many regarded the shaking of the earth as a punishment from the gods, as if the Kaettan people incurred the wrath of the immortals. Others claimed that Stygian sorcerers were wrathful at a Mitran temple so close to their 'holy' land. Whatever the case,

*'I have power, wealth and wisdom. All these things were given to me by my god Set. No god is greater or more powerful. May his reign last eternal.'*

*-Yulshan IV, Prince of Stygia,  
three days before his sacrifice.*

### OASIS OF MANITHAL



## BAROUZ

Shemite Werehyena, 10<sup>th</sup> level Nomad

Medium Humanoid (Human, Shapechanger)

|                          | Human Form                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Hyena Form                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                          | Medium Humanoid (Human, Shapechanger)                                                                                                                                                                                          | Medium Humanoid (Human, Shapechanger)                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Hit Dice:                | 10d10+3d8+26 (94 hp)                                                                                                                                                                                                           | 10d10+3d8+46 (114 hp)                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Initiative:              | +15 (Reflex +9, Dex +2, Improved Initiative +4)                                                                                                                                                                                | +17 (Reflex +9, Dexterity +4, Improved Initiative +4)                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Speed:                   | 40 ft                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | 60 ft                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Dodge Defence:           | 23 (+5 Nomad, +2 natural, +2 Dex, +1 Dodge, +3 Favoured Terrain)                                                                                                                                                               | 25 (+5 Nomad, +2 natural, +4 Dex, +1 Dodge, +3 Favoured Terrain)                                                                                                                                                               |
| Parry Defence:           | 16 (+5 Nomad, +1 Str)                                                                                                                                                                                                          | -                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| DR:                      | 4 (+4 werehyena)                                                                                                                                                                                                               | 6 (+2 hyena, +4 werehyena)                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Base Attack/<br>Grapple: | +11/+12                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | +11/+16                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Attack:                  | Scimitar +13 melee (1d8+1, AP 3)                                                                                                                                                                                               | Bite +16 melee (1d8+7, AP 6)                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Full Attack:             | Scimitar +13/+8/+3 melee (1d8+1, AP 3) and knife +12/+7/+2 melee (1d4+1, AP 1)                                                                                                                                                 | Bite +16/+11/+6 melee (1d8+7, AP 6)                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Space/Reach:             | 5 ft/5 ft                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | 5 ft/5 ft                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Special Attacks:         | Nomad Charge                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Nomad Charge, Trip                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Special Qualities:       | Favoured Terrain (Desert +3, Plains +1), Born to the Saddle, Improved Mobility, Alternate Form, Hyena Empathy, Low-Light Vision, Scent                                                                                         | Favoured Terrain (Desert +3, Plains +1), Born to the Saddle, Improved Mobility, Alternate Form, Hyena Empathy, Low-Light Vision, Scent                                                                                         |
| Saves:                   | Fort +10, Ref +11, Will +5                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Fort +12, Ref +13, Will +5                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Abilities:               | Str 12, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 9, Wis 11, Cha 10                                                                                                                                                                                  | Str 20, Dex 18, Con 16, Int 9, Wis 11, Cha 10                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Skills:                  | Appraise +1, Bluff +9, Heal +2, Hide +18, Listen +12, Move Silently +18, Search +2, Spot +13, Survival +15                                                                                                                     | Appraise +1, Bluff +9, Heal +2, Hide +20, Listen +12, Move Silently +20, Search +2, Spot +13, Survival +15                                                                                                                     |
| Feats:                   | Alertness, Armoured Stealth, Combat Reflexes, Diehard, Dodge, Endurance, Improved Initiative, Improved Two-Weapon Combat, Iron Will, Self-Sufficient, Stealthy, Toughness, Track, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (Scimitar) | Alertness, Armoured Stealth, Combat Reflexes, Diehard, Dodge, Endurance, Improved Initiative, Improved Two-Weapon Combat, Iron Will, Self-Sufficient, Stealthy, Toughness, Track, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (Scimitar) |
| Equipment:               | Scimitar, knife, mail shirt (not worn in the desert heat, can be found in his tent, oiled and ready for use with the Armoured Stealth feat)                                                                                    | Fangs and savagery                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

(These statistics include all Nomad bonuses applicable for fighting in a desert environment. For details of his special attacks and special qualities, please see *Conan: The Roleplaying Game*.)

the upheaval destroyed the great city and most of the people that lived there. The few that did survive spread rumours of the 'curse of the gods' and insured that no others would ever venture to Kaetta again. Merchant and caravan routes changed, commonly used roads disappeared and Kaetta became the dead city that it is today.

The ascent is easy and should be free of any encounters. Characters will notice that Kaetta was a large city in its days of glory. However, very few buildings still stand and most of these are hollow shells of brick and mortar that creak and moan when the wind blows. A broken, cobblestone path is all that remains of the city's main thoroughfare. As the group moves through the winding city streets, they will notice that many of the alleyways and thoroughfares are pitted with cracks and holes. Characters that make a successful Intelligence check (DC 18), will guess that the entire plateau is unstable and possibly hollow or honeycombed.

Characters can make a successful Spot check (DC 18) to notice a small wisp of smoke coming from a semi-intact two-storey building near the heart of the city. As the group approaches the building, several men with crossbows will come out of hiding and tell the characters to stay where they are and not to make any sudden moves. Ishlan of Ibis will speak with the characters to determine their purpose and allegiance. Once Ishlan is convinced that the group is friendly or the allies that he has been waiting for, then he will order his men to stand down. Ishlan leads the group to a large, two-storey building that looks to have been a grain silo at one time.

Ishlan of Ibis is a middle aged man who looks to be of Nemedian blood with a shaven head and no facial hair. His skin is tanned and he stands just shy of six feet tall. Ishlan will welcome the group into his camp

and provide food and water for his new guests. Once Ishlan feels the group is comfortable, he will begin to relate his tale of the happenings so far. Ishlan will tell the characters of his long and perilous journey from the safety of his home in Nemedia to the merciless desert of Shem. He will be brief in his story, mentioning most things as trivial and of no consequence. However, once his story reaches the dead city of Kaetta, his voice takes on an ominous tone. Ishlan will tell the group that he

does not believe the city was destroyed by the gods or some vengeful wizards. Ishlan believes that the city was built upon the remains of an ancient fissure or tear in the earth that had nothing to do with magic but was actually formed from the aged earth. He believes that the city's large size eventually led to its own downfall. He will also relate to the adventurers that he is searching for an ancient temple of Ibis said to have been in the city over 150 years ago.

