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Hello.

I didn't intend to start with that. In fact, when Matt Sprange asked me what I was going to write, I positively stated that one thing I would not do was utter a wheedly 'hello'. The trouble is, when push comes to shove, what else could I say? So, you have either paid your cash and are sitting at home wondering whether this magazine is actually any good, or you are browsing at a shop and want that little nudge to send you to the counter.

BUY THE MAGAZINE!

OK, that probably didn't work. It's another roleplaying magazine, and you have seen them before. What could be any different about this one? Well, technically not a lot. Written in English, printed on paper, the usual stuff. The difference is, this magazine is from Mongoose Publishing. Two years ago this would not have meant much to a roleplayer. Since that time, though, Mongoose has erupted onto the roleplaying scene, producing quality books at a rate that hasn't been seen before in the gaming field. I'm not just talking fantasy-based gaming either, although we now have over 80 books in that genre. There is also Judge Dredd, Babylon 5, Armageddon 2089 and Slaine. Coming soon is Conan and Macho Women With Guns, and you can bet that they won't be the last either.

At Mongoose we realised that to support our products we needed some form of monthly supporting organ. A newsletter? Too small. An on-line magazine? Too ethereal. What gamers want is something solid in hand that can sit comfortably alongside the range of books we produce.

So here we have it. Signs and Portents is designed to support the products you have already bought from us and hopefully will continue to buy in the future. All our product lines will be supported, with regular scenarios, feats, classes, backgrounds and anything else you might want to see in a magazine. There will be in-depth discussion pieces as well, such as the Dynamic Story Generation article in this issue. Humour is a big part of gaming as well, and there will be plenty to share a laugh about as well. Writers like Jonny Nexus will pass their thoughts on to you, and there will be a regular feature about the Mongoose staff's own gaming group which will probably see many of you smiling and nodding knowingly at antics you have been party to in your own groups.

For myself, I've been a roleplayer for a touch over 20 years, but don't worry, I won't bore you with a tedious list of games I have played. What really excites me is the future. I grew up with Conan, read every book a dozen times and I can't wait to unleash myself on a rejuvenated Hyboria. As for Babylon 5, don't get me started on that. Easily the best sci-fi universe I've come across - check out the preview of Minbari Federation in this issue and see for yourself.

If you follow our Tales from Mongoose Hall series you will soon see what sort of highly mature and sophisticated character I am. I did toy with having a quick rant about something at this point, but frankly I'm far too comfortable and satisfied at present. I'm sure that in the months to come there will be plenty of opportunity for me to vent my spleen about things, so for the moment just sit back, fold your arms, and share a moment of deep relaxation with me.

There, feeling better?

Dan

EYE ON MONGOOSE

NEW RELEASES THIS MONTH



Macho Women With Guns

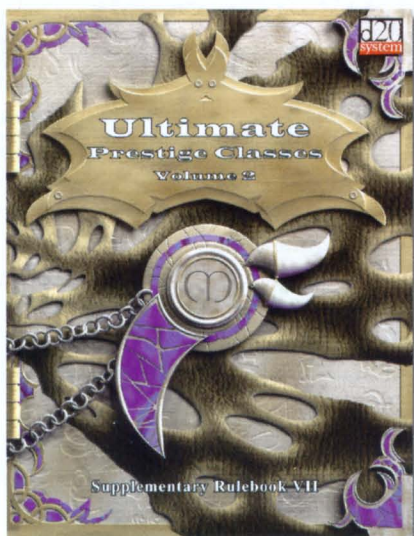
The world as we know it is gone, swept away by the tsunami-like tide of history and the rash actions of pride stricken men. Washed away, the simple joys of celebrity worshipping magazines, daytime TV and chocolate. In other words the world as we know it has been turned into Hell on Earth.

Early in the 21st century things changed, things went wrong.

The world was ripped apart as a great war tore nations apart while horrific plagues and devastating economic collapse sapped the very essence of those the war had spared. Temperatures continued to rise as the long-term effects of global warming were finally realised. Millions of square kilometres around the equator now lie in blasted ruin, rainforests are reduced to skeletal wastelands while barren desert has claimed the remainder.

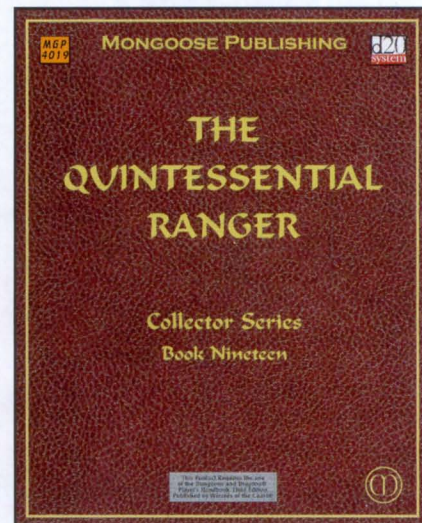
As the world looked set to rebuild itself after the traumas it had suffered a powerful earthquake levelled most of the major cities, already weakened by the terrors of global conflict. Some more pious survivors surmised that God's wrath had finally been visited on his subjects, as the horrors described in the pages of Revelations manifested themselves across His creation.

Step into the world of Macho Women with Guns with this cult offering from Mongoose Publishing. Stand tall, kick butt and above all, remember to look good.



Ultimate Prestige Classes II

Ultimate Prestige Classes, Volume II continues the highly successful Supplementary Rulebook range, compiling over one hundred of the best new prestige classes available. Designed to be seamlessly slotted into any fantasy-based D20 games system, these sourcebooks offer the best of the best that have appeared in terms of rules and options for fantasy d20 games, as well as new material that can be easily included into any campaign. Players and Games Masters will find a wealth of options to enrich both characters and antagonists.



Quintessential Ranger

The Quintessential Ranger is a 128 page sourcebook, offering players and Games Masters of Ranger characters a host of alternatives for their growth and development. This supplement, written by Ian Sturrock (Slaine, Armageddon 2089: Total War) grants rangers even more options for their characters and games. Expanding on the concepts, prestige classes magic and skills of the ranger, the Quintessential Ranger allows both players and Games Masters to fully develop this core class. With rules developed for both 3.5 and 3.0, the ranger is finally free to explore his world.

The nineteenth book in the series, it is just possible that the under-achieving ranger class needs this more than any other. At long last the ranger is going to return to his rightful position – at the head of the party.

ON THE HORIZON...

CONAN



Slayer's Guide to Giants

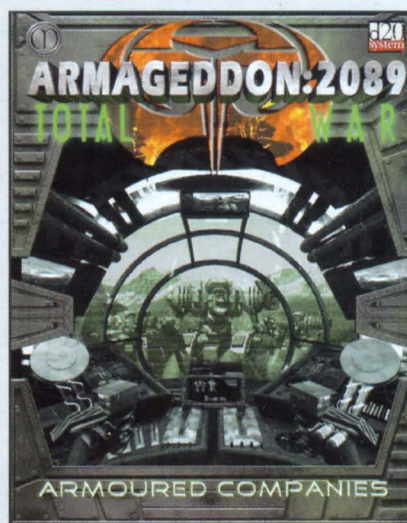
In legend, few creatures command such a powerful, superstitious awe as giants. In fantasy campaigns though they are often dismissed by players, seen as a mere step on the way to higher-level encounters with dragons or demons. A means of garnering plenty of experience points, but not a serious challenge to a well-equipped party with a spellcaster or two and the first clue about tactics. Such a complacent attitude can be very dangerous, particularly if the giants use their natural advantages to maximum effect.

This Guide comprises knowledge drawn from scholarly studies alongside tactics and survival tips offered by adventurers who have tangled with giants and lived to tell the tale. Games Masters will learn many intricate details about giant life and culture, enabling them to make truly memorable encounters with this race for their players, while the players themselves may learn a fact or two that might just save the lives of their characters.

Following on from the unprecedented success of the Slayer's Guide to Undead and the Slayer's Guide to Dragons, Mongoose Publishing presents the Slayer's Guide to Giants, a 128 page sourcebook that truly covers the height, and width of the largest of foes. From giant's physiology, methods of warfare, habitats and more, the Slayer's Guide to Giants truly develops this terrifying foe.

Armoured Companies

Whether rolling in on tracks and wheels or blasting through the rubble of a ruined city street with massive hover jets, the vehicular war machines of the Armageddon War still have a huge impact whenever they are deployed. Even WarMeks take notice when an armoured company appears on their scopes. What one tank lacks in staying power, a whole squadron of tanks can make up for in sheer numbers and volleys of firepower. Stationary targets, like city buildings and opposition command centres, have as much to fear from the main gun of a tank as it does anything a WarMek can carry. Even in terms of nuclear missile bombardment, vehicles can cause untold destruction, making them a threat to be reckoned with.



Different countries utilize their vehicle assets in a variety of ways. Some older, more established countries have their tank corps and motor pools strictly organized, with columns of armour ready to be launched when a given tactical situation calls for them. Nations with a smaller budget or fewer industrial concerns to depend on have stables of inexpensively produced vehicles stabled in quick response bunkers as close to their capitals and military bases as possible. Other countries fall somewhere between these two extremes, balancing the usefulness of vehicle units with their ability to field WarMeks and striking a compromise that leaves the former in less prestigious, but no less important, battlefield roles.

This book contains everything Games Masters and Players needs to incorporate vehicles of all sorts into their campaigns, a kind of Tanker's Guide to Armageddon. The Characters chapter provides all the character classes, skills, and feats needed to create tank crews, drivers, and vehicle support personnel. The chapters on Vehicle Design, Equipment, and Tactics & Procedures give detailed rules for creating, outfitting, and using armoured vehicles in Armageddon 2089 games. The Tanks, Jeeps, and APCs chapter contains several examples of vehicles used throughout the world. The last chapter, The Face of the Enemy, offers a number of known armoured companies and personalities.

Through the use of this book and the main Armageddon 2089: Total War rules, a campaign can centre around a mercenary tank corps, have a better developed vehicular element to WarMek battles, or flesh out the defenses of an enemy compound. By incorporating this sourcebook into the world of 2089, a Games Master can expand the backgrounds of Non Player Characters and provide more varied encounters for characters to deal with. Armoured Companies can be an important part of any tactical situation; using this book can make them an important part of the game as well.



THE COLLECTOR'S SERIES

The Mongoose Q&A is a monthly column collecting together queries, errata and clarifications for all our product lines. This month we focus on the Collector's series of Quintessential books.

Quintessential Fighter

Q: What is the cut line from the Leaping Dodge ability of the swashbuckler prestige class?

A: The swashbuckler may add his class level to his Armour Class when not wearing armour or carrying any kind of shield. He may not use Leaping Dodge when caught flat-footed.

Q: What is the base attack bonus prerequisite for the Acolyte of the Short Blade?

A: +8

Q: What is the full text for the benefit of the Initiate of Orask style?

A: Benefit: Once per day, an initiate of Orask may prepare himself before battle. This requires one undisturbed hour and 100 square feet with which to practice and swing his weapon. If disturbed, the preparation is ruined and may not be attempted again that day. For the next 6 hours, the Initiate must rest for a full 8 hours before he can use the Preparation of Battle ability again.

Quintessential Rogue

Q: Why are the listed poison costs cheaper than the cost to make them using the potion creation rules?

A: The poison rules cover new, most likely unique poisons created by the players. The listed poisons are much more common and thus less expensive to create.

Q: Where is the class feature Dilettante for the tomb raider prestige class?

A: Dilettante was renamed Superior Knowledge.

Quintessential Cleric

Q: What is the sub-type for the *healing flame* spell?

A: Conjuration (healing)

Q: What is the range of material disruption?

A: A burst of 25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels of the caster.

Quintessential Elf

Q: What are the full prerequisites for the third rank of the Bladesong style (page 98)?

A: Perform 8 ranks, Improved Critical, Weapon Specialisation (longsword or short sword).

Quintessential Dwarf

Q: What are the full stats for the braided whip?

A: See below.

Braided Whip

Cost: 60 gp

Damage: 1d6

Critical: 19-20/x2

Range: 15 ft.

Weight: 10 lb.

Type: Slashing

Braided steel whips are not foiled by armour, as are normal whips, nor do they cause subdual damage – any damage by one of these bad boys is actual damage. In all other ways braided whips count as ordinary whips.

Quintessential Monk

Q: Can I use Craft (costuming) instead of Craft (lion) to make a lion head costume?

A: Sure, although lion head costumes involve wood in their design and require more than simple sewing, hence 'costuming' rather than Craft (sewing).

Q: If I make a successful stunning attack in a push hands duel, and do not choose to end the duel for doing so, does my opponent receive his Wisdom bonus for the next opposed check?

A: No.

Q: Where is the Circle Boxing feat?

A: The Circle Boxing feat was replaced with Improved Dodge.

Q: Where is the Master Grappler feat?

A: Master Grappler was renamed Natural Grappler.

Quintessential Witch

Q: What is the full text for the second, third and fourth abilities of the puppet mistress prestige class?

A: Everybody's Friend (Su): Puppet mistresses are personable, friendly and trustworthy; at least that is what they want you to believe. At 2nd level the mistress receives a +2 competence bonus to Bluff, Diplomacy, Innuendo and Sense Motive.

Two Voices (Ex): The puppet mistress's speech is seductive and persuasive, forcing others to do what she wants. Whenever interacting with a Non-Player Character, the mistress may add her Intelligence bonus to her Charisma bonus for the purposes of modifying Non-Player Character reactions.

Calculate Resolve (Ex): When building a horde of minions, the mistress knows how to expand the number and potency of her followers. Puppet mistresses may add their Intelligence bonus to their Leadership scores.

Quintessential Druid

Q: I have a few questions concerning the feat Equipment Master and how it applies to magic items.

Firstly, I presume the druid's magic items are affected by this feat and not just mundane equipment?

The feat states: '...he may declare which items are and which items are not absorbed into his body and rendered inactive. Items may be transformed into some form of clothing suitable for the new body or dropped at the feat - whichever the druid chooses.'

Does this mean that a druid could turn into a bear or a dragon (if sufficient level) and magic items like boots, rings, armour, cloaks, gloves, amulets, bracers, etc, would become bear or dragon-sized and thus operational for the druid?

If so, are there any limits to this feat? Could a druid basically integrate all his magic items to use in his wildshape form?

A: Your interpretation is correct. Things like rings and gloves would change to fit the new form and still work, magic items included. There is no limit to how many magic items, but the form would dictate what could be used. Opposable thumbs would be needed to hold things like rods and speech would be needed for command word items. Those could be left non-absorbed for the other party members to use or absorbed to carry around and keep safe.

Quintessential Bard

Q: Is there a missing ability in the Soul Taker prestige class?

A: The following ability was accidentally left out of the Soul Taker prestige class in the Quintessential Bard:

Enrapture (Su): At 4th level the soul taker masters the art of luring others. Targets affected by the soul taker's lure must attempt to remain close to the character for eight hours. Additionally the DC to resist the soul taker's lure increases by +2.

Quintessential Paladin

Q: Are custos balanced? Ok, you bond a weapon. To maximise a relic you need to spend 8,000 XP plus 20,000gp, and you

have various limitations as to when and how you can raise your weapon's power. Now, you pay 400 XP for a custos, plus 5,140 XP (no gold required?) for a 10th level custos. So... what's the catch? I mean, doesn't the custos have any limitations as to how quickly it can gain a level (enhancement bonus, ability, etc.) like the relic? What if I had a +5 vorpal longsword when I called for a custos, would the +5 and the vorpal effect still be there? If so, isn't the weapon becoming a bit overpowered? If I can later add an ability (paying the normal gold pieces for the ability market price) in a custos with no previous abilities other than those of its class, isn't that making it overpowered?

Shouldn't the Paladin trade his bonded mount for such a powerful weapon, as he does with the Bonded Companion?

A: No, he doesn't trade his mount for a custos.

The difficulty with the custos is that you do not advance it when you want, but only when your character gains experience and then you can only sacrifice up to 50% of that amount, so you must decide where to focus the XPs you gain: in the character or his weapon. Also, the custos has an agenda; it will have its own opinions about how the character is going about his life, while a relic is just... there.

Also remember that when a custos multiclassed, the enhancement bonuses do not stack; the higher bonus is the one that applies. I wouldn't allow a bonded weapon to be enchanted independently but, if the Games Master does, the enhancements would not stack, and even a +4 custos would have to be made into a +1 weapon in order to receive any ability like Keen or Holy from an independent enchanting, since the bonus is born from the bond between paladin and weapon. Mean Games Masters should declare that adding an enchantment to a custos is a huge sign of disrespect for the Celestial residing within and constitutes a violation of that paladin's code. Inviting a custos to an already enchanted weapon is a minor offence; it tells the Celestial that the paladin does not think the bond will be strong enough as he must have an enchantment on the weapon already.

Quintessential Samurai

Q: I would like some clarification on the armour. The individual pieces add up to +12 AC bonus if you have the metal versions, correct? This gives you a much better AC than plate with a huge armour penalty. Can you masterwork each individual piece and end up with an armour check of only -2?