## THE MANTICORE

Large Aberration

|                             |                                                                        |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Hit Dice:</b>            | 6d10+24 (57)                                                           |
| <b>Initiative:</b>          | +4 (+2 Dexterity, +2 Reflex)                                           |
| <b>Speed:</b>               | 30 ft, fly 50 ft (clumsy)                                              |
| <b>Dodge</b>                | 18 (+2 Dex, +6 natural)                                                |
| <b>Defence:</b>             |                                                                        |
| <b>Damage Reduction:</b>    | 6 (+6 natural)                                                         |
| <b>Base Attack/Grapple:</b> | +4/+9                                                                  |
| <b>Attack:</b>              | Claw +9 melee (2d4+5) or<br>6 spikes +7 ranged (1d8)                   |
| <b>Full Attack:</b>         | 2 claws +9 (2d4+5) and bite +7 (1d8+2) or<br>6 spikes +7 (1d8+2/19-20) |
| <b>Space/Reach:</b>         | 10 ft/5 ft                                                             |
| <b>Special Attacks:</b>     | Tail spikes                                                            |
| <b>Special Qualities:</b>   | Low-light vision, scent                                                |
| <b>Saves:</b>               | Fort+6, Ref +4, Will +6                                                |
| <b>Abilities:</b>           | Str 20, Dex 15, Con 19, Int 7, Wis 12, Cha 9                           |
| <b>Skills:</b>              | Listen +5, Spot +9, Survival +2                                        |
| <b>Feats:</b>               | Flyby Attack, Multiattack, Track,<br>Weapon Focus (spikes)             |

The manticore is an aberration created by the Sorcerer Manglas'Uthlal. Manglas was the chief sorcerer of the Crystal Triad during the golden days of the city of Kaetta. Manglas was known to have pulled many horrid abominations from his sorcerous vats during his life. The manticore was one of his greatest achievements; it struck fear and terror into the hearts of those that looked upon it. Before Manglas died, it was said that several manticores were birthed in his magical vats. However, no one knows whether this is true or not.

**Spikes (Ex):** With a snap of its tail, a manticore can loose a volley of six spikes as a standard action (make an attack roll for each spike). This attack has a range of 180 feet with no range increment. All targets must be within 30 feet of each other. The creature can launch only twenty-four spikes in any 24-hour period.

**Skills:** Manticores have a +4 racial bonus on Spot Checks.

Ishlan will continue with his story until a loud roar startles him and the other camp followers. Ishlan will immediately jump up and run to the nearest window. As his men begin to run downstairs with their weapons, a man's scream can be heard outside, followed by the loud roar of a lion. Eventually the characters should run outside and find several of Ishlan's followers gathered around a grisly carcass. Ishlan will tell the characters that the body is all that is left of the sentry that was on guard duty. Ishlan will confess to the characters that since arriving within Kaetta over three weeks ago, they have been attacked every three or four days by a lion. Even though none have seen the creature, it has the roar of a lion and leaves lionish claw marks on its victims. Ishlan and his men have been too busy searching and excavating the ruins to hunt the rogue lion down. The characters may choose to hunt the lion down themselves or they may ignore it, in which case it continues helping itself to a guard or two every three or four nights.

If the characters try to track the lion, a successful Survival skill check by someone with the Track feat (DC 19) will find tracks that lead toward the western part of the ruined city. Eventually the group tracks the creature to the remains of what was a tall and ancient tower. The debris, even after a century of decay, remains in a large pile about thirty feet tall at the top, its stones and masonry still showing sharp and clear edges.

The lord of the lair will jump down from the highest part of the pile and surprise the characters. The creature that leaps down from above is a manticore. This creature was formed in a wizard's laboratory and imprisoned in the tower ages ago. With the death of its master and the destruction of the tower, this creature has been free to roam the countryside. It normally hunts desert animals, but is stocking its larder (a nearby ruin) with human flesh now there is an abundance of its favoured prey. The manticore has the body of a lion, the wings of a

giant bat and the head of a wild man. Its tail sports several large, sharpened spikes that occasionally are used to bring down quarry like heavy darts. The manticore is a ferocious, feral creature that knows no mercy, but has an almost-human intelligence and cunning. It will fight to the death. If the characters manage to defeat the manticore, they will find that several of its body parts can be used as components for magical research. Characters that search the ruins of the tower will find the following: 45 silver pieces, 34 bronze trade pieces, a silvered mirror w/gold trim, a broken rod with a gargoyle figurine on top, and a blank journal of elephant hide with 36 vellum pages.

## THE LOST TEMPLE OF IBIS

*'Knowledge of one's own death can be a curse as well as a blessing. Better not to know and just be surprised when the day comes.'*

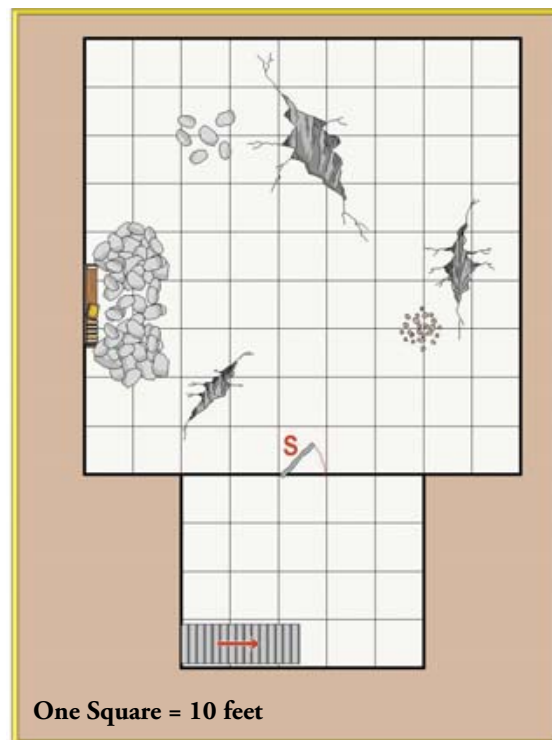
*-Jurlaruth, fallen Priest of Erlik.*

At some point during the fourth day, Ishlan will find the characters and be in a state of extreme excitement. He will relate to the characters that a ruined temple has been found and that the lost temple of Ibis was said to lie beneath it. Ishlan will implore the characters to aid the followers of Ibis in digging out the ruins. If the characters assist Ishlan and his men, then a buried staircase will be uncovered in two days time. If the characters are lazy, punish them with a reappearance by Barouz or the manticore (if either still lives).