A: No. The Do could be masterworked, enchanted, or constructed from magical materials (such as mithral or adamantine) but the other pieces gain no such benefits. If you wear the full kit, you are very well armoured, but it is bulky and difficult to manoeuvre in.

Tune in next month for the
Armageddon 2089 Q&A.

Write for the Mongoose

Want to write for your favourite RPG publisher? Want to get paid for it? Got a great idea for an article? If the answers to these questions are 'yes', then Signs & portents wants to hear from you.

Where to Start...

We will need a brief synopsis of your intended article, no more than one page long. Also include a paragraph or two of your actual writing style, so we can see whether you have what it takes and any samples of previously published work. If we like what we see, we will commission a first draft from you and you will be on your way to becoming a Mongoose contributing writer. And every article we publish will be paid for...which is nice.

Things to Remember

Provide your full details, including name, address and email address if available.

Supply articles via email or on disc. We can read most formats, although MS Word is always a safe bet. You will be provided with a style guide when we commission your article. Make sure you read it!

Subject Matter

First and foremost, the article has to be based on one of our product lines. That is not as limiting as it sounds, however. The d20 fantasy family alone should give you plenty of scope. Think of all our various products, like the Quintessential series and the Slayer's Guides. With more than 80 fantasy-based books to choose from...well, you get the idea. But don't stop there. Think Babylon 5, Judge Dredd, Slaine, Armageddon 2089, not to mention the barrage of forthcoming games that we have coming. If you have ideas for any of our games we want to hear them.

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.

If you want to write new rules for a game, with new uses for skills and maybe some new feats, then be our guest.

We cannot promise that we will like what you have done, but you will get constructive criticism in return, and not just a terse one-line rebuff.

Editing

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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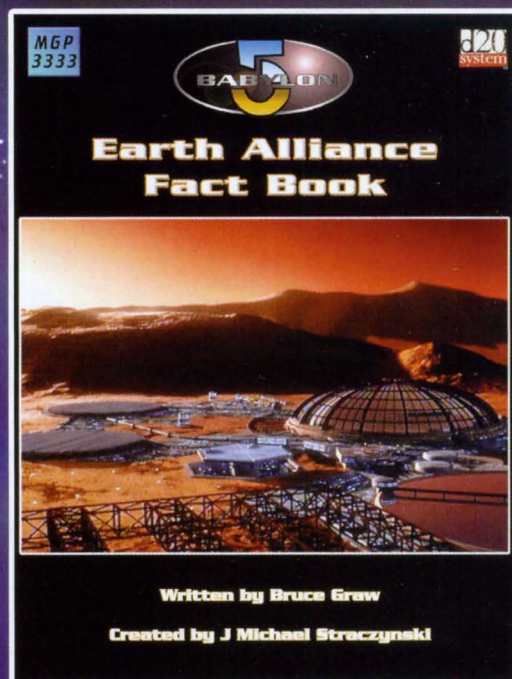
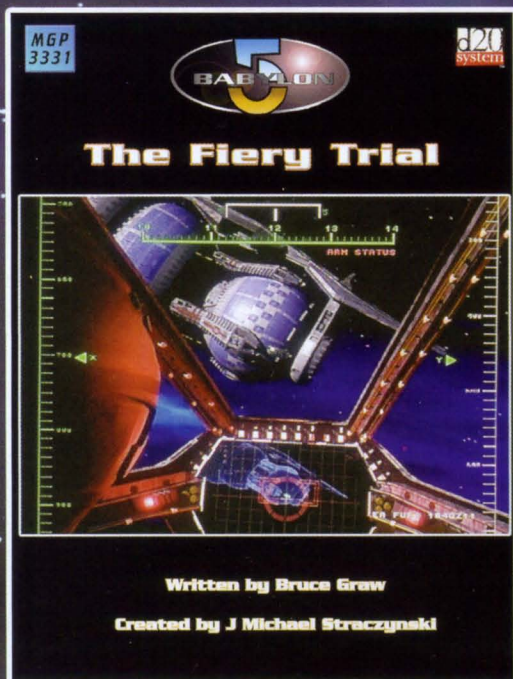
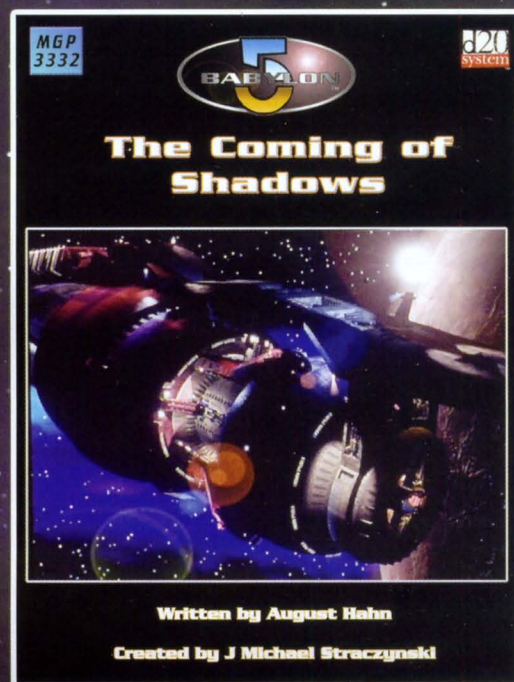
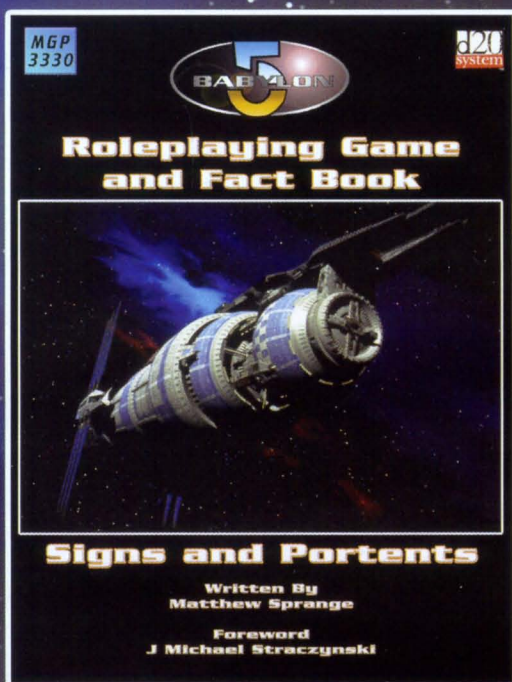
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A FORTRESS OF LIGHT AGAINST AN ANCIENT EVIL



Tales from Mongoose Hall

Ian Barstow takes you on a trip with the Mongoose gaming group...

It will probably come as no surprise that being a producer of roleplaying games, the Mongoose crew have their own weekly gaming group. In this series we will share the ups and downs of gaming life, shedding light on interesting house rules and offering up the staff for a spot of ritual humiliation.

As our gaming diarist, it will soon become apparent that the opinions and direction of this series are somewhat 'weighted'. Well, at least you now know who to blame. The first of a two part report looks at what can happen when a group of dysfunctionals playtest Babylon 5. You have been warned...

My Babylon 5 Diary.

Week 1.

The usual start time of 7 p.m. sees the now-usual crew arrive bearing various forms of chocolate. Apart from myself there's Alex, Matt, Dave and Dan, with Paul as ever in The Chair. With the start of a new game it's Roll Up Characters time, giving me an opportunity to outline the likely personas on offer.

Alex is Rufus Heraldo, a Centauri diplomat of little-or-no standing, giving Alex the usual opportunities to talk until he's blue in the face. This character, apart from being Vir's official brown-noser, appears to have some form of alcohol dependency – should be interesting.

Matt is Luke Donovan, a human lurker, (which, believe it or not,

will not turn out to be the hammiest character name on offer here – but more of Dave anon). This iffy character claims to be known everywhere as 'Lizard', but Alex quickly christened him 'Snake', which I rather think will stick more than Lizzy, although you never know. Whatever happens, Snake – sorry, Lizzy, will be a wrong'un. Matt always plays rascally individuals (I offer in evidence his so-called paladin from the last D&D campaign).

Dan is Daniel Trazari. Presumably Dan gave his character the same name as himself to avoid confusion. Initially he turned out to be a human P12 telepath, but then mysteriously claimed to be a lurker instead. Hmm...I *don't* think...Bet whoever he is he turns out to be the silent, moody type. Bound to be dead real quick too.

surprisingly he is as yet neither blind nor dead. Still, day ain't over yet.

Me? I'm sex-charged Hispanic former security guard Ramón Diaz, complete with impressive accent (sometimes). I've been booted out of the B5 Security Service for being drunk on duty – notice a common pattern emerging in this group yet? I'm willing to bet money that Marcus Kaide (this should always be spoken theatrically, by the way) is only one step from being either a wino or a druggie.

So, we have our decidedly dodgy band; four humans and Alex, as usual, the odd-Centauri out. Knocking around B5, we individually get approached by agents working for a geezer named Anderson, who is looking for some inept boozers to go off-station in search of some missing

scientists. Everybody looks at Dave hoping Marcus Kaide might go missing too, but no such luck. At least I managed to screw my contact out of 50 credits just for showing up for the meet,

Ian's Top Roleplaying Tips

#48

Don't Use Your Own Name

This may appear obvious but clearly it is still happening. It is not clever to give your character the same name that you have. On the surface it may seem quite practical, and you may feel that this will make gameplay easier, but in reality the rest of the group will glare at you behind your back with that 'what a numpty' look. We all know it.

Then comes Dave as human scientist supreme, Marcus Kaide. I ask you, 'Marcus Kaide'. How heroic is that? And he turns out to be a wheedly pen pusher. Surprisingly for Dave he isn't a drunkard, and even more

which was more than the others accomplished. Lizzy attempted to pull down 100 creds having seen me in action but got told to push off. Bwahahahaha!

At the meeting we did our usual trick

of talking over Paul's intro spiel, so at the end of it nobody knew entirely what was happening. I didn't even know where or when we were leaving. No wonder I was kicked out of security. Heraldo left early and decided to search all the bars he could in search of Lennier!?! As you do. What a surprise when he came up empty...

Needless to say we failed to ask any pertinent questions of this Anderson geezer until it was nearly too late. We finally discovered that we were going to a planet called Levana IV Beta where these bozos from McGee Industries had been looking for some 'interesting ruins'. Yeah, right. It didn't take my super-trained senses to smell a rat, or three. Having managed to blag some ammo out of Anderson, we split up for a good night's boozing – we don't need no stinking sleep.

It might be fair to point out at this point that I am prone to conspiracy theories when gaming. Hence, without any solid evidence at all, I instantly have Anderson and McGee Industries pegged as a bunch of skels on the make. It is just possible that you will see this trait resurface throughout our forthcoming adventures. I can only apologise for this flaw in advance. One day I'll be right though, you'll see...

Back to the plot. It turns out that Anderson is sending two of his people with us – 'Dave', his enforcer (my opinion) and Fernandez, a hot piece of totty (Heraldo's opinion). Once aboard we also meet the Pakistani pilot, who unfortunately sounds suspiciously Welsh, due to Paul's interesting Variable Accent™. He promises us a smooth flight plus a welcome in the hillsides – which is nice. Notice how as yet the group hasn't made the slightest effort to discuss the mission in private or even attempt to get to know each other. This is not unusual. Don't be going expecting advanced planning and professionalism out here. It is more than likely that Lizzy will have murdered one of us by close of play, anyway.

Anyway, after a day or so mooching through space, we get pulled over by a bunch of variable alien customs blokes who spot Heraldo boozing away happily. This turns out to be a serious offence in this part of the galaxy. Luckily, possession of automatic weapons and grenades isn't, or I'd have been in a spot of bother. So, Heraldo, being Alex, won't simply pay up (although I bet anything you like that this would have been his advice to any other member of the gang getting caught short) and proceeds to tough it out with the customs aliens, threatening their entire planet with war and general unpleasantness unless they let him off the 100-cred fine – the tight-arse. Sadly he succeeds in an Intimidate check and gets away with it. Never mind.

Following this comedy incident we finally get to the planet, landing near the ruins where the dopey science boffins went missing. We nearly investigate some strange termite mounds, but super-inquisitive genius Marcus Kaide (think theatrical, remember?) can't be bothered

that he had one down his strides the whole time and *Marcus Kaide* (now appearing in italics for greater effect) claiming that he can make one by tomorrow. My suggestion that he buries his head in a termite mound falls on deaf ears.

At this point we have to stop while I perform a medical examination of Daniel to see if he is still alive. Face it, if you had been a P12 telepath you'd have 'accidentally' read the minds of everybody you inadvertently bumped into. Not Daniel – well, not unless total inactivity is a strong telepathic characteristic. Strong prodding elicits no more than moody scowl, the novelty of which can wear off after a while.

I've slipped again, haven't I? Quickly, back on track before anybody notices... We then enter the abandoned camp; seven tents, a domey-thing and various bits of guff – but strictly no scientists. Having mooched about thus far without any plan of formation or actually any plan at all, we spread out to loot... sorry, *investigate* the tents. Apart from

Ian's Top Roleplaying Tips

#201

Try to Appear Alive

This is always popular with the other players. Every group has a quiet one. This is OK. Just remember, if you are the quiet one in a group, show willing occasionally. You might even like it. Also worth bearing in mind - the quiet ones are easily forgotten when it comes to healing time...

to check them out, so the 8-foot monstrosities will no doubt eat us underground later. Marcus first, I'm hoping. It's at this point that I ask if anybody brought a torch, to which we get the usual burbled 'umming-and aahing', with Lizzy claiming

various pokey bits of clothing. I come up with a diary written by one Evan Thompson, presumably the top bloke. He talks about finding a tunnel and something not 'natural'. The usual stuff.

So ends our first session. So, what have we learnt? Firstly, the crew are as inept as ever. We even had to be given breathing apparatus, having forgotten to ask about little things like atmosphere. Atmosphere...we don't need no stinking atmosphere. We've also found a lot of mileage is to be had in the totally inappropriately named *Marcus Kaide*. This is going to be really good value – as long as he lives. We've already suggested that he have his own theme tune and a special *Marcus Kaide* skill check akin to Bardic Knowledge. Session #2 should be most interesting.

Week 2.

Planning. If one word stands out this week it's 'planning'. Having dismally failed to get any further turning over the tents, we head off for the man-made dome referred to in Thompson's diary. Asking *Marcus Kaide* to check it out, he comes back with the landmark information that it is man-made. We are all suitably impressed, and tell him so. Heraldo tells him several times just so he is certain how impressed we are. Plans to shoot him are being hatched, you can bank on it.

Discovering that we sort of forgot to bring any torches, Heraldo and I go back to the spacecraft, where I take the opportunity to ransack *Marcus Kaide's* cabin. After all, he can't really be a brilliant whatever-he-actually-is, can he? Sadly all I find is his change of undies. The temptation to soil them was immense, but I desisted. No doubt I'll live to regret it. Then, realising our pressing time schedule, Heraldo and I play cards with the crew, getting fleeced by the now-Russian pilot whose accent is on some sort of tour of the Balkans from the sound of it. Heraldo does actually win one hand, and so we leave with him feeling suitably smug.

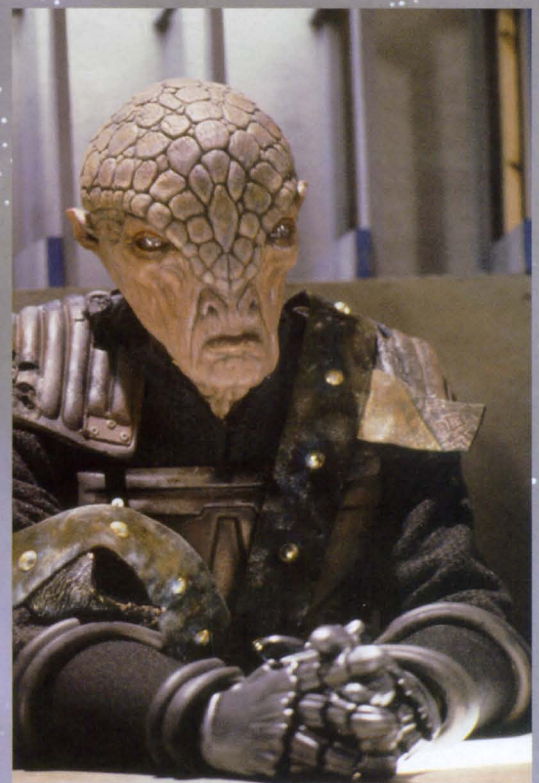
Back at *Kaide's* man-made edifice, we find a metal door – well, hole actually – has been arc-welded into the ground, so we mooch on in, taking time out to not find anything

in various piles of dust. Inside are a couple of corpses covered by a pile of rubbish. Lizzy investigates and, sensing movement, does what we all would and shoots it with his PPG. He misses the beetle-sized insect that crawls out. The corpses turn out to be security guards. Finding a footprint of some size on the floor, a v-shaped mark and damn all else, we stop for a think. This is too much for Heraldo who – unarmed – decides to go out for a walk. As you do. The rest of us discuss our find. Dan, having asked Paul for a description of the footprint, informs us that it is a footprint within a footprint. This actually turns out to be Paul showing Dan the actual size of the print over what would be a human foot...doh. We just assume that Dan is so psychically charged that he can see through footprints. We further decide that our employers are wrong'uns and that we are being set up as expendable should this job go wrong. We then further still decide that Heraldo is probably a villain as well. Never go off on your own for secret meetings with the Games Master, that's a mantra I guess we all know. No such thing as innocence around here. Looks like my conspiracy theories are rubbing off on the others.