Ishlan will insist that he be one of the first to descend the staircase into what was once a holy place of Ibis. If the group has been helpful or are allies of Ibis, then

Ishlan will insist that they join him in this most holiest of moments.

As the group descends the staircase into the ruined basement, they notice a strange smell that assaults their senses. Characters that make a successful Spot check (DC 18) notice wisps of smoke coming from cracks in the floor. Closer inspection of the smoke reveals that it is pungent and noxious. Characters that lean close to the smoke and breath it in are subject to its poisonous effects. Characters that stay in the basement for more than 10 rounds are also subject to the poison and must make a new saving throw every round thereafter – characters of weak constitution are likely to be overcome very quickly.



The foul smoke can be dispersed in a number of ways, the most expedient of which involve sorcery.

### FOUL SMOKE OF KAETTA

Inhaled poison: Fortitude save DC 15, primary and secondary damage 1d2 Wisdom.

A successful Search check (DC 18) reveals a secret door on the north side of the room, behind a torch sconce. The secret door opens up to a large square room, approximately 100 feet on a side. The room is littered with rock and other debris and several large cracks can be seen snaking their way across the floor. Ishlan will immediately run over to a section of the wall, where several wooden shelves can be seen buried under earth and stone. With the characters help in clearing the debris, Ishlan will find several ancient books and tomes in various stages of decay. He encourages everyone present to continue clearing the rubble in an attempt to salvage this ancient lore.

After a minute of digging, the characters may make a Listen check (DC 17) to hear noise coming from the cracks in the floor. Characters that succeed by 5 or more will hear what sounds like something or someone climbing up from below. After two rounds, the dead of Kaetta will start clawing their way up into the ancient temple of Ibis. The risen dead begin to crawl their way out of the crevasses, with slow and methodical movements. Characters will notice that the dead are dressed in different kinds of clothing and

### RISEN DEAD

The risen dead use the statistics as presented on page 325 of *Conan: The Roleplaying Game*.

accoutrements and most likely are the perished citizens of ancient Kaetta. Each round, one risen dead per player character crawls forth. After five rounds, it will become apparent that there is no end to the stream of walking dead coming forth from the fissures. If the group does not retreat back to the surface then Ishlan will make the suggestion that they should, even though he is reluctant to leave such great literary treasures behind. Once back on the surface, the characters and followers of Ibis can re-bury the staircase with rocks and debris.

Later that night, Ishlan will be reading through the recovered books of Ibis when he will jump up with a shout of excitement. He has found a passage relating to the missing artefact of Ibis. Ishlan will tell the adventures that the Staff of Ibis is mentioned within the ancient text that he is reading; however, his demeanour will sadden and he will advise them that it was stolen several years before the city of Kaetta was destroyed. Ishlan will continue to read and his mood will once again change. Ishlan relates to the adventures that the staff was stolen by an ancient Stygian lord who called himself 'Hepthnon'. Ishlan knows that ruins of the same name lie just across the River Styx, not more than three days travel from Kaetta. Ishlan knows that if he or his followers are found in Stygia they will suffer unspeakable tortures at the hands of the priests of Set. However, the characters are not only skilled adventurers, they are also eminently expendable. They could cross into Stygia, find the ruins of Hepthnon and return with the Staff of Ibis. If the group seems reluctant or wants more payment, Ishlan will bring forth a brown bag and pour its contents on the floor. The bag contains several uncut opals that glitter in the firelight. Ishlan had planned to take the sack back to Nemedra for the temple coffers; however he believes the Staff of Ibis to be worth far more and would be willing to trade the bag of gems for its return. Characters that make a successful Appraise check (DC 18) can estimate the value of the gems at over 8000 silver pieces. If the

characters agree to undertake the journey, Ishlan will provide them with seven days food and water. Ishlan will also insist on providing mounts for each character, so as to increase their chances for success. The characters should leave Kaetta the next morning and follow the lost road out of the southern part of the city into the desert wastes.

### SCORPION KINGS

As the characters leave the Kaettan plateau behind, the ground turns to desert and the road disappears beneath the burning sands. After half a day riding, the group comes under attack from some of the desert's most vicious creatures. A nest of four giant scorpions lies along the characters route from Kaetta to the River Styx. These creatures have grown extremely large over the last several years, feeding on wild camels and lions that cross their territory. The creatures will attempt a surprise attack and will strike at the characters' mounts more than the characters themselves. However, if a character manages to inflict damage on a giant scorpion, then it will immediately change its attacks to that person. If the adventures defeat the giant scorpions they will find little of value.

A possible complication of this encounter is the death of so many mounts that the characters have to travel across the desert at walking speed. In this case, they may well have to ration their supplies of food and water, and will probably arrive at their destination fatigued.

## SCORPION KING

|                          |                                                                 |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
|                          | Large Animal (vermin)                                           |
| Hit Dice:                | 5d8+10 (32 hp)                                                  |
| Initiative:              | +1 (+1 Reflex)                                                  |
| Speed:                   | 50 ft                                                           |
| Dodge                    | 17 (-1 size, +8 natural)                                        |
| Defence:                 |                                                                 |
| Damage                   | 4 (+4 natural)                                                  |
| Reduction:               |                                                                 |
| Base Attack/<br>Grapple: | +3/+11                                                          |
| Attack:                  | Claw +6 melee (1d6+4)                                           |
| Full Attack:             | 2 claws +6 melee (1d6+4) and sting +1 melee (1d6+2 plus poison) |
| Space/Reach:             | 10 ft/5 ft                                                      |
| Special<br>Attacks:      | Constrict 1d6+4, improved grab, poison                          |
| Special<br>Qualities:    | Low-light vision, tremorsense 60 ft., vermin traits             |
| Saves:                   | Fort +6, Ref +1, Will +1                                        |
| Abilities:               | Str 19, Dex 10, Con 14, Int -, Wis 10, Cha 2                    |
| Skills:                  | Climb +8, Hide +0, Spot +4                                      |

**Constrict (Ex):** A giant scorpion deals automatic claw damage on a successful grapple check.

**Improved Grab (Ex):** To use this ability, a giant scorpion must hit with a claw attack.

**Poison (Ex):** A giant scorpion has a poisonous sting. The Fortitude save is DC 14 and it deals 1d4 Con initial and secondary damage. The save DCs are Constitution-based.