Anyway, Heraldo eventually shows up again and, speaking in riddles and part-truths, tells us there is something 'interesting' back at the ship for us to see. Yeah, right. The distrust level goes through the roof. Lizzy and me are now convinced that he's in league with the baddies (our employers, of course, not this big-footed creature that clearly wasted the two security bods) and we prepare for action. On the way back he reveals that he has 'captured' three Llort. This is impressive as he was unarmed. Back at the ship, we follow him to the cockpit where he tries to lull me into a false sense of

security by offering me a drink. I respond as anybody would by putting a PPG to his head whilst Lizzy covers the currently-Transylvanian pilot. This turns out to be a bad move, as the onboard security systems kick in and give us both some serious electric shocks which put us out for the count. Luckily I forgot I was wearing padded armour, as had I been conscious I would undoubtedly have topped Heraldo. Hmm, then again...

Eventually we are brought round. In fact, Lizzy is brought round twice due to medical inefficiency by Heraldo and *Marcus Kaide*, with the result that he is spaced out on the cocktail of drugs they have pumped into him – more of which anon. Waking up, we find ourselves unarmed, so I glare unpleasantly at



One of the Llort. Uglier than Alex? It's a hard call.

the Centauri and consider beating him senseless with my stun stick. We then go off to interrogate the three Llort. Dangerous Dave and Missy Fernandez are there already, getting nothing out of these big-footed aliens (looks like our theory of a ten-foot monster doing the killings just went down the tubes) so Heraldo begins

throwing his microscopic weight around, threatening all sorts of Centauri barbarity if they don't talk. Having been suitably insulted by the Llort, he finally bores one into telling

On board, it seems, are maybe half-a-dozen scientists, in the hands of the Llort, for whatever reason we didn't bother to ask. Lizzy and I have our PPGs back, so are feeling

PPG and pulls the trigger, only then remembering that it wasn't loaded (nice to see the baddies roll a fumble for a change). Heraldo's bottle goes, and he runs for cover, all thoughts of the plan abandoned. Chaos now reigns. Lizzy, still high on drugs, bursts out of his position, taking a pot shot at a pair of big feet visible in the ship. Naturally he misses. What, surprised? Remember, this is the man who missed a large insect at three feet. Meanwhile, back on the ridge, the rest of us break cover and charge. As you do.

Ian's Top Roleplaying Tips

#155

Remember what equipment you have

We all do it, I know, but as experienced players we should all know better. The trouble is, immersed in hilarity and enjoying the situation, you tend to naturally forget those special added features that you blew your last few creds/gp on. Try to pause, hold back and stop enjoying yourself. Remember you're there to roleplay, not have fun.

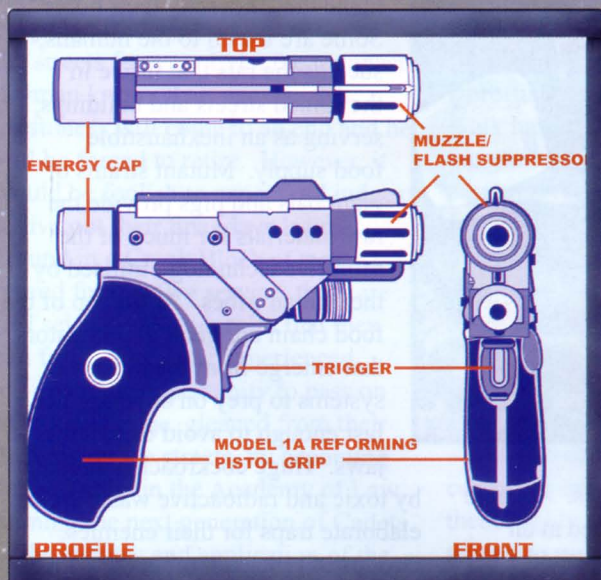
us that his spacecraft is about 3 arns away. 'That's the equivalent of about an hour,' says *Kaide* authoritatively. We decide to investigate.

30 minutes later we are at the site.

suitably manly again, and we plan an attack. Lizzy – being what turns out to be a roly-poly (Str 7, Con 16) sneaky git – will sneak up and hide near the Llort craft to provide close-in protection for Heraldo, who insists that he can bluff his way inside and locate the prisoners. Wired for sound, we await his signal. So goes our plan...

Lizzy somehow manages to get his fat arse into cover without being seen by the Llort, who are clearly blind as bats, although they perk up when Heraldo comes blundering across the sand mumbling into his concealed mike. As he casually greets the startled Llort, we wait in trepidation. Which is more than the Llort does. He levels his

Heraldo gamely attacks the Llort, armed only with a passing rock. He does 4 points of damage, sadly reduced to 2 due to another Str 7 physique. This marks the Llort who rifle-butts him in the kisser, ruining his hair. He then shoots Lizzy as the wobbly lurker blunders past to god knows where, before hearing the sound of a door opening. In what is beginning to become habit, he opens fire again, dropping what appears to be a female scientist attempting to escape. I compound matters by charging into combat intent on saving Heraldo, only to dive straight past and injure myself on the side of the hull. Another winner. The session ends with us being temporarily bailed out by Dangerous Dave who shoots the Llort annoying Heraldo. Don't you just hate it when that happens?



The PPG - just one weapon with which the group are completely unfamiliar...



Next month...will Lizzy get charged with murder? Will Heraldo stay sober? Will Daniel do anything?

Find out in Issue 2 of Signs & Portents.

TAKING THE LONG WALK

by Matt Sharp

The average citizen of Mega-City One regards the subterranean Undercity as an urban myth. Every juve who attends the Mega-Schools knows that Mega-City One was built on top of the east coast of the former United States of America, engulfing old cities with strange and exotic names such as Washington DC or New York City. Eld-shelter residents may retain vague memories of these semi-mythical places. Most citizens believe the old cities were destroyed when the construction of the Mega-City began, with only the occasional dilapidated structure – landmarks such as the Empire State Building or the Statue of Liberty – salvaged as historical monuments. Only a few citizens know that the East Coast landscapes of pre-war America continue to stand in the cold darkness beneath City Bottom, a subterranean mausoleum preserving these archaic structures for all time.

The homeless vagrant who scrapes a pathetic existence on City Bottom can be forgiven for believing that he is the lowest of the low, the mile-high silhouettes of the surrounding city

blocks serving as a constant reminder that he ranks at the very bottom of Mega-City One society. A few yards below his scrawny feet, thousands of living beings strive to survive against the primordial plagues of hunger and thirst, and fight for their lives against other denizens who have mutated in horrific ways, perfectly adapted to the eerie, hostile concrete and brick landscape.

In the constant darkness of the buried cities a new civilisation has developed. Almost completely cut off from human progress and sunlight, mankind has been forced to rapidly

So, you've been a judge for twenty years, done all there is to do in the Big Meg and it's time to retire and put your feet up, a job well done.

Retire my *\$~!

Once a judge, always a judge, as you are about to find out...

disasters that regularly beset the Mega-City seek out the Undercity's dubious protection. Vicious criminals fleeing from the judges locate cracks in City Bottom, risking life and limb to squeeze through and make a bid for freedom down below. Cursed Earth mutants avoid the Cursed Earth's harsh environment by chipping at Mega-City One's foundations until they can enter the Undercity. Hundreds of Citi-Def units eagerly embark on training missions into the Undercity every year – many fail to make the grade and either become hopelessly lost or are butchered by the native troggies, hungry for food.



Apart from humans and human mutants, many other creatures make the Undercity their home. Some are useful to the humans, such as the rats that thrive in the ruined streets and buildings, serving as an inexhaustible food supply. Mutant strains of giant bats and pigs provide the raw materials for much of the primitive technology utilised by the human tribes. At the top of the food chain are giant albino gators that emerge from the old sewer systems to prey on anything not fast enough to avoid their lethal jaws. Huge cockroaches mutated

adapt to life in the shadows. A stable mutant strain has developed at an incredible rate, producing squat, twisted creatures capable of seeing in absolute darkness called troggies. In addition, refugees of the terrible

by toxic and radioactive waste create elaborate traps for their enemies. Groups of renegade robots, escapees from the First Robot War, fiercely defend their territory. Zombies, who remain animated despite the

death of Sabbat the Necromancer, their creator, and human cannibals transformed into ghouls by the Sisters of Death, form their own tribes alongside several strains of werewolf. Old enemies of humanity like the vampire and the wurdolak feed off the blood of the Undercity dwellers.

Mega-City One citizens brave – or foolish – enough to venture down into the Undercity, rarely stay for long – if they survive to leave at all. Even the judges prefer not to trespass unless the city's safety depends on their doing so. Remarkably, some judges choose to end their careers patrolling the Undercity, taking the Long Walk into the unknown. Those who survive are often affected physically and mentally by their new home, and none ever leave the Undercity unscathed.

New Prestige Class - Undercity Long Walk Judge

No judge is expected to remain on the streets forever. Even the toughest lawman knows that, one day, his usefulness will come to an end and he will be forced to retire. However, it would be foolish to expect old judges to live out their final days lazing around in a Crock Block. Once retired from active service, there are still several valuable roles that they can fulfil. The most experienced are given the opportunity to pass on their knowledge, gleaned from their decades on the streets, by becoming Judge Tutors in the Academy of Law, training the next generation of Cadets in the statutes and application of the Law. Others are given administrative roles in Sector Houses, where they are able to offer guidance and assistance to their former colleges.

But there are always a few who find such tasks tedious. The only alternative is known as the Long Walk, when a retiring judge is given the opportunity to leave the confines

Taking the Long Walk is marked by a great ceremony. Twenty-one judges flank their departing comrade, each saluting him with a single shot as he passes. The traditional lament is

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1	+1	+2	+2	+2	Specialist Equipment
2	+2	+2	+2	+2	Bonus Feat, Darkvision 20 ft.
3	+3	+3	+3	+3	Light Sensitive, Hardened Constitution
4	+4	+3	+3	+4	Bonus Feat, Toughness
5	+5	+4	+4	+5	Fearsome Reputation
6	+6/+1	+4	+4	+6	Bonus Feat, Darkvision 30 ft.
7	+7/+2	+5	+5	+7	Iron Muscles
8	+8/+3	+5	+5	+8	Bonus Feat
9	+9/+4	+6	+6	+9	Toughness
10	+10/+5	+7	+7	+10	Bonus Feat

of the Mega-City to bring the Law to the Lawless in the wastelands beyond the Justice Department's normal jurisdiction. Most choose to venture into the radioactive wasteland of the Cursed Earth, but the blackness of the Undercity is also an option. The long walk judges are practically the only official law enforcement that exists in the shadow-cloaked underworld. A judge who becomes disillusioned with the Justice Department is also given the opportunity of taking the Long Walk, but most choose to simply renounce their authority and become normal citizens. Unfortunately, the threat of the Long Walk has been used in the past as the ultimate disciplinary measure, particularly during the reign of Chief Judge Silver and the second term of Chief Judge McGruder. Corrupt judges suspected of committing some terrible crime were permitted to take the Long Walk as the honourable alternative to a sentence on Titan or a Cursed Earth work farm – unfortunately, beyond the strict control of the Justice Department, these highly dangerous individuals tended to run amok. Some of the most notorious maniacs and murderers to wander the Undercity and the Cursed Earth were former Long Walk judges.

recited as he exits the Mega-City for the final time. As the gates to the city clang shut behind him, the judge is alone for almost the first time in his life. From now on, he can only rely on himself – there is no backup, no comrades to come to his aid should he get into trouble. He has only his training and experience to keep him alive in a new, hostile environment. It takes a truly exceptional individual to survive longer than a few months as a long walk judge.

Hit Dice: d12

Requirements

To qualify to become a long walk judge, a street judge must fulfil all the following criteria.

Special: Must have left the Justice Department under honourable circumstances.

Class Skills: The long walk judge's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Balance (Dex), Climb (Str), Concentration (Con), Hide (Dex), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Listen (Wis), Medical (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Search (Int), Sense Motive (Wis), Spot (Wis), Streetwise (Wis), Swim (Str), Technical (Int) and Wilderness Lore (Undercity) (Wis).

Skill points at each level: 4 + Int modifier

Class Features

All the following are class features of the undercity long walk judge prestige class.

Specialist Equipment: Long walk judges retain all their standard issue equipment except for their helmet. They are also equipped with a carryall containing 20 extra Lawgiver magazines, a high-powered flashlight (see p43 of *The Rookie's Guide to the Block Wars*), five medium sized power packs, 50 ft. of rope and two months worth of K-Rations. Long walk judges are also given the option to take a Colt .308 shot blaster (see p33 of *The Rookie's Guide to the Justice Department*) including a bandoleer containing 60 cartridges as a backup weapon. The judge is able to produce his own cartridges for a shot blaster – see *Manufacturing Ammunition* below.

Bonus Feat: An undercity long walk judge must constantly struggle for survival in the buried cities. The character must quickly adapt, and tends to pick up new tricks quickly. At 2nd level and every other level thereafter, the judge gains a bonus General or Judge feat.

Darkvision: Having spent some time living in the blackness of the Undercity, the long walk judge's eyes have gradually become accustomed to seeing in the dark. As long as there is some glimmer of light, the judge is able to see as though it is normal daylight. By the time the character reaches 2nd level, he can see to a range of 20 feet, at 6th level the range increases to 30 feet.

Fearsome Reputation: Should the judge manage to survive to 5th level, he will have carved a reputation as a formidable loner. He has become well respected by the local tribes of humans and troggies. The character is able to add his class level to any Intimidate checks he makes when dealing with Undercity dwellers.

Hardened Constitution: By the time he reaches 3rd level, the long walk judge has become toughened by life in the Undercity. He immediately gains a permanent +1 bonus to his Constitution score.

Iron Muscles: Constantly struggling to survive eventually pays off by the time the judge reaches 7th level. The character immediately gains a permanent +1 bonus to his Strength score.

Light Sensitive: Unfortunately, living in the dark often leaves the long walk judge sensitive to bright light. If exposed to any light source stronger than a torch, the judge becomes dazzled and suffers a –1 penalty to attack rolls for the next 2d6 minutes.

Toughness: A long walk judge requires a great level of stamina to survive in the Undercity. At 4th and 9th level, the character gains the Toughness feat.

Undercity Dwellers

A wide diversity of humanity has made its home in the dark tunnels and caverns of the Undercity. Over the years, there seems to have been a spurt of 'super-evolution' – humans have evolved into new sub-species at an incredible rate. Academics have named this new race 'homo-subterraneus', but the residents of the Mega-City know the creatures by a different name – troggies. Several distinct variations of these troglodyte-like beings have appeared. Even though the troggie tribes are perfectly adapted for life without light, in 2125 they are still a minority, far outnumbered by the ranks of 'normal' humans who form tribes in the Undercity. While some are prepared to co-exist with their troggie neighbours – a few tribes consist of a combination of human and troggie members – most regard the dim creatures as a threat or simply despise them for being different.

New Prior Life - The Undercity Dweller

To the horror and disgust of many citizens of Mega-City One, there are thousands of human beings eking out an uncomfortable existence in the pitch-blackness beneath the uncaring streets of the city. Undercity dwellers are barely human by normal standards, slowly adapting to a life without light and living on an unsuitable diet of rodents and fungi. However, the bitter fight for survival has led the residents of the Undercity to form much stronger bonds with each other than their counterparts on the surface, although the complex tribal culture values unthinking loyalty to a strong leader rather than genuine friendship. Undercity dwellers are typically scrawny but wiry, hardened by difficult lives but pale and sickly-looking, as most have never seen the sun. Most dress in simple but ragged clothing. All Undercity dwellers share certain characteristics, but each tribe or clan offers different advantages and restrictions. Despite their radically different lifestyle to criminal citizens in Mega-City One, an Undercity tribe is treated the same as an ordinary street gang, as detailed on page 150 of *The Judge Dredd Roleplaying Game* and in *The Rookie's Guide to Criminal Organisations*.

† All Undercity dwellers have become accustomed to living without light, able to make use of the smallest glimmer of illumination to see. The Undercity dweller has Darkvision to a range of 30 feet.

† Conversely, life in constant shadow has left most residents of the Undercity with a loathing and terror of bright light. Undercity dwellers suffer a –1 penalty to attack rolls if exposed to any light stronger than a flashlight.

† Because of their tough beginnings, Undercity dwellers are capable fighters. An Undercity dweller gains a permanent +1 modifier to his base attack bonus.

† High-tech weapons are scarce in the Undercity. Most tribes have little opportunity to become proficient in all but the most primitive of weapons. Undercity dwellers begin the game proficient only in Grenade and Melee weapons.

† Mega-City currency is useless in the Undercity. The inhabitants operate a primitive barter system that most Mega-Citizens find totally incomprehensible. An Undercity dweller starts the game with no money, but will possess a primitive melee weapon of some description – such as a knife, club or spear.