**Tremorsense (Ex):** A giant scorpion is sensitive to vibrations in the ground and can automatically pinpoint the location of anything within 60 feet that is in contact with the ground.

**Skills:** A giant scorpion has a +4 racial bonus on Climb, Hide and Spot checks.

attacked by a giant crocodile. A character that falls (or wades, or swims) into the river will be attacked. Giant crocodiles have made the River Styx their home since recorded history. Considered sacred and highly revered by Stygians, the giant crocodile has ruled the Styx through fear and intimidation for ages.

The group should realise that disabling the bridge, once they're across, will definitely slow down the hostile Stygians racing toward them. The river is too deep for chariots at this point and it will take the Stygians several hours if not a full day to repair the bridge. The giant crocodiles will also delay their attempts at repairing the bridge. The characters should use this time wisely and quicken their pace toward the ruins of Hephthnon.

## THE OASIS OF AMUN-TEH



Half a day's travel from the bridge of Nebheth, the adventures reach the Oasis of Amun'Teh. It immediately becomes apparent that the oasis has not seen visitors for many years. The palms and plants that grow around the oasis are wild and untouched. Several sets of bones can be seen around the edge of the oasis, half covered

## THE ANCIENT BRIDGE OF NEBHETH

Assuming their mounts survive the encounter with the scorpions, a day and a half into the adventurers' journey they should reach the green marshland that borders the River Styx. As soon as the group is within two miles of the bridge of Nebheth, a large dust cloud will be seen in the distance, coming from the west. The character with the best Spot check will see two chariots and many horsemen, moving at high speed toward the bridge. Characters can make a difficult Spot check (DC 28)

to notice that the soldiers are flying Stygian Standards. The adventures should immediately recognise that they are outnumbered and should flee across the bridge. The bridge of Nebheth is of ancient design and is in poor repair. The bridge is made of sun cracked wood and frayed hemp rope, and sits only inches above the surface of the water. Characters that attempt to cross the bridge on horseback must make a successful Ride check (DC 19) to stay seated upon their steeds and cross the bridge successfully. However, any character crossing the bridge, whether on foot or horse, risks the chance of being attacked by the rulers of the river. There is a 10% chance that a creature crossing the bridge will be

by the shifting desert sands. Characters will notice that human bones are mixed in with animal bones. As the group nears the oasis a strong, rotting smell assails their senses. Hiding in the wild foliage (Hide check 23) are seven desert ghouls. These creatures have been bound to the Oasis of Amun'teh for almost 30 years. Cursed by an ancient sorcerer, the former thieves were granted a perverse immortality as punishment for their crimes. Left at the oasis to kill any who drink from its waters, these parodies of life constantly hunger for fresh blood. As soon as the first character moves within 80 feet of the oasis, the ghouls charge and attack. These creatures fight to the death. Even if destroyed, their bodies will reconstitute by the next new moon unless the curse is broken with a *greater warding* spell (make the magic attack roll against DC 27).

### AMUN-TEH GHOULS

The ghouls use the statistics as presented on page 323 of *Conan: The Roleplaying Game*.

The Ghouls do not care about material things and have no lair. However, over the years, the victims of the Ghouls have lost many items around the oasis and in its waters. Characters that take two hours to make a difficult Search check (DC 28) will find the following items: 24 silver pieces, a gold necklace with a hawk and serpent design, a jade and amethyst jewellery box containing 8 black lotus leaves, and a Stygian axe-mace (Akbitanan quality).

*'Any man that willingly worships Set is either evil or insane. Most of the time I have found they are both.'*  
-Heragard of Shumar, priest of Mitra.

## THE RUINS OF HEPTHNON

As the characters approach the ruins of Hepthnon, they will see a series of worn statues and columns half buried by the sands. Most of the architecture and designs date back to the ancient Stygian culture of about 300 years ago. Most of the columns are carved in the shape of river reeds that have been bundled together; however, some bear the likeness of serpents. Characters that make a moderate Spot check (DC 20) will notice that a few of

the columns bear worn writing upon them. Characters that have Decipher Script skill (DC 28) can decipher the writing as prayers in homage to the dark god Set. The writings also confirm these ruins as the final resting place of Lord Hepthnon, ruler of middle Stygia.

The characters should begin a thorough search of the ruins, looking for an entrance into Hepthnon's tomb. The characters will find a large crack on the side of the main ruins, half buried beneath the sands. Anyone of Medium size may pass through easily, as may anyone of

### GIANT CROCODILE

|                      |                                                           |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
|                      | Huge Animal                                               |
| Hit Dice:            | 7d8+28 (59 hp)                                            |
| Initiative:          | +6 (+5 Reflex, +1 Dexterity)                              |
| Speed:               | 20 ft. (4 squares) swim 30 ft.                            |
| Dodge                | 16 (-2 size, +1 Dex, +7 natural)                          |
| Defence:             |                                                           |
| Damage Reduction:    | 7 (+7 natural)                                            |
| Base Attack/Grapple: | +5/+21                                                    |
| Attack:              | Bite +11 melee (2d8+12) or tail slap +11 melee (1d12+12)  |
| Full Attack:         | Bite +11 melee (2d8+12) and tail slap +11 melee (1d12+12) |
| Space/Reach:         | 15 ft/10 ft                                               |
| Special Attacks:     | Improved grab                                             |
| Special Qualities:   | Hold breath, low-light vision                             |
| Saves:               | Fort +9, Ref +6, Will +3                                  |
| Abilities:           | Str 27, Dex 12, Con 19, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 2              |
| Skills:              | Hide +1*, Listen +5, Spot +5, Swim +16                    |
| Feats:               | Alertness, Endurance, Skill Focus (Hide)                  |

These huge creatures usually live in the Styx River and can be more than 20 feet long. Giant crocodiles fight and behave like their smaller cousins.

**Skills:** A giant crocodile has a +8 bonus on any Swim check to perform some special action or avoid a hazard. It can always take 10 on a Swim check, even if distracted or endangered. It can use the run action while swimming, provided it swims in a straight line.

\*A giant crocodile gains a +4 racial bonus on Hide checks when in the water. Further, a crocodile can lie in the water with only its eyes and nostrils showing, gaining a +10 cover bonus on Hide checks.

## SASSHIA

Large Magical Beast

|                             |                                                                 |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Hit Dice:</b>            | 9d10+27 (76 hp)                                                 |
| <b>Initiative:</b>          | +8 (+6 Reflex, +2 Dexterity)                                    |
| <b>Speed:</b>               | 60 ft                                                           |
| <b>Dodge</b>                | 17 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +6                                         |
| <b>Defence:</b>             | natural)                                                        |
| <b>Damage Reduction:</b>    | 5 (+5 natural)                                                  |
| <b>Base Attack/Grapple:</b> | +9/+19                                                          |
| <b>Attack:</b>              | Touch +14 melee (1d4 Wisdom drain)                              |
| <b>Full Attack:</b>         | Touch +14 melee (1d4 Wisdom drain) and 2 claws +9 melee (1d4+4) |
| <b>Space/Reach:</b>         | 10 ft/5 ft                                                      |
| <b>Special Attacks:</b>     | Wisdom drain                                                    |
| <b>Special Qualities:</b>   | Low-light vision                                                |
| <b>Saves:</b>               | Fort +9, Ref +8, Will +5                                        |
| <b>Abilities:</b>           | Str 22, Dex 15, Con 16, Int 8, Wis 15, Cha 8                    |
| <b>Skills:</b>              | Bluff +3, Hide +6, Listen +6, Spot +6, Survival +6              |
| <b>Feats:</b>               | Power Attack, Cleave, Endurance                                 |

Sasshia has the upper body of an attractive Stygian woman and the lower body of a large black panther. She wields a jewelled dagger in one hand and her claws are sharp, but her insidious touch is a more dangerous weapon.

**Wisdom Drain (Su):** Sasshia drains 1d4 points of Wisdom each time she hits with her melee touch attack.

Large size who is not wearing medium or heavy armour. The tomb is pitch black and only those characters with illumination or a special ability will be able to see.

As the group descends into the Stygian tomb, their light sources are whipped back in forth by the desert winds now blowing into the ancient catacomb. Many different piles of bones can be seen lining the walls of the tomb and the various alcoves along the passageway. Ancient writings and artwork depict Stygian warriors and slaves at work building Hepthnon's final resting place. Priests and sorcerers can be seen intoning dark prayers and casting powerful spells over Hepthnon's tomb. Each level of the tomb has a large set of stairs that descends to the next level.

As the group makes its way farther into the tomb, the wind fades and the darkness becomes more ominous. Echoing sounds can be heard coming from all directions and shadows seem to move of their own accord. Near the last level, several braziers set along the wall light up on their own in a surprising flash of light. Near the last set of stairs descending into the tomb can be seen several large paintings of serpents, ruling over men; enslaving and consuming them by the thousands. At the end of the stairs a large set of wooden doors bound with bronze fittings and studs can be seen looming before the adventurers. The door is locked, but a difficult Open Locks check (DC 35) can be made to open it. If the check is unsuccessful, then the door can also be battered down (hardness 5, 100 hp). Inside is the final resting place of Hepthnon.

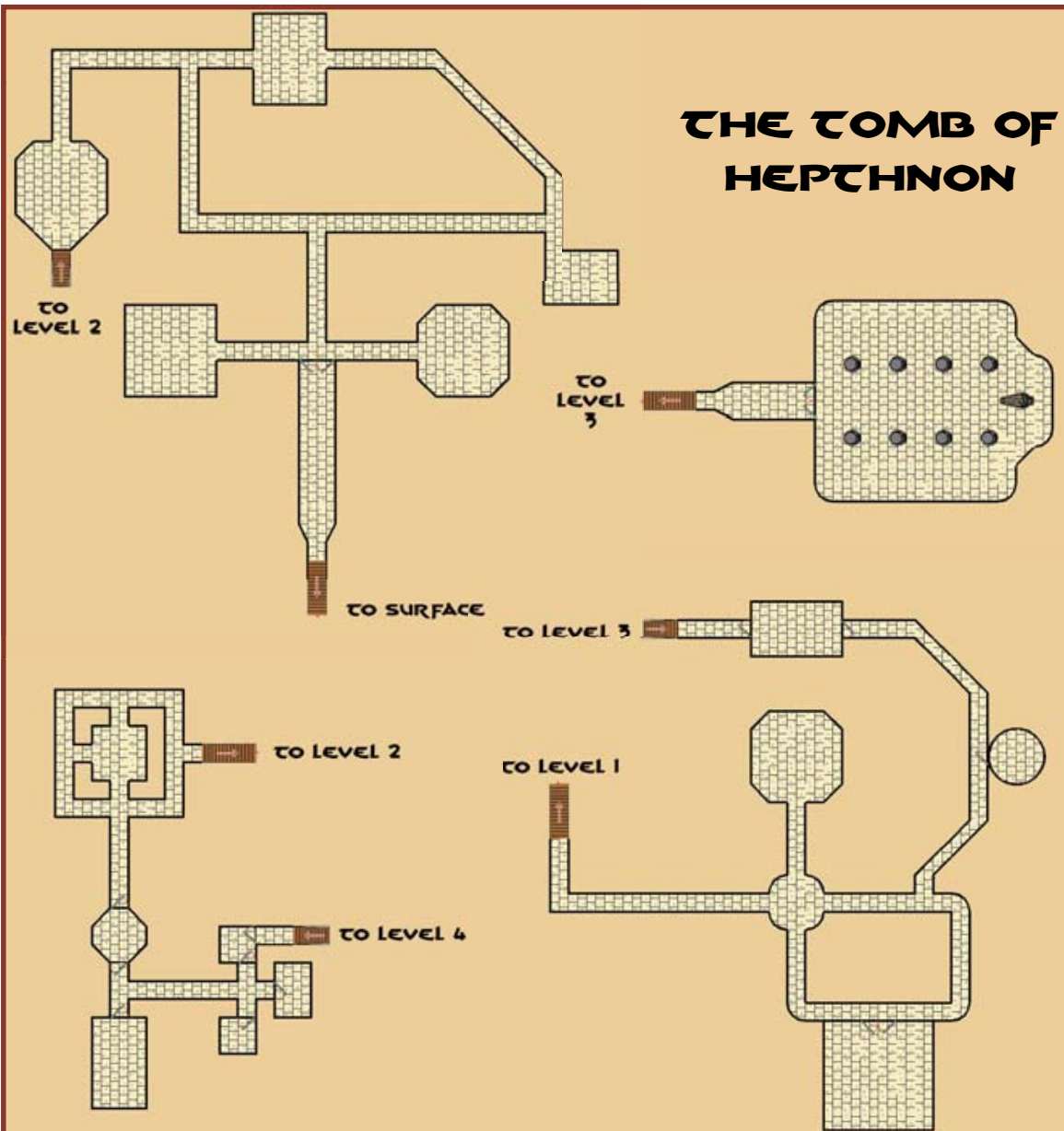
Whether or not Hepthnon has been awakened ahead of time, his guardian will defend him from anyone who enters the tomb. Sasshia was Hepthnon's lover in life and now his unsleeping guardian. Born as a minor noble, Sasshia longed for the life of luxury and sensuality that only wealth could give her. She became