The many tribes and clans of the Undercity carry a wide variety of primitive weapons and equipment to aid in their struggle for survival in the dark streets and buildings. Most of this is antique gear left behind when the cities were buried, carefully maintained and repaired over the years. Many of the original 'stay-behinds' took to stockpiling huge caches of weapons and ammunition, anticipating the strife ahead. Some of these caches remain in hard-to-reach places. Other, less well-prepared, Undercity dwellers were

forced to improvise weapons from the materials that they found in the ruined conurbations. Alongside the shotguns and revolvers even older weapons began to appear – clubs and spears, bows and slings, throwbacks to mankind's ancient past.

Manufacturing Ammunition:

No firearm possesses unlimited ammunition. Cut off from munitions factories and supplies of ammunition when the cities were first buried, bullets and cartridges rapidly became scarce. Before long, ammunition was considered much too valuable to actually use and pistols and rifles were transformed into awkwardly-shaped clubs. Bows and crossbows, with their easy-to-make bolts and arrows, soon began to reappear in the hands of the tribes. However, some of the more technologically advanced tribes began to manufacture their own ammunition. The principles were straightforward – all that was really needed was a basic knowledge of chemistry and a supply of raw materials.

Bullets and shotgun cartridges for antique firearms require shell cases, gunpowder and lead. Modern weapons such as spit guns and handguns require far more

specialised materials which cannot be found in the Undercity, as well as more sophisticated manufacturing processes. In the resource-starved confines of the Undercity, shell cases have become quite a valuable commodity. Lead is also rather hard to come by – some tribes have taken to butchering corpses in order to recover the bullets that killed them. Gunpowder is probably the most readily available resource – all that is needed is a basic knowledge of chemistry to combine charcoal with saltpetre. There is no shortage of charcoal – it is one of the few things that there is a surplus of in the Undercity – and saltpetre is produced by the decay of sewerage, something that is difficult to avoid in the sealed environment. Making the bullets is the most complicated part – although it is simply time consuming rather than complicated, once the basics have been learnt and understood. Manufacturing 20 shells for an antique shotgun, revolver or rifle requires a pound of lead, 20 empty cartridge cases, half-a-pound of gunpowder and one hour of work. A Technical check at DC 20 will produce low quality shells that have a tendency to jam. On any attack roll that results in a natural score of '1', the shell is a dud and the weapon will jam. Failure of the Technical check will produce a batch of cartridges that automatically jam. It requires a full-round action and a successful Technical check (DC12) to clear a jam.



Stand by for more from Dredd in future issues!

The Minbari Federation Fact Book



Of all the races in the universe of Babylon 5, none save perhaps the Vorlons are more enigmatic and mysterious than the Minbari. Possessing a culture steeped in tradition and dogma, the Minbari closely resemble humans but are very evidently not human. They are stronger, faster, and possess acute senses that humanity can only begin to understand. They are deeply spiritual but feel no need to share or even explain their beliefs to others. They give great respect to their elders and accept the rule of a single council even on worlds far from their own

territory. Their ways are unfathomable, even to some of their own kind, yet none dare question their motives. At least, none dare question them openly.

Never was this more evident than at the Battle of the Line in the year 2248. Earth's last defenders held out a thin line of hope and starships against the encroachment of an overwhelming

Minbari battle fleet. The Earth/Minbari War had begun with a misunderstanding and seemed destined to end with the complete destruction of the human race. As one determined but hopelessly outnumbered Earth ship after another fell to the Minbari's technologically superior firepower, all seemed lost. Then, for no explainable reason, the Minbari surrendered and withdrew. There were to be no terms, no reparations for the losses of the war, but the Minbari pulled back just short of wiping out humanity. They ceased

The enigmatic Minbari, with their complex social behaviour, three caste levels and pivotal role in the Babylon 5 universe have long fascinated roleplayers. Now, this October, we are releasing the definitive source book on the Minbari and their way of life. This month we thought you might like a little aperitif...

fire and stopped the advance on the very eve of their victory.

This kind of behaviour, strong action without any sort of explanation or excuse, is typically Minbari. Holding themselves to be quietly superior to all other races, they are known to be the most advanced race in the galaxy, again not counting the Vorlons. While the latter race shrouds itself in secrecy and is never visible for long, the Minbari do not bother to hide from prying eyes. They are adept at hiding in plain sight, with far more to their culture and traditions than could ever be seen by outsiders without invitation. For those few with the ability to learn more about the Minbari, the race has many secrets.

Minbari Prestige Classes

The mechanics for prestige classes in the Babylon 5 roleplaying game are fairly straightforward and applicable to any kind of specialized role that goes beyond the basic categories that character classes represent. Whenever someone's role becomes a little narrower than a character class would accurately represent given the defining attributes of skills and feats, a prestige class is usually the best way to provide the right level of rules support. Prestige classes

reflect the special training and new abilities that a character would need to receive to properly portray someone in their chosen field.

For the Minbari, the prestige class system could not be more appropriate. Their society already defines very narrow roles for members of the race to fill, roles that suit the creation of prestige classes very nicely. While many of these roles can also be represented just as well by taking basic character class levels, the right feats and the proper number of skill points, some are beyond the capabilities of these customizing methods. Any type of warrior can be built with soldier and/or officer levels and feats to reflect their training, but in some cases, a prestige class can improve the 'fit' of Minbari duties even more.

Alyt

 his class actually extends its definition to the ranking officers of all three branches of the military and simulates the special command and combat training given to these exceptional leaders. Though the prestige class is called Alyt, those who belong to the other two branches call their class by a different name (Ilyr for the Infantry and Ovar for the Navy, respectively). The basic focus for the class does not change with the name, though some of its specific benefits do. The overall concept of the class, that of a trained military leader expected to serve both in the war room and on the front line, remains the same.

The Alyt (or whatever the upper ranks of the specific military branch are called) is an elite officer, trained using the finest methods available to the Minbari and given almost unquestioned access to staggering amounts of military material. When they choose to take an action, starships move by their command. As such, this prestige class is a kind of alternate officer class for the Minbari, with

Ambassador Sinclair,

When you read this, you will have been on Minbar for a few days and are as settled in as you are ever going to get. The Minbari have probably told you little and you probably understand what they have said even less. If I told you this was all for a higher purpose, you would not believe it, so I will save you the high minded prophecies for now. Trust me; there will be time for prophecy later. Right now, you have to learn and you have to do it quickly.

The universe is changing and not everything is getting better, as you well know. The death of the President was no accident, just as Garibaldi tried to tell you. He is a good man, but then I do not need to tell you that. If it helps, he will be all right. You need to worry about a lot of things, Jeffery Sinclair, but he is not one of them. The changes in the universe involve the past, present and future of all life. You have a part to play in all this; you just do not know it yet. This message and the ones to follow will help guide you towards that end. There is much you need to know, and tragically little time to teach it all to you.

First things first, the Minbari are important. They are not as different from us as humans would like to believe. They may seem alien, but you will find that they are capable of every pettiness and nobility that we are. In the war to come and believe me, war is coming, humanity's only hope is to stand beside the Minbari and the Vorlons against the darkness. If this union does not take place, each will be swept aside by a horror you do not dare imagine. Yes, even the Vorlons are at risk, but I cannot tell you much about them you do not already know. The Minbari, well... I can tell you a lot more about them.

Pay attention to these lessons, Ambassador. By the time they are through, you will know almost as much about these people as I do. More importantly, you will be ready to do what must be done. There are many forms of life in this galaxy and just as many ways to end them. If the lights that are the Minbari people are to be kept burning, sacrifices will have to be made. When that time comes, you will get one more message from me. It will be the last one I will ever send to you, and you will know what to do when you get it.

For now, enjoy your new home and listen to what these people have to tell you. Read what I send you and what others will provide. There are those who know something of what is to come and as long as you are willing to accept the truth, it will be given to you. No one expects you to face the gathering shadows in ignorance, Jeffery Sinclair. Just remember what the Vorlons say about truth and that swords can cut very deeply.

**Sincerely,
A Friend**

progression here effectively the same as taking levels in the officer character class listed in the Babylon 5 Main Rulebook. Though the abilities and skills here are slightly different, the effect of developing a command presence with the military is much the same.

Additional Hit Points: 2.

Requirements

To qualify to become an Alyt, a character must fulfil all the following criteria.

Race: Minbari

Ability Scores: Charisma 13+

Skills: Diplomacy 8+, Knowledge (military) 4+, Profession (soldier or other appropriate division) 4+

Feats: Alertness, Nerves of Steel

Special: A Minbari wishing to take this prestige class must be part of the military, have earned some distinction in the line of duty, and gain the approval of the Games Master prior to his first level of Alyt.

Class Skills

The Alyt's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Bluff (Cha), Computer Use (Int), Concentration (Con), Diplomacy (Cha), Drive (Dex), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (Int), Listen (Wis), Medical (Wis), Pilot (Dex), Sense Motive (Wis), Speak Language (None), and Spot (Wis).

Skill points at each level: 4 + Int modifier.

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the Alyt prestige class.

Rallying Call: At 1st level, the Alyt may shout encouragement to any faltering allies within earshot (communications devices may be used) as a standard action. All allies hearing the call may make an immediate Will save at DC 15 to recover from any cowering, frightened, panicked or shaken effects. This ability may be used once per day. Upon reaching 10th level, Rallying Call may be used

twice a day, and three times a day at 15th level.

Notice of the Council: The service the Alyt has rendered to his people has brought him to the attention of the Grey Council. While this notice has no direct affect on his abilities or status yet, the Minbari is watched to see if he shows signs of deserving greater authority in the future. This has no game effects immediately, but the Minbari's name has been spoken in the highest halls of power of his race, something that will likely have deep significance to him as a character.

Division Weapon Bonus: When using the typical weapon of his branch of the military, the Minbari gains a bonus listed to his attack rolls. For a fleet officer, this is the Nial starfighter. For ground forces officers, these are the Sha'an PPG and the Sha'nar fusion rifle. Naval commanders gain this bonus when manning a weapon system on a naval vessel directly.

Way of Command: Upon reaching 3rd level, the Alyt exudes an aura of confidence whilst under fire that steadies those under his command and makes them more receptive to his orders. All allies gain a +2 morale bonus to any skill checks. The range of Way of Command is the entire ship for a Minbari fleet officer (Alyt), 100 feet for a ground forces officer (Ilyr) and up to 3 vessels within 1 mile for a naval commander (Ovar).

Faith of the Council: The attention of the Grey Council has not become a tacit approval of his actions based on his exemplary service in the past. The Minbari will be called to a meeting of the Grey Council at this level and interviewed by the warrior caste Satai as to his motives and sense of duty. Assuming this interview goes successfully, the Alyt is given a commendation and sent back to his command. From this point on, the Alyt gains the direct command of a vehicle appropriate to his division (Games Master's choice) and can request the intervention of two more

of the same class and up to four lesser craft (again, Games Master's choice) for any military action he engages in. Frivolous or catastrophically poor performance while using this ability can result in its removal.

Branch Elite: As the Alyt increases in rank and capability, his reputation and skill increases. A veteran of countless military actions, he is now considered one of the elite. Upon attaining 6th level, the Alyt gains a benefit dependant on the branch in which he serves. Fleet officers may grant a permanent +1 competence bonus to the DV, sensor score, or stealth score (one choice only, made as a free action at the beginning of each of the Alyt's rounds) of a ship so long as they are personally in command. Ground officers grant a +1 morale bonus to all attack rolls made by allies within 60 feet. Naval commanders can make a targeting run and acquire a target as a single move-equivalent action, so long as they or anyone below them in their immediate chain of command are piloting a naval vessel of Gargantuan size or smaller.

Friend to the Council: The warrior caste Satai are personally known to the Alyt at this level and are considered to be on friendly terms with him, making his ability to manipulate his military branch even stronger. The Games Master will have to work out with the player exactly what type of fleet (or army) is at his disposal, but it should be at least a medium sized division as listed in the Organizations chapter of this sourcebook. These troops and vehicles are entirely at the Alyt's disposal, though unacceptable losses or pointless deployments can strain the relationship between the Alyt and the Grey Council, resulting in the revocation of this benefit.

Legendary Speech: At 9th level, the Alyt has become a true leader of men, regardless of his prior background. Before entering battle, the Alyt may make an inspiring speech to the men he leads. This takes one minute and affects all allies who can hear his

THE ALYT

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1	+0	+1	+0	+1	Rallying Call, Notice of the Council
2	+1	+2	+0	+2	Division Weapon Bonus +1
3	+2	+2	+1	+2	Way of Command
4	+3	+2	+1	+2	Faith of the Council
5	+3	+3	+1	+3	Division Weapon Bonus +2
6	+4	+3	+2	+3	Branch Elite
7	+5	+4	+2	+4	Friend to the Council
8	+6	+4	+2	+4	Division Weapon Bonus +3
9	+6	+4	+3	+4	Legendary Speech
10	+7	+5	+3	+5	Great Leader

words. At the end of this time, the Alyt makes a Charisma check (DC 15). If successful, all allies will gain a +1 morale bonus to all saving throws, attack and damage rolls for the next 1d3 hours.

In addition, they will not surrender during this time. At the Games Master's discretion, Legendary Speech may be used to gain other bonuses, such as swaying potential allies to

join the Alyt's side in a forthcoming battle or war. Legendary Speech may be used once per day.

Great Leader: A Great Leader of the Minbari military is one step away from becoming proclaimed Shai Alyt, the overall commander of the grand Minbari fleet. Other divisions have their own titles, but the point of this feature is that the long service and impressive personal abilities of the

Alyt have brought him to the brink of attaining that rank through merit alone. All Minbari treat a Great Leader with deference, granting him a +2 bonus to all Charisma-related

hand at a challenge. Without the support of their society, every day can be a contest of wits and skill just for survival, but the benefits of freedom are often worth the endless

struggle. Instead of the typical caste benefit of being a Minbari, the Casteless gain something new, the Survivor trait as summarized below. For reference in playing these or any other Minbari character, the racial traits of the Minbari are reprinted here with the Casteless option listed.

Minbari Racial Traits

☞ +2 Strength, -2 Charisma: Minbari seem almost supernaturally strong for their light build, but have little regard or compassion for other races.

- ☞ All Minbari are of Medium-size.
- ☞ Minbari have a base speed of 30 feet.
- ☞ Minbari are extremely quick and can react faster than most other races. They gain a +2 bonus to all Initiative checks.
- ☞ Extremely resilient, it takes a lot to kill a Minbari and so long as they still draw



Ambassador Delenn

checks when interacting with them in person. If the Minbari in question is a member of the warrior caste or part of the same branch of the military (Fleet, Infantry, or Naval), this bonus increases to +4.

Casteless Characters

☞ The Casteless are a unique character opportunity for players wishing to try their

breath, they will carry on with their assigned tasks no matter what befalls them. Minbari gain Great Fortitude as a bonus feat.

☞ All Minbari belong to one of the three castes that form their society. Players must choose to belong to the worker, warrior or religious caste. They may also choose to become one of the Casteless, dissenters who have shunned the caste system of their people.

☞ Religious Caste: Members of the religious caste are extremely knowledgeable, having spent much of their infancy and adolescence learning from the collected wisdom of their entire race. They gain a +2 racial bonus to all Knowledge checks.

☞ Warrior Caste: The Minbari warrior caste is trained to fight – all members are proficient with all non-exotic weapons and may pick one as a favoured weapon. Whenever using their favoured weapon, Minbari gain a +1 racial bonus to their attack rolls.

☞ Worker Caste: Members of the worker caste have many diverse skills and trades. They gain a +2 racial bonus to all Craft and Profession checks.

☞ Casteless: The Casteless are survivors. Their long and arduous existence in the name of freedom and personal choice give them a +4 bonus to all Concentration checks made to endure hardship and provides the equivalent of the Endurance feat.

☞ Automatic languages: Dark, grey and light Minbari, and English.

☞ Favoured Class: Diplomat (religious caste), Officer (warrior caste), Scientist (worker caste), Lurker (Casteless). A multiclass

Minbari's favoured class does not count when determining whether he suffers an XP penalty for multiclassing.

Minbar

Planet: Minbar

Climate: Temperate to Cold, Warmer near Equator

Weather Average: Mild 80%, Light Storms (Winter) 11%, Light Storms (Rain) 5%, Severe Storms (Mixed) 4%

Technical Level: Advanced, gravitic technology, hyperspace-capable, terraforming, genetic engineering
Native Sentient Race(s): Minbari
Dominant Government: Representational Democracy (Grey Council, 9 voting members, 3 from each caste)

Notable Cities: Yedor (capital), Tuzanor, Dianor, Han'li, Durall, Ananor, Mialor

Population: 2,300,000 billion (82% of population is urban, 18% live in rural or isolated areas)

a crust composed predominantly of crystalline deposits, most of the architecture and building materials are gleaned directly from crystal via cutting lasers and industrial cutting equipment. Most Minbar cities are constructed of shaped crystal and benefit from gravitational and solar technology for heat, power, and transportation.

No planet in the Federation is more important to the Minbari people than Minbar. While many races have populated other worlds to the point of surviving or thriving after the loss of their homeworld, the Minbari would be shattered as a culture without Minbar. During the first Great War involving the Minbari, the Shadows did not push their attack on this world because of their philosophy of striking the edges of a culture before tearing out its heart. This may have cost them their victory, as without Minbar, the Minbari would likely have lost their will to fight and been easily routed.



Cultural Information: Population is divided into three castes – worker, warrior, and religious. Each controls a section of the planet surface and is further subdivided into clans along family bloodlines.

Planetary Notes: Minbar is the homeworld of the Minbari Federation. A heavy world with

Tuzanor, Minbar

Videly known as Valen's favourite city on Minbar, Tuzanor is also called the 'City of Sorrows'. This epithet is remembered in the Minbari saying, 'To dream in the City of Sorrows is to dream of a better future' and comes

originally from a terrible battle that raged here before the time of Valen in which millions of Minbari perished between the setting of the sun and its rise again the next morning. Valen was said to love the architecture of this city because of its difference from the other constructions of the Minbari and the distinct sense of peace he always felt gazing over its crenellated minarets at night.

One of Tuzanor's most unique features is the Se'en Voltayn, the 'Veil of Bright Dreams', a crystal laden ridge that surrounds the city at a distance of over a kilometre and is illuminated at night through the naturally stored sunlight of the previous day. This ridge is the inner wall of a crater that was formed when the city settled into the planet's surface following the terrible battle that gave Tuzanor its name. The breathtaking formation of the glowing ridge wall is said to be the resting place of all those who were lost in that conflict. Legend has it that the light is the radiance of the dreams and hopes of the slain. It is in this crater of light that young Anla'shok students meditate each night while they attend the Ranger academy located here.

Vehicles of the Minbari Federation

Vhen other races think of the Minbari in vehicular terms, they invariably picture the mighty ships of their fleet, soaring untouchable and elegant among the stars. While these are undoubtedly the most impressive examples of Minbari vehicular technology, they are by no means the extent of it. Gravitic innovations and the kinds of special materials the race has access to have led to some of the most visually unique and functionally efficient vehicles in the galaxy. From lowly cargo haulers to transatmospheric starships capable of going from space to air to undersea, the Minbari have a wide variety of very special vessels.

One thing other races notice quickly about the designs of Minbari vehicles is the appearance of organic lines and curves to everything they build. This suggests a type of living vessel, something the Minbari do not directly possess but often allow other races to believe they do. In truth, this aesthetic comes from their dimly

remembered time of fosterage by the Vorlons and their admiration for that ancient race's cultivated, as opposed to constructed, ship technology. While the Minbari would adore the ability to make organic vessels, they cannot do so without outside aid.

The White Star

The result of a technological gestalt between Minbari and Vorlon science, the White Star is a powerful vessel with firepower and endurance far beyond what its small size would suggest. Combining all of the advantages of Minbari ship design with many of the benefits of Vorlon living materials, White Stars are agile, resilient and capable of handling almost anything a hostile galaxy can throw at them. With enough speed to evade capital ships they cannot engage directly, a White Star is usually crewed by elite personnel, making them even more effective.

Colossal Spacecraft; hp 400; DV 20 (-8 size, +18 agility); DR 18 (20); Spd -; Acc 4; Dec 4; Han +3; Sensor +10; Stealth 25; SQ Jump Point, Atmospheric Capable, Long-Ranged, Minbari Flight Computer, Living Ship (healing capacity only); Cargo 50,000 lb.; 2 Officers, 6 Pilots, 4 Sensor Operators, 18 Crewmen

Weapons:

Improved Neutron Laser; 1 Boresight; Attack +6 (targeting computer); Damage 150+5d10; Critical 17-20; Range 8 Four Molecular Pulsars; 4 Front; Attack +5 (targeting computer); Damage 20+2d10; Critical 18-20; Range 8; Rapid Fire

Craft (2):

6 Nial Fighters or 2 Flyers

A White Star in action

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WHAT JAMES N. FREY THINKS ABOUT ROLEPLAYING

By Jonny Nexus

Who is James N. Frey you ask? Well he's the author of a rather nifty book called 'How to write a damn good novel' which I happened to be reading one Sunday morning, before my weekly roleplaying session. I'd like to say that while reading it I immediately realised that the principles he was outlining could equally be applied to the field of roleplaying. I'd like to say it, but I can't, because I didn't. It was, after all, Sunday **morning**.

But that afternoon, as I roleplayed my Call of Cthulhu character, the Honourable Squadron Leader Ralph Charles George Halthorpe-Halthorpe¹ MP BA DFC, that thought did arrive, albeit somewhat sheepish, and several hours late.

I'd been reading what James had to say on the concept of '*character maximum capacity*' and the "*would he really?*" test'. James says: '*All of your central characters, both protagonists and antagonists, should at all times be clever and efficient in handling the problems you have presented them.*' He then goes on to explain that this doesn't mean they have to be super-people, merely that they do the best thing that they could have done in any particular situation. In particular, when they hear strange moans and groans from the attic, they shouldn't go up the stairs to investigate. According to James, this is known as the '*idiot in the attic*' cliché, and he cautions the aspiring author to never use it.

I remembered this advice when our player characters were about to spend the night in a lunatic asylum that was now both staff-less and several patients light, due to the fact that there was a serial killer on the loose.

(After arriving to visit the head doctor – and getting attacked by a nutter² while knocking on the door – we'd found the doctor's dead body inside the house, along with the messy remains of two nurses and several patients).

Can you see where I'm going?

One of the player characters, Doctor Dalton, was visiting the lunatics (those that were still alive) accompanied by my servant Jones (a Non-Player Character) who was acting as his assistant. Meanwhile, my player character, Ralph – who had lost 24% of his sanity in a single day, and was therefore quite eager to make the acquaintance of tomorrow – and the third player character, Robert, were settling down for the night in the room where we'd made our headquarters. This seemed to disturb our Games Master, John, who was coming out with subtle hints like: 'So you're just going to let them walk around the basement cells, unarmed?' Eventually, I cottoned on, and said that me and my shotgun would accompany them.

'So what are you doing?' John asked Robert's player.

'Going to sleep,' was the reply.

'Are you locking the door?'

'Well no, they wouldn't be able to get back in, would they?'

At this point it occurred to me that going to sleep in an unlocked room³, in a building which had an insane serial killer on the loose, might not

be what James had in mind when he talked about 'character maximum capacity'.

Which led to an interesting thought. If roleplaying is, as some have suggested, a process where a group of players collaboratively, and interactively, write a story, a novel even, then – according to my James N. Frey – it's a novel that apparently sucks.

But is this really true? Let's look at something else James says, about keeping characters in 'the crucible':

'Characters are in the crucible to stay if their motivation to continue in conflict is greater than their motivation to run away from the conflict. You know you have failed to put your characters in a crucible if your readers are apt to ask questions like: 'Why doesn't the knight just go home and forget about slaying the dragon?'

I guess the Games Master railroading because 'Look I spent a tenner on this module!' doesn't count then?

So, I suppose we'll just have to accept that James doesn't think much of our novel-writing skills.

Next session, having transformed straight from morons to heroes without passing sane, we're heading off into the woods in search of a flesh-melting horror, armed only with flaming torches, bottles of petrol, and a shotgun armed with bird-shot⁴. I think Mr Frey calls that 'melodrama'. I'm not sure what that means, but I suspect it isn't good.

¹Pronounced 'Rafe Haltrop-Halthorpe'. I think it's a good name, although I have to confess that by the time I've finished introducing myself, my colleagues have usually finished the current encounter and moved on to the next.

²He'd gone 'ape' because the doctor – being dead – hadn't given him his medication. Unfortunately, after capturing him, we forgot to give him the medication also, twice, with the result that he again attacked us. Twice.

³We kept on making jokes about him being Shroedinger's player character, who would be both alive and dead – until we opened the door and collapsed the probability wave.

⁴This inflicts a hugely unimpressive D3 of damage, which basically amounts to a mild pebble-dashing of the victim's face and the consequent pissing-off this involves.



Angry People in an Angry Land



Behind Enemy Lines: Kazakhstan is the first in the exciting new series of campaign books from Mongoose Publishing for its hugely successful Armageddon 2089 Roleplaying Game. Take your team and immerse yourself in a world of hurt - if you dare.



ARMAGEDDON:2089 TOTAL WAR

THE NUKIE BROWNS

FROM NEWCASTLE WITH LOVE...

By Ian Sturrock

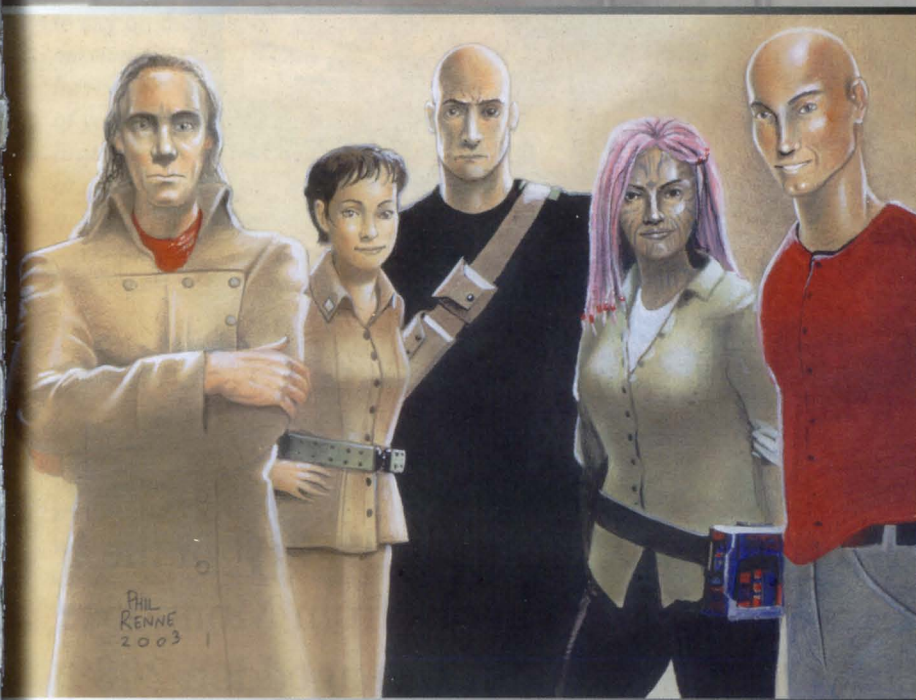
Were they originally named for their favourite tippie? Their place of origin in North-East England? Their characteristically brown camouflage, well suited to the rocky deserts where they have done their most famous work? A mutual surname? Or their propensity for never firing hi-ex when a tacnuke would do the job?

Perhaps we will never know for sure, since this seems to be one of the few areas I found Ricky, Charlie, John, Davey and Ally 'Brown' to be reticent about. Certainly they will only answer to the surname 'Brown' though this seems as likely to be a pop-music style stance as one based on any familial relationship between the five, since they could not be more different physically.

hair. He does most of the talking, but I cannot help suspecting that his apparent sincerity is no more than a thin veil for his sarcasm – I am never sure if he is pulling my leg, or deadly serious about everything he says. He talks about the squad's influences, mentioning the 20th century rock band The Stooges as a major inspiration for their combat tactics ('Just go out and d/l *Raw Power*,' he insists, 'That track *Search and Destroy* – smart targeting, no prisoners, max-tech guerrilla warfare. The Utah Saints homage is even better. . .) then citing Hugo Boss as their style guru ('He designed some of the most impressive military uniforms ever seen, for the World War II-era German army') and Robert E. Lee ('The first punk rock general') as their hero when it comes to attitude.

mischievous pixie's face, all sharply angled chin, pointed nose and flashing eyes. When she talks, fast as crystal meth, her hands are constantly in motion, and you get the impression that if the office were a little bigger she would be running round in circles too.

John ('Not Johnny,' he insists as Ricky introduces us), weapons officer, is competent-looking and serious, hair shaved to the scalp, plain, dark combat gear and with a dangerous gleam in his rather bulbous grey eyes. He says little during this interview, and smiles only once, when Charlie gives a colourful description of wiping out a convoy of light tanks with a one-in-a-million bridge-blowing shot.



Davey – comms – is the only one without a broad Newcastle accent, though his quickfire Belfast dialect is just as difficult to follow for this reporter. He has a classic army boxer's build, not too big but wirily muscular and very nimble. Like John, his head is shaved, but he wears tight, bleached jeans and Docs rather than military gear.

Ally's bright pink dreadlocks and Maori-style facial tattoos mark her out as the type of scout who never leaves her WarMek and heads incognito into the local city. She has a rep as the owner of the two sharpest eyes in the business, though, and one of the keenest minds. Rumour has it that she and Davey write a big chunk of the team's combat software themselves, in their spare time, just because...

Ricky, the squad leader, is tall, skinny, intense and loquacious, with a tangle of long, greying, black

Charlie, assault specialist, is a pint-size powerhouse, her short, dark, gamine-style crop framing a

The Nukie Browns specialise in what Ricky calls 'defensive assassination'.

'We got the idea from watching newscasts of various US presidents talking about defending their nation with one breath, and firing cruise missiles at other people's countries with the next,' he explains. 'We just loved the spin, and the assumption of stupidity on the part of the audience – which of course turned out to be correct. To us, a defensive assassination is any strike deep into enemy territory, aimed at wiping out an individual or materiel that could otherwise be used against the client at a later date. Our philosophy is to make maximum use of mobility and stealth. If we encounter serious resistance, especially from enemy WarMeks, we have already failed – because they should not have detected us, nor caught up with us.'

Their most famous missions have all taken place in the desert, often in North Africa and the remnants of the Middle East, though they have taken on at least one mission to the USA that they will not talk about. Indeed, when their notoriety and reputation have spread, they have done so by word of mouth, usually in whispers: 'Here is a WarMek squad that can really fight, that is not afraid of anything...'

Steadfastly refusing to pick a side, the Nukie Browns have quite cleverly used the United Kingdom's currently fragmented state to play both sides against the middle. Davey, who acts as the team's agent as well as comms op, explains without apology that the Nukie Browns increase their basic fee by 10% each time they complete a contract.

'This war is insane,' Ally says. 'We have no wish to pretend otherwise. There is nothing we can do to make it better – so we help make it worse, while ensuring we get well paid – very well paid – out of it. Who'd be a civilian in these times? We risk our

necks out in the field, but at least we have armour and WarMeks to protect us. The ordinary people of the world have no such defence, but are almost as likely to be shot at as us. They are not so well paid, either. This way, we get to fund our own private escape plans. None of us are going to be in this war any longer than we need to be. We are here so we can one day afford to get out.'

NEW TECHNOLOGY

The Nukie Browns use one exotic piece of equipment, the versatile but heavy 80mm autocannon. This is excellent for short-to-medium-range anti-aircraft use, yet packs a powerful enough punch to smash straight through light tank and WarMek armour.

80mm Autocannon, Moore Ltd.: This extra-heavy autocannon is something of a peculiarity. Although technically capable of fully automatic fire, it is very slow, around 120 rounds per minute, and cannot even be fired at that speed for more than a few seconds before it needs to be left to cool a while. Most WarMek pilots avoid firing this autocannon on full automatic due to this need to let it cool off or risk overheating.

If rapid-fired, it must be left to cool for the following round, or if fired (whether rapid-fire or single-shot) the next round it will overheat on an attack roll of 1-2. If fired again the next round without being left to cool, the chance of overheating doubles to 1-4, and to 1-8 the following round. An overheated autocannon may not be used to fire at all until repaired. Repairing it is a ten-minute Engineering job (DC 25).

Though the standard IR Signature for an 80mm Autocannon shot is 23, this is reduced to 15 if fired on Rapid Fire.

80MM AUTOCANNON



Weapons

Weapon	US Cost	Mass	Hardpoints	Power Points	Infrared Signature	Damage	Area of Effect
Autocannon, 80mm, Moore Ltd.	\$150,000	8	8	3	23*	1d20	—
Critical	Ammo/ton	Ammo Cost/ton	Range Increment	Type	Projectile Structure Points	Inflammable?	
x2	15	\$6,000	200m	Rapid Fire Projectile	—	—	

At this point, Ricky claims he has no particular wish to get out, and within minutes the whole team is locked in argument. It is clear that these disputes happen regularly, and have a ritualistic quality to them, like the primitive wars between neighbouring tribes, where war-cries are shouted but spears are thrown from just beyond effective range. . .

— from an interview for
Which WarMek? Magazine.

NUKIE BROWN SQUAD WARMEKS

The Nukie Browns favour light-to-medium-weight, fast WarMeks, with even their assault WarMek being a relatively small Assassin. This is the usual WarMek combination for the team, along with any customisation made by the team to the stock models. They usually have a small, mixed bag of robotic followers for resupply and repair in the field, but are more than prepared to flee and leave the robots to fend for themselves if need be.

Note that all four of the squad's WarMeks mount Laser Communications Systems in addition to the usual Comms Processors. Where practical, the squad will use the laser comms, only reverting to standard radio frequencies if the laser system becomes out of sync.