lover to the lord Hepthnon and for many years served him faithfully. When the time came for her death and embalming within Hepthnon's tomb, she could not bear the thought of dying when her lord would go on living. Sasshia begged Hepthnon for another choice and he gave her one. Hepthnon's priests and sorcerers used their arcane knowledge to change Sasshia into a magical beast, bound to guard her lord and lover for all eternity. Sasshia will attack any who enter the tomb with a savagery of an animal and the cunning of a woman. She will not surrender and will fight unto the death.

Once Sasshia is defeated, the adventurers will have to face Hepthnon. Entombed ages ago, Hepthnon had the most powerful sorcerers cast spells of preservation and protection upon him. He was also highly favoured by the priesthood of Set, who on his behalf beseeched Set for his blessing. Set 'answered' and Hepthnon was given the 'Kiss of Set'. The Kiss of Set is a blessing given only to those who are favoured by the serpent god, that transforms them from a mortal shell to that of a serpent man of Set. An ancient race that once ruled the world, the serpent men of Set slowly dwindled in numbers and eventually disappeared long ago. Legends still persist of hidden enclaves or dark caverns where these creatures sacrifice to their god and plot the downfall of men.

At first, adventures may well mistake Hepthnon for a large Stygian, dressed in ancient armour and wielding a wicked-looking battleaxe. However, upon closer inspection, characters will notice many features that are not human. Hepthnon has a forked tongue, pointed teeth and scaly patches of dark green all over his body. His eyes are unblinking yellow slits that glow with an unearthly radiance. When Hepthnon speaks, his voice is a sibilant whisper that grinds upon the sanity of all who hear it. Hepthnon will settle for nothing less than the destruction of all who have violated his tomb. He will make it clear that after he has slain or driven off

## THE TOMB OF HEPHTHON



The Games Master may wish to add some random encounters, depending on the skill of the adventures. More powerful groups may need more encounters and weaker groups less. The Games Master may wish to add their own traps and puzzles and are encouraged to change the tomb to match their specific needs.

all the defilers, he will march forth into the world to once again murder and plunder in the name of Set. Hephthnon cannot be bribed or reasoned with and will fight to the death.

Born to a wealthy and powerful family, Hephthnon enjoyed the privilege of status. At the age of 13, his family was nearly wiped out by a black plague that swept through the city of Luxur. One of the few to survive, he took control of the family's holdings and began to build up what was left of his family's wealth. Having served in the king's army for over five years, Hephthnon made many friends and enemies. On his 23<sup>rd</sup> birthday, several different noblemen, jealous of Hephthnon's wealth and glory, joined together and nearly annihilated Hephthnon's remaining family and servants in a dark night of assassinations and murder. Hephthnon retreated into the deep desert, taking with him the remains of his house and retainers, vowing to return one day and exact his revenge.

Three years later, the 'Scourge of the Desert' returned to Luxur at the head of a mercenary army. Hephthnon, after receiving blessings from a dark oracle of Set, set forth on a campaign to destroy all the noble houses that had a hand in his family's demise. The king, having no choice, allowed Hephthnon's army to enter the city and massacre his enemies. The king expected Hephthnon to ask for the throne, or simply kill him and take it, but Hephthnon did no such thing. Having tortured and killed all his

## HEPTHNON

Male snake-man of Set, Stygian Noble 10/Soldier 5

Medium Humanoid

|                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Hit Dice:            | 10d8 + 5d10 + 60 (132 hp)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Initiative:          | +12 (+8 Dexterity, +4 Reflex)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Speed:               | 30 ft. (base 40 ft, slowed by armour)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Dodge Defence:       | 18 (+6 base, +1 Dexterity, +1 Dodge) or 22 against missiles (+4 shield, and Archer's Bane)                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Parry Defence:       | 29 (+8 base, +6 Strength, +1 Parry, +4 shield)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Damage Reduction:    | 12 (+9 armour, +3 natural)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Base Attack/Grapple: | +12/+18                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Attack:              | Axe of Hepthnon +20 melee (1d10+8, 19-20/x3, AP 12)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Full Attack:         | Axe of Hepthnon +20/+15/+10 melee (1d10+8, 19-20/x3, AP 12)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Space/Reach:         | 5 ft/5 ft                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Special Qualities:   | Special Regional Features (+2), Lead By Example (+4), Enhanced Leadership, Formation Combat (Heavy Infantry)                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Magic Attack:        | +12 (+2 racial, +7 Cha, +2 Noble, +1 Soldier)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Power Points:        | 14 (base 10, +4 Wis)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Saves:               | Fort +11, Reflex +12, Will +12                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Abilities:           | Str 22, Dex 26, Con 19, Int 19, Wis 19, Cha 24                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Skills:              | Climb +14, Craft (alchemy) +9, Diplomacy +20, Handle Animal +11, Intimidate +25, Knowledge (arcane) +10, Knowledge (geography (Stygia)) +17, Knowledge (history (ancient Stygia)) +17, Knowledge (religion (Set)) +17, Perform (ritual) +17, Profession (soldier) +12, Ride +23, Search +12, Sense Motive +17 |
| Feats:               | Archer's Bane, Cleave, Dodge, Exotic Weapon Proficiency: Stygian Longbow, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Critical: Battleaxe, Improved Sunder, Leadership, Menacing Aura, Parry, Power Attack, Steely Gaze, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus: Battleaxe, Weapon Specialisation: Battleaxe                      |
| Leadership:          | 32 (15 level, +7 Cha, +3 noble, +5 <i>Axe of Hepthnon</i> , +2 base of operations: the Tomb of Hepthnon)                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Possessions:         | Mail hauberk and breastplate, <i>Axe of Hepthnon</i> (an Akbitanan battleaxe so glorious that it grants +5 to one's Leadership score), large shield, pouch of Stygian tomb dust (2 pinches), <i>the Bracers of Habruthil</i> (grant the Brawl feat while worn), Stygian war-spear                             |
| Spells:              | <i>Black plague, demonic pact, domination, entrance, raise corpse, summon demon</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

Hepthnon can be a very powerful antagonist if he is prepared for the adventurers. The Games Master may wish to have Hepthnon awaken only after the group has entered the burial tomb. However, if the group is competent and powerful, then the Games Master may wish Hepthnon awake and have had several rounds to prepare for their arrival, or several minutes if they had to smash the door down instead of opening it quietly.

enemies, Hepthnon left Luxur and travelled to the eastern desert where he built a temporary tent city and began his raiding campaigns into Shem. Hepthnon knew that he could not live forever, and he wished to repay Set for granting him revenge against his enemies.