Ricky

12th level Field Officer, pilots a Tametomo. The Tametomo has had the retractable spike removed, instead mounting a third pack of Lancer missiles.

Charlie

11th level Assault Officer, pilots an Assassin. The Assassin has had the usual reflective coating ground off, and replaced with a MultiCamo™ coating.

John

11th level WarMek Weapons Officer, has the gunner position in the Tametomo piloted by Ricky.

Davey

11th level Comms Officer, pilots the custom-built Birdshot Medium Comms/Anti-Air WarMek.

Ally

12th level Scout Officer, pilots a stock Ipex Rec4.

BIRDSHOT

Medium Comms/Anti-Air WarMek

The Birdshot has been custom-designed by the Nukie Browns WarMek squad to provide highly effective anti-aircraft capability, but still offer the versatility and heavy armour weight required of a heavy-duty comms mek. The design has often been copied, though as yet only imperfectly.

The Birdshot is remarkable for its combination of an excellent price, high-quality sensor array, and a thick, serious weight of armour. It achieves this by having a rather small power plant for such a relatively large WarMek. This low-powered Tokamak is more than sufficient to power the weapons and full scanning and EW gear, and still have power points left to move along at quite a trot, but to run at full speed the Birdshot must employ its backup power supply.

Large WarMek

Chassis: 75 tons

Total Mass: 120 tons

Defence Value: 9

Crew: 1 pilot

Base Speed: 30m

Handling: -2

Armour Type: Composite armour, MultiCamo™ coating

Cost: \$10,839,500

Power Plant: Tokamak M

Power Points: 55

Emissions

Infrared Signature: 27 (32 in optimal conditions)

Magnetic Signature: 20

Radar Signature: 23

Seismic Signature: 10

Head

Structure Points: 5

Armour: 30

Rear Armour: 15

Hardpoints: 0.5

Weapons

Weapon	Power Points	Range Increment	Damage	Critical	IR Signature	Type
80mm Autocannon	3	200m	1d20	x2	25	Rapid Fire Projectile
Hawkeye Missiles, 2-pack	1	*	2d6	x2	10*	Projectile
Shuriken Missiles, 8-pack	1	*	1d6	x2	13*	Projectile
WarMek Punch	24*	—	1d4+3	19-20/x2	—	Bludgeoning
WarMek Kick	24*	—	1d6+3	x2	—	Bludgeoning

Power Points

Action or System	Power Point Cost	Range Increment
Move at Base Speed (up to 30m)	12	—
Move at Double Speed (up to 60m)	24	—
Run or Charge (up to 120m)	60	—
Use Weapon	As Listed for Weapon Type	As Listed for Weapon Type
Stand from Prone Position	12	—
Advanced Comms Processor	2	*
Advanced Radio Warfare System	5	*
ATIROS	1	7km
Countermeasures Launcher	1	—
Electronic Emissions Detector	1	250m
Ground Surveillance Radar	3	200m
Infrared Advanced Scanner	2	200m/2km
Laser Communications System	2	*
Millimetre-Wave Radar	2	200m
Ray-Tech Minimal Air Defence Radar	1	2.5km
Variable-Band Electromagnetic Jammer	1*	—
Wideband Area Jammers	1	—

Weapons & Equipment:

Advanced Comms Processor, Ground Surveillance Radar, Infrared Advanced Scanner, Laser Comms, ATIROS, Electromagnetic Emissions Detector, Advanced Radar Warfare System, Variable-Band Electromagnetic Jammer, Millimetre-Wave Radar, Shuriken SAM (8-pack)
Cargo: 0

Left Arm

Structure Points: 8
Armour: 45
Rear Armour: 22
Hardpoints: 0
Weapons & Equipment: Ray-Tech Minimal Air Defence Radar, Hawkeye SAMs (2-pack)
Cargo: 0



Torso

Structure Points: 29
Armour: 90
Rear Armour: 45
Hardpoints: 2
Weapons & Equipment: Tokamak M, 2 tons HEAM ammo for Autocannon (30 shots), Chebb Distributed Fire Extinguisher, Backup Power Capacitor
Cargo: 0

Right Arm

Structure Points: 8
Armour: 45
Rear Armour: 22
Hardpoints: 0
Weapons & Equipment: 80mm Autocannon
Cargo: 0

Left Leg

Structure Points: 9
Armour: 45
Rear Armour: 22
Hardpoints: 3
Weapons & Equipment: Countermeasures Launcher + 5 x Electro-Optical, 5 x Hot Window, 5 x Smoke, 5 x Hot Smoke
Cargo: 0

Right Leg

Structure Points: 9
Armour: 45
Rear Armour: 22
Hardpoints: 0
Weapons & Equipment: Wideband Area Jammers (5)
Cargo: 0

Secrets of the Written Word

by Adrian Bott

A preview of
**Encyclopaedia
Arcane: Tomes and
Libraries - coming
September 2003**

When the people of the ancient world first discovered writing, they intuitively connected it with magic. The making of a sign that both was and was not the thing it represented; that was a new thing, a thing of power, a thing for rulers and the counsellors of rulers. The earliest magic wand may have been a stylus, a simple tool for engraving words on a wax tablet.

From that point on, magic and words have always been connected. It is frequently the thunderous syllables of arcane language that empower the magician's will, enabling him to work wonders of magic. Even the word 'spell', with its connotation both of a magic formula and of arranging letters in the right and proper way, shows the intimate connection of language with magic. The old word for a book of spells, a 'grimoire' is etymologically connected with 'grammar'. So, to arrange words or letters in meaningful patterns is the same fundamental process as making magic.

Those who work with magic in a written form, such as wizards and clerics, have a great respect for books. Many wizards in particular feel a strong desire to be surrounded by them, an urge that seems unrelated to the wisdom and power the books may contain. This may be down to an intuitive reverence for written

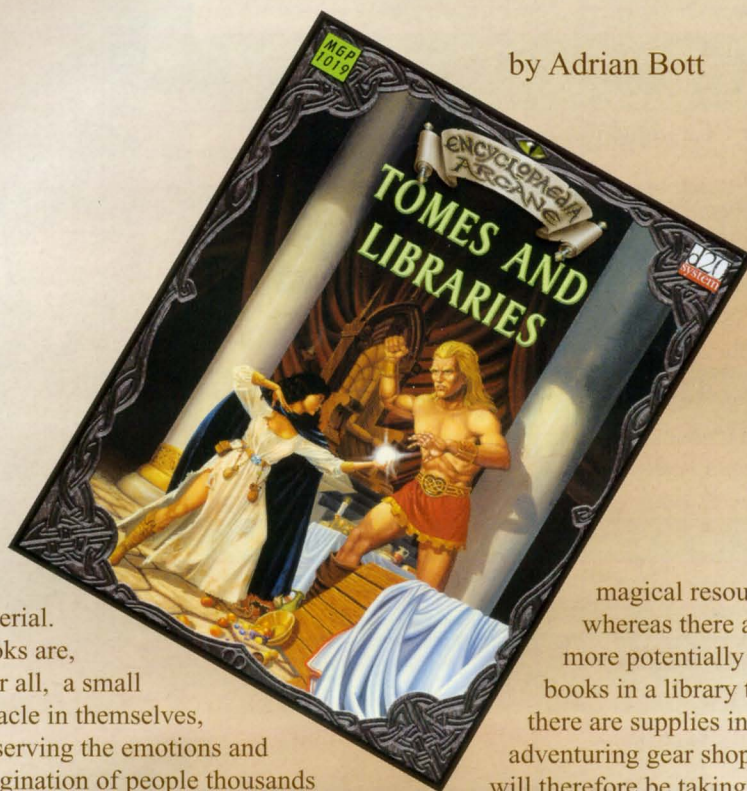
material. Books are, after all, a small miracle in themselves, preserving the emotions and imagination of people thousands of years dead, enabling scientific genius to be passed down from one generation to the next.

Libraries are thus far more than mere collections of volumes. Socially, they have served as the storehouse for the collected wisdom of the tribe, or even of a whole civilisation. When information is entrusted to a recording medium instead of to oral traditions, the library becomes the memory of the people. If that culture should die out suddenly or descend into decadence, the written records are often all that is left of them, a symbolic skeleton for the researchers of the future to pick over. Ancient, powerful secrets are stored in libraries; ancient dread and danger, too.

Although wizards and libraries are so often connected, very little time has been spent on exploring the function and powers of the library. Libraries usually turn up as scenic backdrops or repositories for purely

magical resources, whereas there are more potentially useful books in a library than there are supplies in an adventuring gear shop. We will therefore be taking a long overdue stroll down the library aisles and finding out how to use its stored wisdom to our best advantage. Magic-using characters, who have more of a natural inclination towards reading than characters of other classes, will find an abundance of new ways to apply the knowledge set down in their books – and a whole lot of new books to go searching for!

Players of any class who prefer to use their brains as well as their sword arms will find new roles to play and new ways to tackle the challenges they encounter. Strength can see you through a tough battle, health can keep you standing when you are wounded and luck can sometimes get you out of trouble; but knowledge can trump any of these, because knowledge can find ways of applying strength more efficiently, avoiding wounds in the first place and substituting a blind trust in fate with advance planning. You will never look at a library in the same way again.



Why Libraries Exist

Memory is unreliable and the flesh is mortal. Upon these basic premises rests the reason for the written word and all that follows from it. In order that thoughts might outlive the thinker, that the discoveries of past ages might not need to be rediscovered laboriously and that fleeting ideas of genius might be preserved for eternity, sentient beings have worked to discover ways to preserve their thoughts in symbolic form, recorded on media designed to last for as long as possible.

The very first library (in human terms, irrespective of anything the Gods may have invented) was a cave wall, on which a learned tribesman carefully painted the images of beasts, heroes and deities. From that first repository of symbolic knowledge came writing, in which the symbols no longer had to resemble what they stood for. From the very first, making marks was a magical act. The daub of paint on the wall *was* the bison; the writing down of a person's name somehow captured their essence. Literacy was considered to be a magical talent by those too ignorant to know any better.

With the growth of civilisation, the recording of knowledge becomes a matter of prime importance. Bards and skalds can store history in their memories, but what happens if the bard dies? A leader who is not remembered in legend might as well never have existed. A warrior chieftain who is busy waging war and bringing prizes home cannot be expected to keep track of all the treasures he owns, nor to write his own correspondence to other warlords. For that, he needs a scribe. The written word is also crucial to many concepts of 'civilised' religion, as opposed to the pagan religions that are more concerned with emotions of awe and wonder. When the Gods speak, someone should write down what they say, as they may never gift mankind with their wisdom again. That holy writing can then take on a

talismanic virtue. The book becomes an object of reverence in itself, not just for what it says.

The earliest forms of library are the archives of the tribe's or the kingdom's records. Often there is little contained therein apart from a year by year description of what the civilisation did, whether the year brought a good or bad harvest, who war was waged upon, who was born, who was married and who died. There will also be accounts of the tribe's legends, set down in a 'standard' form, so that history will not efface the truth through telling and retelling.

Those leaders who begin to value learning as well as raw physical prowess will want to extend their collections by including the written wisdom of other civilisations, especially when they realise that their own wise men can use this recorded knowledge to make new weapons and build stronger fortifications. When knowledge is recorded, it can be traded. In this way, one tribe or civilisation can exchange ideas with another. Libraries can be built up in which the knowledge of many civilisations is gathered together. The ultimate result is the library familiar from all fantasy campaigns, the chamber full of overstuffed shelves bulging with tome upon tome. It is with this kind of library that this book is concerned.

The Makings of a Book

Engraved on Stone

There are several types of material traditionally used to store written information. The crudest is the stone or clay tablet. Before more lightweight materials are discovered, the best way to preserve knowledge is to carve it into the same kind of stuff of which buildings are made. That way, it will last. Tablets cannot store as much information as a whole book but may easily store as much as may be written on a scroll. It is possible (and common amongst some

ancient civilisations) to record spells upon tablets in exactly the same way as they are written on scrolls, with the tablet crumbling as the spell is discharged. Although it is inconvenient for a wizard to have to haul around a tablet, if the spell is one of which he has particular need it is better than not having the spell at all. Sometimes, tablets are unearthed that store extremely potent or dangerous spells long since forgotten by the younger civilisations.

Papyrus

Easier to store than bulky tablets, papyrus is a form of rough sheet made by pressing reeds together. It is most commonly used by desert-dwelling civilisations. Its principal disadvantages are its bumpy and uneven surface, sometimes causing a mystic syllable to be mis-spelt or an illustration to be smudged, its vulnerability to damp and its edibility. Rats and other vermin will happily chew holes in papyrus if they are allowed to. On the positive side, it is cheap and plentiful.

Metal

Less common than papyrus or clay as a writing medium, soft metals are sometimes used. The writing is carefully engraved or pressed into the surface and the metal is then rolled up and stored as a scroll. Copper is most commonly used for this purpose. While such scrolls are much more durable than papyrus and easier to store than tablets, they are harder to prepare and have a tendency to split from metal fatigue if unrolled and rolled up too many times. They are sometimes used to store records of particular importance that will not be accessed very often, such as the definitive version of a holy text from which several working copies will be made before it is returned to the archives, or the location of a store of treasure that the scroll-writer will not have a chance to unearth for some years. Dwarf civilisations are fonder of metal scrolls than other races, mixing their copper in with other metals to produce a springy elastic alloy that is both long lasting and flexible.

Fabric

Cultures that have discovered weaving (which will include all of the intelligent humanoid races in a standard fantasy milieu) will often take advantage of this to produce sheets of material, usually silk, that are then used to store information or write letters. Silk scrolls are extremely costly to produce and if there is a cheaper alternative, they will rarely be used except on ceremonial occasions or to hold magical writing. Elves are noted for their use of ornamented silk scrolls; these can sometimes be yards long and have many beautiful marginal illustrations, as they often are when an epic poem has been recorded on them.

Parchment

Parchment is the standard medium for important or magical documents in a fantasy milieu. Ranging in colour from ivory to dark tan depending on the quality, it is prepared from animal hide that has been soaked and stripped. Old parchment has a crackly consistency to it, causing pages to turn noisily. If it has been made well, it can retain its flexibility for thousands of years. It is often made from the hide of goats or sheep. The technique of making parchment is a Craft skill in its own right. All the flesh must be carefully removed from the skin, then the hide is stretched to ensure maximum yield.

Calfskin or lambskin parchment is called *vellum* and is the finest quality of parchment available, being pale in colour, thin and very flexible. Vellum is always recommended when scribing magical scrolls or making individual talismans. Many religions will require their holy texts to be written on vellum parchment, as lesser materials are seen as 'base' and unworthy of receiving the power of divine revelation. Maps are also often recorded on parchment because of its

durability. The prices given in *Core Rulebook I* for a sheet of parchment assume goatskin or sheepskin of moderate quality is being bought. Vellum costs 9 silver pieces per sheet.

Good parchment is so much in demand that in times of want, older books are often recycled to make new ones. Pieces of blank parchment are cut from larger volumes and joined together. It is not uncommon for a browser looking through a recently

b o u n d
across a
fragment of a
much
older text



incorporated into the endpapers, particularly when the binder did not know or care what the older book was. Many fragments of ancient knowledge are rediscovered in this way.

Documents discovered on parchment will always have been written by hand. It is not a medium on which writing is printed.

Paper

Although it is not often thought of as such, paper is just as commonly

found in a fantasy world as in the everyday. If this were not the case, there would be few libraries, as the amount of parchment required would be astronomical. It is made from a variety of ingredients, usually including cotton or linen rags but almost always including hemp. Depending on how widespread its manufacture is in a given region, paper is either more scarce than parchment or relatively cheap and plentiful. In either case it varies in quality from batch to batch and manufacturer to manufacturer. The price of 4 silver pieces per sheet in *Core Rulebook I* assumes that paper is scarce and that the sheet bought is of the highest quality. Rough paper in a region where paper is plentiful could be got for the same amount of copper pieces.

In a campaign world where paper is plentiful and printing has been discovered, paper is the standard medium for storing the kind of writing that is produced in large quantities, such as popular books, broadsheets (one-page newspapers), handbills, posters (such as 'wanted' posters), song sheets and the like. It is also readily available for anyone to buy blank, so that they may carry out such vital tasks as writing their own letters, making maps or filling out their last will and testament before descending into a dungeon.

For the purposes of this supplement, we are assuming that printing has been discovered, though it has not become a universally accepted method of bookmaking. Books are clearly common in the d20 fantasy universe and it is impossible to believe they were all written by hand. Literacy is also widespread instead of being limited to the classes most commonly associated with it, such as nobles, priests and mages. It is thus reasonable to suppose that printing has made books accessible to a wider audience but that the literate members of society have remained rather stuck in their ways, preferring more archaic methods of information storage. This is particularly true of priests, wizards and sorcerers, as magic and religion alike seem to gravitate much more

readily to the old methods of hand-copying on to parchment than to newer techniques of mass printing.

Libraries in a Fantasy World

Not every collection of books and manuscripts can be said to be a library. Many homes have one or two books knocking about and some of the richer ones might even have a whole case full, but only an institution or individual with substantial wealth or renown can afford to acquire books in sufficient quantity to have a library. As a rule of thumb, five thousand books (including scrolls and pamphlets) must be included in a collection before it is even worthy of the title of library.

Wizards are the most renowned of characters for book collecting but they are far from being the only people to do so. Owning a large number of books is considered by many to be a sign of nobility; one is a person of letters and education, not some muddy peasant. Some professional institutions, such as guilds, keep collections of books in order to preserve the wisdom of their craft and educate the apprentices. Many private collectors have libraries, sometimes including books of great value bought as an investment.

Wizardly Libraries

These are the familiar libraries from classic fantasy. Antique wooden shelves hold a variety of odd-shaped tomes, some of which seem about to burst open with repressed magical energy. The place is almost always untidy, since it is in constant use. Scrolls lie unfurled on work surfaces, books are held open by any heavy object that comes to hand and recently consulted titles are stacked on top of one another in precarious piles.

The traditional place for such a library is at the top of a wizard's

tower, where the bookshelves line part or most of the walls, with a single hanging lamp in the room's centre. It is not possible to fit a library of more than small size into an unmodified tower room, so what many wizards do is add an extra level of shelves above the first, having balconies and ladders built so they can reach them. This way, the more dangerous or infrequently used books can be kept up high out of easy reach of visitors.

Larger wizardly libraries can be found in castle rooms or, if the wizard has a large house of his own, in a room set aside for the purpose. Some wizards who are nervous about security will set aside the magical sections of their libraries (including spellbooks, which are often stolen) in a small secret area. This allows them to use the library as normal, while any visitors are restricted to the sections on open display.

Although many wizards (particularly the more aged ones) prefer to be solitary and accumulate libraries of their own, there are others who work together and form communal libraries. Magical orders will always have the best library they can assemble. The library of a long-established good-aligned order is the epitome of what an arcane library should be. The order's work and reputation will have enabled it to garner the most rare and sought-after titles, the powers of the members can be counted on to prevent theft and the frequent necessity of use means that the place is kept in immaculate order, usually by *unseen servants* and other magical beings conjured for the purpose.

Noble Libraries

The aristocracy are proud of their academic accomplishments. They keep libraries in order to educate their children, to settle disputes and to show off to their aristocratic friends. There are no conventional universities or colleges in a fantasy setting, so most families have their own book collections and enlist private tutors.

Poorer families rarely learn from books, as their trades do not usually require literacy to learn, though they may learn to read as a useful step in life.

As noble families often stay in the same house for generation after generation, large hereditary libraries are accumulated. These will not always be maintained. If the family falls on hard times, servants will be kept on for essentials like cooking and cleaning and the library will be shut up and left to gather dust. Few families bother with the trouble of hiring a full-time librarian. As a result, the family will not often know what it has in its collection, or who was the last person to consult it.

It is hard to predict what you will find in a noble library. Once in a while, a family member will develop a mania for books and add a huge amount to the collection; once he is dead and gone, another family member will run up gambling debts and sell a stack of books to raise money. Some families have crates of old books in storage that they have not bothered to unpack. It is hard for a wizard not to salivate at the thought of what lost treasures could be lurking in attics in unopened boxes.

Royal libraries are usually the most splendid, well-stocked and best maintained of all noble libraries. They are founded and kept updated by monarchs who are sufficiently wise (or have sufficiently wise advisors) to know that a ruler must learn from the past if he is to avoid repeating past mistakes. Royal libraries are exempt from the usual rules regarding illegal books. It is felt that a ruler may sometimes need to consult information best kept from the public, if only to make a more educated guess at what his enemies may be doing.

Public Libraries

Some towns and cities are sufficiently civilised to have a public library. These are usually founded by a benefactor who wished to make his

hometown a better place after his death and left his collection to form the basis of a new library. Others after him follow this worthy example, either by making donations while alive or passing collections on at death and within a few years a library is established.

Public libraries do not often contain a great depth of material. What they do have is usually of popular interest, such as fiction (usually the largest section), craft books, biographies, folklore and religious titles. They often have a problem with theft and vandalism and as a result they do not stock expensive or delicate books, keeping mostly to paperbacks and hardbacks. They have next to no material about magic, as this is the first to be stolen by curious teenagers. Even the books that survive do not always contain what they should. Anyone consulting a text in a public library may find that the pictures have been removed because someone thought they would look nice on the wall, or a crucial page has been obliterated by a halfling child's crayon drawing of a tree.

Guild Libraries

It is very common for a guild of craftsmen to have a small library, kept at the guild headquarters. The books found therein will mostly be technical manuals, though there will be some more general titles for the guild members to read while relaxing. The reference books of the guild are treated with as much care and reverence by the members as a wizard treats his spellbooks. A guild will sometimes own a particularly rare and prized tome that will be displayed

in a locked cabinet and only brought out on ceremonial occasions. Some guilds have their own initiation rites, such as that of the Venerable Company of Brewers during which the candidate is obliged to stand in the centre of the cellar wearing nothing but a barrel while the other guild members throw ale at him. At the conclusion of this rite, the newly initiated Brewer would be given the guild's tome to kiss to seal his oath



of loyalty to the guild and allowed access to it thereafter.

In a class of their own are the Rogues' Guilds. Their libraries, when they have them, are dark and secretive affairs, full of slim volumes on all manner of lawless crafts. The arts of the rogue are not all passed down by word of mouth. Some rogues who have survived to old age have been so concerned to preserve their knowledge (or so keen to boast of their exploits) that they have written whole books of guidance to those younger rogues following in their footsteps. A rogue who is a member of a guild might be given access to

books that describe the secrets of disguise, the art of striking from the shadows, the best colours and dyes to use when dressing so as not to be seen in an urban environment, the care and maintenance of thieves' tools, the art of improvising a lockpick, the techniques of glass-cutter use, one hundred useful knots and so on.

Not all of the rogue's guild library books are written with the rogue in mind; it is a poor library that will not have several books on the art of locksmithing. A rogue who has had the foresight to bring along a schematic showing the insides of a difficult lock will find he has a much better chance of picking it.

The books found in the libraries of the Guilds of Assassins are darker still, containing plenty of medical and anatomical texts. From these, the students learn the way the various races' bodies work and the most efficient ways of preventing them from doing so. Volumes of poison lore are given pride of place, with full-page diagrams showing which parts of various creatures are venomous and how to extract the poison safely. Instructions are given whereby the student may brew his own venom and handle it with impunity. Assassins do not derive their class feature of poison use from nowhere; they all have to learn it and what they do not learn from instructors they read in books.

Any rogues' or assassins' library is running a risk by existing in the first place, as a great many of the books contained therein will be considered illegal or dangerous by the authorities in most lawful regimes. Depending on the degree of corruption in the city or town, a bribe is sometimes paid to ensure the library is allowed to carry on undisturbed. Where this is impractical, the library is simply

kept secret. A guild of this kind will sometimes have a dummy library as a false front, on whose shelves are found volumes of poetry and romantic paperbacks. Only the members will be told which copy of Nugent's Whimsical Odes For Young Folk actually contains The Book of Silent Slaughter inside its thick binding.

Bardic Colleges

The love bards have for knowledge draws them to libraries like ants to honey. They can happily spend days just browsing the shelves and reading whatever chances to come to hand. Their tendency to wander prevents them from settling down for long in one place, so dedicated bardic libraries formed by individuals are not common. They would much rather consult other people's collections than go to the time and trouble of building up their own.

Bardic colleges, on the other hand, are repositories for all manner of esoteric information. Bards come there not only to learn but also to contribute, recording their experiences and individual compositions on scrolls kept for the purpose and adding to the college's store of learning. Bards who are members of a college are freely permitted to copy from the texts kept there. This rule means that information is kept in a constant flow between the various colleges. A bard may write down a song of his own composition in which the adventures of his team-mates are chronicled and add it to the records of one college; another bard may find it there, copy it on to a scroll and take it with him, adding it to the archives of the colleges he encounters on his wanderings. As the kind of information recorded by bards is not often very long and needs to be portable so that it can be taken with them on a journey, bardic colleges keep a great deal of their records in scroll form and rarely include tomes.

Clerical Libraries

The religious orders and established churches have some of the best

collections of books anywhere. Clerical libraries are often better stocked than those of wizards (perhaps because wizards so often selfishly guard their books, rather than pooling them in the interests of the faith) though they are much more rare; there is usually only one per religion and it is typically found at that religion's most holy site.

Clerics' understanding of the sacred leads them to treat their collections with reverence and care. Thanks to their ministrations, many ancient texts have been preserved that might otherwise have been lost to the ages. Unfortunately for the would-be researcher, gaining access to a clerical library is very difficult. Religious librarians often feel their collections are best kept for those sufficiently enlightened to benefit from them; or, if their content is controversial, for those sufficiently holy to withstand them. Legends abound of cathedrals in whose upper towers immense libraries are kept, to which no outsider is ever granted access. It is certainly true that many high-ranking clerics have owned volumes of very dubious material indeed, ostensibly for their value as art.

Private Collections

The very rich, the eccentric, the light-fingered and the just plain lucky

sometimes manage to amass personal collections of books to rival those of any institution. The individual tastes of the collector will shape the collection; libraries of this kind never contain anything superfluous. They are usually small, with an excellent selection of extremely rare books. Unlike noble libraries, which they otherwise resemble, they focus on a few areas in depth rather than covering a great many. Private libraries may only be accessed at the whim of the collector him or herself. They are almost always part of a large house, with a whole room to themselves. Some especially wealthy families may even have a Noble library and a Private Collection belonging to the family members under the same roof.

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Encyclopaedia Arcane

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The Coming of

CONAN®

Roleplaying in the Hyborian Age

Conan game designer Ian Sturrock is, to say the least, A Conan fanatic. It's just as well, because this is going to be a massive project for Mongoose Publishing, and is set to dominate the release schedules for 2004.

Nevertheless, he has found time to give Signs & Portents readers a taste of what is to come...

Some months ago, I got a phone call from Matthew Sprange. 'We've got the Conan licence!' he said. As you can imagine, he was delighted at the prospect – and I was, if anything, even more delighted to be given the chance to write it. Over the next few months I will be writing occasional articles for *Signs and Portents* on the upcoming *Conan RPG* (due for release early in 2004). These will be something between previews and development diaries, offering a glimpse into both the process of creating a d20 System game and the finished game itself.

Sorcery

It was clear right from the start that to truly capture the feel of the Hyborian

Age and the style of sword-and-sorcery adventures popularised by the Conan stories, several major changes and a fair few minor changes would need to be made to the core d20 rules. Perhaps the most major at first glance would seem to be the way magic works within the game. This is an area that has not yet been written up in detail, so I will be focusing more

on it in a later article, but for now, here are a few of my thoughts on how it will be handled:

- There is no division between arcane and divine magic. In the original stories, it is left deliberately vague as to whether any genuine gods exist at all, though Some



The Cimmerian in classic pose from the timeless brush of the legendary Frank Frazetta, now gracing the cover of the forthcoming fully illustrated Conan book - The Coming of Conan the Cimmerian by Ballantine Books.

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- There is no division between arcane and divine magic. In the original stories, it is left deliberately vague as to whether any genuine gods exist at all, though there are certainly demons. Most priests are little more than pious fools at best, and corrupt, self-seeking deceivers at worst. Those few who do know magic learn it in more or less the same way any other sorcerer does. A few religious groups, such as the worshippers of Set, Ibis and Asura, do teach their

followers some amount of useful sorcery, but again this knowledge is not qualitatively different from that of the more independent sorcerers – though in the case of most cults it is used more to fight other sorcerers than anything else.

- Several sorcerous organisations exist, and there will be specific advantages (and drawbacks) to being a member – the main drawback being a relatively inflexible path to power. Independent sorcerers, though, have more of a chance to set their own schedule. The basic sorcerer class, which looks like being called 'scholar' at present, will be customisable, so that a Priest of Set has a quite different set of statistics to a Khitan sorcerer of the same level.
- Sorcery generally includes almost any means of producing an effect that would look magical to a non-sorcerer – from sorcery proper to compelling demons, wielding the Hyborian equivalent of alchemical fire or simple flash powder and using hypnotic techniques to compel the weak-willed.

Sword

Again, the full details of the combat system are still under development, but here are a few thoughts to get your imagination going:

- Weapons and armour break, very frequently, in the Conan stories. Even a well-made weapon such as a king might wield could break when used to strike a particularly devastating blow. More primitive weapons regularly shatter when used to attack armoured foes. Likewise,

armour itself is not invulnerable – it often gets hacked right off the warrior, especially in large-scale battles.

- Armour will be damage-absorbing, rather than making the wearer harder to hit. Again this is based on the stories – when Conan is wearing his mail and scale armour, he is invulnerable to the weapons of the Black Coast corsairs.
- Many weapons, even including some two-handed weapons, can be used with finesse. Finesse is a fighting style anyone can do without a feat, and allows a character to use his Dexterity bonus instead of his Strength bonus to attack rolls with those weapons, just as the Weapon Finesse feat does usually. A character using finesse does not attempt to hack through armour, but to attack areas the armour does not cover – effectively making his opponent harder to hit, rather like the usual d20 System. This will not be too easy to do, though, as all characters will have defence bonuses which make them harder to hit and increase by level, just like their attack bonuses.
- There will be a number of additional tactical options available to most characters. Finesse is one example of these, since a character could potentially change from one style to another – for example, against a heavily armoured, but not very agile (low Defence Value) opponent, finesse might be useful, whereas an opponent who is both well-armoured and agile (high Defence Value) is probably better handled by simply trying to bash through the armour, since hitting him in the

first place will be difficult enough.

- One of my design goals here is to avoid adding any complexity to the d20 System, but to make melee combat both more interesting and more tactical, since the relative shortage of personal magic items means there would otherwise be fewer tactical options available to the average character. Combat in the *Conan RPG* has to be fast and furious – but with enough depth so that you can elect to bash your opponent's skull in with your sword pommel instead of slashing him with the blade, and have it make a difference.

System

OK, less of the random thoughts and on to some crunchy game mechanics. I have been working on more or less the entire game simultaneously, so even the random thoughts already have some crunch attached – but the character generation chapter is the only one that is more or less complete. It is still very much subject to change, however, since it is not yet fully play-tested.

Character Races

All characters in the Hyborian Age are human – more or less. (The 'less'

Prohibited Classes and Favoured Classes

Each race has one or sometimes two favoured classes. Rather than penalising characters who do not base their character concept on a favoured class, the *Conan RPG* rewards those who do, by giving out bonuses to those who take at least a few levels in their race's favoured class. Prohibited classes are only prohibited at the start of the game – a Vendhyan mercenary soldier who later joins a Shemite nomad band for a while can certainly gain levels in the nomad character class.

bit will probably be half-demon characters, who crop up occasionally in the stories, but will probably be handled here by a template rather than a separate character race.) These humans though are far more varied than humans usually are in the d20 System. The different cultures and backgrounds of Conan's world mean that a pikeman from Gunderland will be very different to a Vendhyan lancer, and both will be different to a Shemite mercenary, though they will all have the same character class – soldier. Effectively this means that each nation or region has its own character race. This leads to a lot of races – around twenty, at last count!

Here is a sample Hyborian race:

Vendhyan

The Vendhyans have probably the most advanced society outside of the West and Khitai, with a highly sophisticated government and

religion. They tend to have a light brown to mid-brown skin tone and straight, black hair and large, dark eyes.

- +2 racial bonus to all Diplomacy, Sense Motive and Knowledge (nobility) checks, and +1 racial bonus to all Bluff, Gather Information and Knowledge (history) checks. The Vendhyans are an ancient, cultured and well-educated race. Particularly at the higher levels, their society is highly sophisticated, so that careful choice of words

Next issue Ian looks at how character classes will work in the *Conan Roleplaying Game*.

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MONGOOSE PUBLISHING

FOR ALL YOUR ROLEPLAYING



DYNAMIC STORY GENERATION

by Shannon Kalvar

Story Engines in Roleplaying Games

Sitting back after running a great game is one of the satisfactions of Games Mastering. All of your hard work, the hours of preparation and planning resulted in a masterful set of intricate scenes that fired off flawlessly. You think back over how the players acted like they knew their lines, the dice obeyed your every whim...

Then you snap back to reality. In the real world you have thirty minutes before the crew will show up. Last session the barbarian ran off with the barmaid, the scythe trap cut off the rogue's hand and the magician is still stuck on the roof after his *jump* spell misfired. The *Doodad of What'sit* the local magistrate contracted the players to retrieve is long gone. As far as you can tell it should show up in a flea market a thousand miles away sometime next year.

Now what?

LINEAR STORYTELLING VS. THE STORY ENGINE

Every game book provides advice about how to set up a game. They cover aspects of Games Mastering from lighting to literary tricks to keep your players involved. In *Core Rulebook II* it even briefly mentions the idea of adventure 'flow charts' designed to channel players from fight to fight.

All of these tricks and tips are helpful in their way. Unfortunately they do not provide us with the tools we need to quickly figure out what happens

when our players deviate from the plot. The very best advice we get boils down to 'improvise'. Although we do have to improvise, telling us to do it does not provide us with the tools we need to be successful.