Hepthnon began construction on his burial tomb and also ensured that it was a grand monument to Set. Hepthnon filled the tomb with art and paintings in homage to Set. He also plundered several cities and what wealth he did not pay his mercenaries was placed with him in his tomb. Almost ten years passed before Hepthnon's tomb was complete, but when it was done it rivalled that of any Stygian king. Having asked blessings

and prayers from Set's highest priests, Hepthnon was granted a very high honour among followers of Set and a powerful priest cast the ritual of the Kiss of Set. With his tomb complete and his transformation beginning, Hepthnon was placed in his tomb to await the completion.

However, Hepthnon was never released from his tomb at his appointed time. A massive sandstorm struck down upon his tomb and killed many of his followers. Others were scattered and never returned to their lord's tomb. The storm raged for three days, burying Hepthnon's tomb and stopping his followers from ever finding it. His name and burial place have been lost for centuries and few even remember his name.

Several large urns, wooden chests and leather sacks lie scattered about Hepthnon's tomb. Most of them are overflowing with trinkets and baubles of various makes and sizes. However, many of the items are made of clay, wood and papyrus that have disintegrated with time. Characters taking time to search can uncover one of the following things (choose or decide randomly) for every twenty minutes of searching:

- *The Staff of Ibis* (it is strongly recommended that this be discovered, as it's the point of the whole adventure)
- Gold and silver statuettes worth 5000 silver pieces

contd...

## THE KISS OF SET

The *Kiss of Set* is not so much a spell as it is a ritual. The ritual consumes thirty doses of black lotus incense and a like amount of regular incense (total cost 10000 silver pieces), must be overseen by at least five priests of Set (5<sup>th</sup> level Scholars with the Priest feat) and led by a priest of Set with at least 15 ranks in Knowledge (Mysteries: Set).<sup>\*</sup> The leader of the ritual must make a Perform (Ritual) check against a DC of 32. The subject of the ritual and the other priests may assist this check if they have at least one rank in Perform (Ritual).

If the lead priest successfully performs the ritual, the subject must make three Will saves with a DC of 30. A devout follower of Set gains a +4 circumstance bonus on these saves. If they fail the first, they are instantly slain by the magical energies coursing through them and their body disintegrates into swarms of snakes that attack everyone present in a violent frenzy. If they fail the second, their body and mind are transformed into that of a Son of Set, utterly loyal to the lead priest. If they fail the third save, their body lapses into a trance state as normal, but when they awaken they will be barely sentient beast-men who live to rend the living and drink their blood.

If everything goes according to plan, the subject enters a trance state similar to a coma for six months. During this time, he does not need to eat, drink or breathe, and cannot be awakened by outside stimuli. When his physical and mental transformation into a serpent-man of Set is complete, he awakes, a creature wholly inhuman and committed to the cause of Set.

The new serpent-man of Set gains 1d6 points in every attribute, and automatically wakes knowing six spells in up to three sorcery styles. To power this new magic, he gains 10 power points plus his Wisdom modifier, and each time he gains a level thereafter he gains additional power points equal to his Wisdom modifier.

It is recommended that the Games Master does not let Player Characters have access to this ritual and that it should only be used as an adventure plot or for an antagonist Non Player Character.

<sup>\*</sup>See *Faith and Fervour* for more details of mysteries.

- Seven leather sacks with 8000 silver coins of Stygian mint
- Small golden vial with four pinches of black lotus powder
- A silver-chased oak jewellery box
- 20 silver ingots (each valued at 100 silver pieces)
- Two iron-bound casks with 156 miscellaneous precious and semi-precious stones
- A glass amphora bound with golden wire containing 2 doses of golden wine of Xuthal
- A cedar chest with Khitain markings and designs (contains bones of a Yaggite)
- Six spears of Akbitanan quality
- Six large shields
- Six breastplates with serpent designs

## THE STAFF OF IBIS

The Staff of Ibis is made of gold, approximately six feet in height and topped with the image of the god Ibis. Followers of Set suffer a penalty of -2 to hit and damage when attacking the staff wielder. Possessors of the staff gain the following feats when holding the staff: *Demon Killer*, *Alertness*, *Iron Will*. The staff contains a reservoir of magical energy, granting the owner 10 power points that they can draw on as if they were their own. These points replenish every day at dawn. The staff has a 60% chance to destroy any *Ebon Staff of Set* it comes into contact with, although it will also be destroyed in the process.

## STYGIAN WRATH

Having retrieved the Staff of Ibis, the characters should leave the tomb as quickly as possible. As the characters exit the Stygian tomb, Hsis'Arul and his mercenaries will be waiting, camped about the ruins. The Games Master may wish to remove this encounter if their

group is too weak or wounded from the battle with Hephthnon. However, if Hephthnon or Sasshia survived, the adventurers might lure them out of the tomb and into the camp of Hsis'Arul (although Hephthnon is more likely to conjure a demon and send it out first as a scout or a distraction). If the characters spend more than a day within the tomb, the Games Master should have Hsis'Arul and his men enter the tomb and begin a search for the adventurers.

Hsis'Arul is no fool and will flee if the battle goes against him. At the first sign of impending defeat, he will mount his chariot and retreat with all haste. He cares nothing for the mercenaries or Seshen and will not seek to save them – indeed, he always keeps one eye on any weakened soldiers in case he can use them as fodder for his Opportunistic Sacrifice feat. Seshen is a leader of men and will fight to the death, unless he finds himself facing supernatural opponents without Hsis'Arul to back him up.

## CONCLUSION

The Game Master will note that several adventures or ongoing campaigns can occur using this adventure as a starting point. Below are a few examples:

- Characters may wish to help Ishlan further by escorting him back to Nemedia to the temple of Ibis.
- If Hsis'Arul survives, he will gather more men and chase down the characters until he has his revenge.
- Barouz may still be hunting the characters, possibly seeking vengeance for the deaths of one or more of his sons.
- Ishlan may tell the adventures of another lost artefact of Ibis that he needs help in retrieving.
- If Hephthnon survives, he will make good his promise and begin to gather an army to terrorise the surrounding lands.

## 50 SHEMITE MERCENARIES

### 1<sup>st</sup> Level Soldiers

|                      |                                                                                                                |
|----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Hit Dice:            | 1d10 + 1 (6 hp)                                                                                                |
| Initiative:          | +1 (+1 Dexterity)                                                                                              |
| Speed:               | 30 ft                                                                                                          |
| Dodge                | 11 (+1 Dex)                                                                                                    |
| Defence:             |                                                                                                                |
| Parry Defence:       | 14 (+1 Str, +3 targe)                                                                                          |
| Damage Reduction:    | 5 (+5 armour)                                                                                                  |
| Base Attack/Grapple: | +1/+2                                                                                                          |
| Attack:              | Broadsword +2 melee (1d10+1, 19-20, AP 4)<br>or Shemite bow +3 ranged (1d10 + 2, x3, AP 4)                     |
| Space/Reach:         | 5 ft/5 ft                                                                                                      |
| Special Qualities:   | Formation Combat (Light Cavalry)                                                                               |
| Saves:               | Fort +2, Reflex +0, Will +0                                                                                    |
| Abilities:           | Str 12, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 10                                                                 |
| Skills:              | Appraise +2, Bluff +2, Hide +3, Jump +5, Listen +2, Move Silently +3, Ride +5, Search +2, Spot +2, Survival +2 |
| Feats:               | Mounted Combat, Mounted Archery                                                                                |
| Possessions:         | Shemite bow (+1), 20 arrows, broadsword, targe, mail shirt, Stygian warhorse                                   |

## HSIS'ARUL

Male Stygian 12<sup>th</sup> Level Scholar

|                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Hit Dice:          | 12d6+12 (54 hp)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Initiative:        | +6 (+2 Dexterity, +4 Reflex)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Speed:             | 30 ft                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Dodge Defence:     | 16 (+4 Scholar, +2 Dex)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Parry Defence:     | 14 (+4 Scholar)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| DR:                | 0                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Attack:            | Dagger +9 melee (1d4) or dart +11 ranged (1d4+poison)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Full Attack:       | Dagger +9/+4 melee (1d4) or darts +11/+6 ranged (1d4+poison)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Space/Reach:       | 5 ft/5 ft                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Special Attacks:   | Spells                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Special Qualities: | Knowledge is Power, Spells                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Magic Attack:      | +8 (+2 Cha, +6 Scholar)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Power Points:      | 11 (maximum 33)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Saves:             | Fort +5, Reflex +6, Will +14                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Abilities:         | Str 10, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 16, Wis 19, Cha 14                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Skills:            | Bluff +17, Craft (Alchemy) +14, Decipher Script +18, Gather Information +11, Handle Animal +8, Intimidate +11, Listen +13, Knowledge (Arcana) +22, Knowledge (Religion) +20, Knowledge (Nobility and Royalty) +20, Perform (Ritual) +19, Profession (Priest) +19, Search +18, Sleight of Hand +8                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Feats:             | Adept: Prestidigitation, Hexer, Iron Will, Knowledgeable, No Honour, Opportunistic Sacrifice, Priest, Ritual Sacrifice, Tormented Sacrifice                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Equipment:         | Two emerald-studded daggers, ten poisoned darts (Fortitude DC 18, initial and secondary damage 1d6 Str)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Spells:            | Curses: <i>lesser ill-fortune</i> , <i>ill-fortune</i> , <i>greater ill-fortune</i> , <i>curse of Yizil</i> ; Prestidigitation: <i>conjuring</i> , <i>burst barrier</i> , <i>telekinesis</i> , <i>greater telekinesis</i> ; Hypnotism: <i>entrance</i> , <i>hypnotic suggestion</i> , <i>domination</i> , <i>savage beast</i> , <i>dread serpent</i> , <i>ranged hypnotism</i> ; Divination: <i>astrological prediction</i> , <i>psychometry</i> , <i>mind reading</i> ; Counterspells: <i>warding</i> , <i>greater warding</i> . |

## SESHEN

Male Shemite 10<sup>th</sup> Level Soldier

|                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Hit Dice:          | 10d10+20 (75 hp)                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Initiative:        | +5 (+3 Dexterity, +2 Reflex)                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Speed:             | 30 ft                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Dodge Defence:     | 18 (+5 Soldier, +3 Dex)                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Parry Defence:     | 22 (+7 Soldier, +2 Str, +3 targe)                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| DR:                | 5 (+5 armour)                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Attack:            | Broadsword +12 melee (1d10 + 2, 19-20, AP 5) or Shemite bow +16 ranged (1d10 + 5, 19-20/x3, AP 4)                                                                                                                             |
| Full Attack:       | Broadsword +12/+7 melee (1d10 + 2, 19-20, AP 5) or Shemite bow +16/+11 ranged (1d10 + 5, 19-20/x3, AP 4)                                                                                                                      |
| Space/Reach:       | 5 ft/5 ft                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Special Attacks:   | -                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Special Qualities: | Formation Combat (Skirmisher, Light Cavalry)                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Magic Attack:      | -                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Power Points:      | -                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Saves:             | Fort +8, Reflex +5, Will +3                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Abilities:         | Str 14, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 14                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Skills:            | Appraise +4, Bluff +3, Climb +15, Hide +5, Jump +15, Listen +3, Move Silently +5, Ride +16, Search +14, Spot +5, Survival +3                                                                                                  |
| Feats:             | Greater Weapon Focus: Shemite Bow, Improved Critical: Shemite Bow, Mounted Archery, Mounted Combat, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Ranged Finesse, Rapid Shot, Weapon Focus: Shemite Bow, Weapon Specialisation: Shemite Bow |
| Equipment:         | Shemite bow (+2), 20 arrows, broadsword, targe, mail shirt, Stygian warhorse, metal war chest (hardness 10, 30 hp, Open Lock DC 30) containing the mercenaries' pay( 3000 silver pieces)                                      |

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