The advice we have comes from hard-learned wisdom and dramatic theory. It assumes that the Games Master plots a story composed of scenes with specific interconnections. The typical scenario plays out like this: The players encounter the vorpal bunny that in turn leads them to the amethyst toad that leads them to the passed-out princess. This linear three-part plot structure guides the players through the session. A few very talented authors discuss how to open up this simple line with a flow chart, allowing for basic deviations.

The problem with these linear approaches appears when they encounter real players. Players do not follow scripts. They miss clues, bungle dice rolls and sometimes just flat out do not understand what the plot wants from them. In inspiration and frustration they do crazy things. When they deviate from the carefully chosen path prepared for them the linear plot falls apart. Games Masters then have to improvise with varying degrees of success.

With proper planning the Games Master does not have to improvise in a vacuum. By adopting methods from system analysis and design we can create a method that allows us to spontaneously generate plots based on player actions.

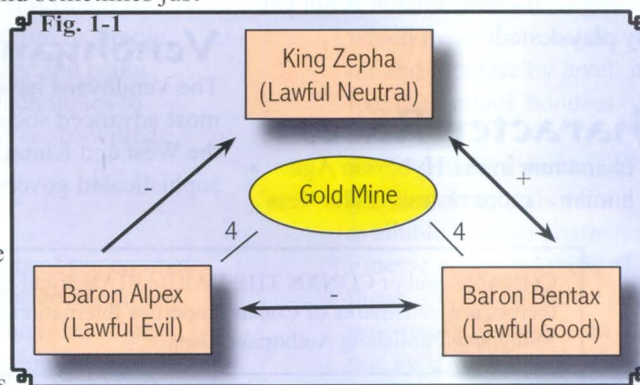
This method actually relies on player unpredictability rather than suppressing it. It allows the Games Master to assess at a glance what consequences a player's actions might have, thereby allowing him to assign logical consequences to such actions. Just as importantly, the method also creates logically structured sessions with a minimal amount of work.

We call this method the story engine. At a basic level it is a graphic representation of the elements of a story. It manages the background activity that occurs around the players giving them something to play against. On a more complex level the engine is a way to create and manage complex stories without losing track of the disparate elements. Rather than trying to remember all of the details or recording them in a linear format the engine gives us a place to manage this information.

THE STORY ENGINE

Hype aside, what is a story engine and how do we build one? Basically a story engine is a system diagram adapted to make our lives as Games Masters easier. A simple one might look like this:

Figure 1-1: Sample Story Engine



The boxes represent *nodes*, the arrows lines of *influence* either positive or negative and the lines show *alignment*. The circle represents a *resource* contended for by the nodes attached to it by alignment lines. The numbers next to the lines show the relative degree of alignment between the resource and the attached node. The + or - signs near the arrows show whether the influence between

the nodes is primarily positive or negative.

Figure 1-1 shows us the following story:

In the Kingdom of Zepha there are two barons, Alpex and Bentax, who are at odds over a gold mine close to them. Things that are good for Baron Alpex hurt the King. Things that are good for Baron Bentax help the King. Anything that helps one of the barons hurts the other. The gold mine is currently balanced between the two barons, with both of them having worked hard to gain control (represented by the 4 number, indicating some work in the past). The King himself has no direct association with the gold mine; perhaps he is unaware of its existence or has no way of enforcing such a claim.

Elements of an Engine

How did we derive the above story from Figure 1-1? First we deconstructed the diagram into its elements. Then we traced the relationships between those pieces to work out the story.

All story engines share some of the following elements in common:

Alignment (Lines): Alignment is a measure of how much control a node exerts over a resource. Typically alignment is represented by a number between 1 and 10, with 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest. The node with the highest value alignment line has control over the resource. When two or more nodes have equal alignment with the resource, that resource becomes neutral. This model assumes that controlling a resource is a positive event not a negative one. However, gaining control of a resource could have unforeseen negative consequences. In the above example, the gold mine is balanced between the two barons.

Influence (Arrows): Influences represent positive or negative relationships between two nodes. A positive relationship between

two nodes indicates that an event strengthening one node has a corresponding positive effect on the connected node. An event weakening a node attached by a positive line has a corresponding weakening effect on the attached node. The opposite holds true for nodes attached by negative influences: events strengthening one node weaken the other and those that strengthen the other weaken the node. The arrows on the line indicate the direction of a line of influence. A line with only one arrow indicates a one-way relationship – events that effect the node effect the target node but not vice versa. A line with two arrows indicates a reciprocal relationship. In the above example influence arrows connect the three nodes. Note that a single event only travels one way down a line of influence even if the line indicates a reciprocal relationship. A positive event for node A that affects node B does not immediately affect node A again.

Nodes (Boxes): A node represents a single person, force or organization that possesses independent volition. When influences affect a node the node can respond. The nature of the influence determines the nature of the response. Positive influences generate positive responses. Negative influences generate negative responses as the node attempts to regain whatever strength it lost. Example nodes include: a royal princess, her suitors, a merchant house, a necromantic cult, the local constable and a god. Each node must be connected to at least one other node by an arrow of influence. In the above example the nodes are Baron Alpex, Baron Bentax and King Zepha.

Resources (Circles): A resource typically represents an object, place or abstract thing that has no conscious volition. Resources do not take action in and of themselves. Instead nodes act on them by increasing or decreasing lines of alignment. Examples of possible resources include: holy sites, mines, towns and strategic locations. Princesses are

nodes, not resources, no matter what everyone around them thinks. In the above example the gold mine is the contested resource.

Remember that nodes have a will of their own. Each node reacts to the influences exerted upon it, either by other nodes in the engine or from the players directly. It is this reaction that creates motion in the engine.

Engine Building Rules

It is possible to just randomly throw down lines of influence, nodes and resources to create a story engine. However by following a few simple rules we can build engines that provide us with interesting results rather than random chaos. These rules are:

Make nodes discrete. Nodes must possess some form of unique identity. Ideally players can readily recognize a node when they encounter it.

Examples of good nodes include: political parties, small organizations, individual actors in the story, trade guilds, nobles and noble families. Examples of more diffuse nodes include very large organizations, countries and cities.

To see why some of the diffuse nodes are potentially difficult to work with take the example of a city. At a macro level you might decide that specific actions are good or bad for the city as a whole. However, that city has a variety of organizations and powers within it. Since these groups have their own agendas and needs, they will not respond to stimuli in the same fashion. In fact actions that are positive or negative for the city as a whole might have exactly the opposite result for any given faction.

Each node must connect with at least one other node in a positive or negative fashion. Ideally nodes should connect with at least two other nodes.

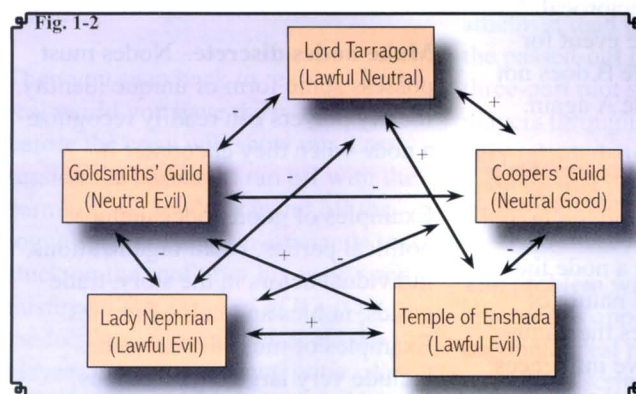
Unconnected nodes do not influence any other node. Whatever action is taken by or against an unconnected node does not stimulate further responses from the engine.

All nodes in an engine do not need to directly connect.

When you have more than three nodes trying to manage connections between them all can become graphically confusing. More importantly, having nodes without direct lines of influence allows the story engine to create 'unanticipated' side effects to player actions. Look at the following two engines, each with five nodes.

Figure 1-2: Example of a fully connected engine

In Figure 1-2 any action that



affects any node not only directly influences the other four nodes but also generates corresponding changes (sometimes contradictory) throughout the system. After one or two game sessions keeping track of the evolution of this engine becomes difficult, if not impossible.

Figure 1-3: Example of a lobed story engine

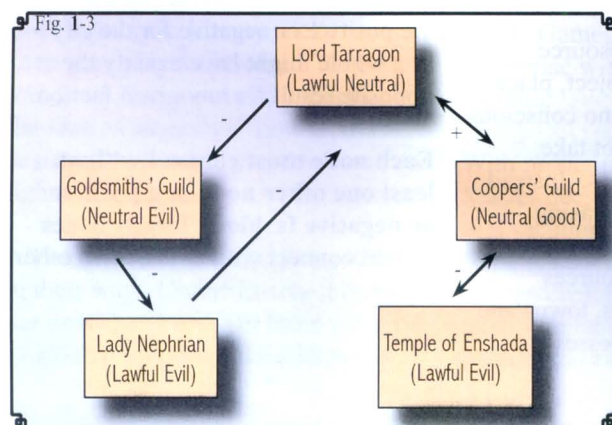


Figure 1-3 shows a 'lobed' story engine. In this structure each node connects to no more than two other nodes. This simplifies the relationships within the engine, allowing the Games Master to more easily track the results of player actions. It also 'hides' consequences from the players, since the Temple of Enshada is not directly connected to Lady Nephrian it might not be immediately obvious to the players why hurting the Temple caused the Lady to become their friend.

A story engine may or may not have a resource. Resources are optional components of the story engine structure.

Both Figures 1-2 and 1-3 demonstrate story engines that do not possess resources. Resources represent

an optional component within engines. Since resources do not take action they can easily be dispensed with or ignored.

Resources are not nodes. A rule of thumb is that if the 'resource' can think for itself

it is a node. A magical sword is a resource. A magical sword that talks to its owner and schemes to take over the world is a node.

Avoid an even number of nodes.

Although it is possible to design a story engine with an even number of nodes that has continual motion,

maintaining it can be difficult. Odd numbers of nodes ensure that there will almost always be an imbalance of forces in the engine. This generates motion, which in turn generates stories.

When connecting nodes with influence include both positive and negative lines.

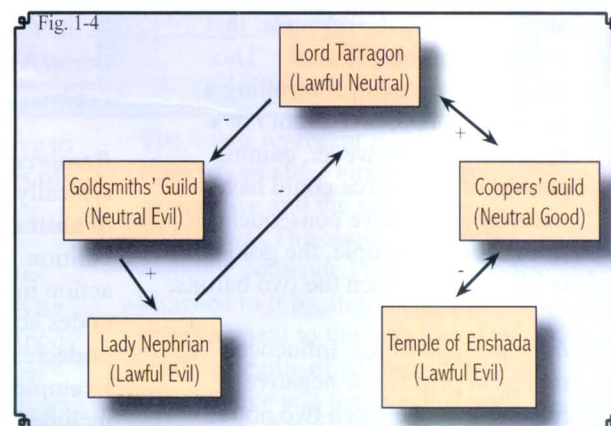
The lines of influence represent positive and negative consequences in the game world. Having only positive or negative consequences for player actions does not make for very interesting stories. By having both positive and negative consequences for every action the game world takes on a more 'real' feel.

Avoid uninterrupted feedback loops.

If three or more nodes are connected with the same kind of influence (positive or negative) it can generate a loop that throws the engine out of balance.

Looking at the left lobe of Figure 1-3 we see a three part negative loop. Anything that positively affects Lord Tarragon creates a negative effect on the Goldsmiths Guild and has a corresponding positive effect on Lady Nephrian. This generates a negative effect on Lord Tarragon, which in turn generates a positive effect on the Guild in turn generating a negative effect the Lady generating a positive effect on the guild, etc. An easier way to restate the figure might be:

Figure 1-4: Restated example lobed engine



Once we change the influence between Lady Nephrian and the Goldsmiths' Guild from negative to positive we create an alliance in the engine. Now the two rise and fall at the same time, and both are aligned against Lord Tarragon. For the duration of the engine the two force support one another, creating a power block for the players to interact with.

HOW PLAYERS FIT

Say we have built a story engine. We know how the nodes react to one another. We have some resources placed for the nodes to contend over. Maybe we even have a handful of ideas about what we would like to see happen during the game. Now, where do the players fit into all of this? Do they act as nodes? Resources? Something else entirely?

Players exist outside of the story engine. They act on the engine in the following ways:

Players provide positive or negative impacts to one of the nodes. For example, if the players undertake a quest to gain a new artefact for a temple that temple becomes stronger. This positive influence has a corresponding influence on other nodes, causing them to become stronger or weaker. The nodes, possessing volition, can then take action based on what happened to them.

Players' actions can alter the value of lines of influence to resources. Nodes might employ players to secure a resource for them, or to weaken a rival's influence. This in turn strengthens the node, generating corresponding effects in other, attached nodes.

Players can alter the value or direction of a line of influence between nodes. They do this by engaging in negotiations or actions intended to improve or sour relationships between nodes. Changing a line of influence dramatically alters the balance of the engine as a whole. These kinds

of dramatic alterations usually mark sweeping changes in the world.

In other words, the players provide the motive force that drives the engine forward. The engine reacts to their actions. Although it does not look like it at first glance, the players are in fact the single most important part of the engine. Fortunately, unlike the nodes, the engine does not require that the players act in any particular way. The Games Master simply measures their actions into positive and negative effects on specific nodes, alignments or influences and allows the nodes to react from there.

MILLING OUT A SESSION

After building a story engine and starting it running, we need to learn how to translate the motion of the engine into actual game sessions. Although lovely in a theoretical sense, knowing the consequences of the players' actions needs to translate into some kind of action in the game world.

The important point to remember here is that each node represents a force with will and volition. Before each session the Games Master notes the impact of the players' actions on various nodes. Then he asks the following questions:

Has enough time elapsed for the connected nodes to notice the change? Information and influence take time to travel through the world. If the last session ended on a cliffhanger, then the odds are good that the attached nodes have no idea what has happened. If days or weeks have passed, the affected nodes have had plenty of time to notice and formulate responses.

Was the node positively or negatively affected? Nodes affected positively by player actions take positive steps in the world. They extend their influence, display greater wealth and fund missions that will further enhance their standing. Nodes

affected negatively strive to preserve their influence by increasing their standing, gaining control over new resources and potentially striking back at the source of their troubles.

How much of the action taken by various nodes can the players see? Some things happen behind the scenes. Others provide the players with opportunities for adventure or at least rumours and news to consider.

Once we decide on the answers to the above three questions on a node-by-node basis we have the beginning of our next adventure. We know what the various forces and personalities within the player's world will do next. Now we decide which pieces we would like for the players to be involved with and dream up reasons for them.

TUNE-UPS

The system described above allows us to model basic stories and events. However over time the Games Master may encounter situations that require more complex methods. In some cases these methods are simple derivations of the base tools. In other cases the Games Master will need to add information to the diagram to ensure a consistent flow of information.

Tune-ups to the engine include:

Conflicting influence

– by connecting two nodes with unidirectional lines of influence (one positive, one negative) you can create a relationship in which things that are good for one party are bad for the other creating a balanced feedback loop that keeps both in misery without changing state. Positive and negative effects on the two nodes balance out as influence travels back and forth.

Valued Influences – Generally the Games Master only needs to know whether or not an influence positively or negatively impacts a node. He can track the

effects of the influence easily enough without any further information. In some cases though he may wish to *weight* (increasing its effect on the targeted node), *increment* (indicating how often it is activated) or *value* (indicating the relative value to the related parties) the influence.

We use weighted influences when we wish to model a particularly powerful relationship. By default all influences have the same weight. By increasing the value of a particular influence, we in effect mute the rest of the engine. Each event that travels on a weighted line acts as if it were X number of positive/negative events, rather than a single one, where X is the value given to the line.

Incrementing an influence allows the Games Master to keep track of how often a particular node comes under influence. Although not useful by itself this value may be relevant to conditionals placed on the engine.

Valuing an influence allows the Games Master to determine how important a specific influence is to the parties involved. Positive influences increase the value by one. Negative influences decrease the value by one

Valued Nodes – In order to keep track of the relative value of various nodes the Games Master may wish to assign them numeric values. Positive influences increase the value by one. Negative influences decrease the value by one. The value of a node represents its power relative to other nodes in the system.

Both valued influences and valued nodes are primarily of interest because they provide us with a way to create goals and conditions for the engine as a whole. A goal indicates an end point;

if it is reached the engine itself collapses. A condition indicates a place where a specific shift or change happens within the engine. This change may be a shift in an influence, a change in relationships, or a story event.

Goals and conditions take on a basic *if X then Y* structure. For example, the engine in figure 1-3 might have the following goal applied to it:

If Lord Tarragon achieves value 12 then he becomes the king.

It might also have the following condition applied to it:

If Lady Nephrian's value exceeds Lord Tarragon's by more than 4 then he must marry her, changing the influence from negative to positive.

Goals and conditions allow the Games Master to move beyond the abstract idea of 'this influences that' to a more traditional story-based approach to gaming. They create concrete events that the players can work either to avoid or achieve depending on their own preferences and the intentions of the Games Master.

INFLUENCE IN DETAIL

In an abstract sense influence represents a positive or negative effect one node exerts on another. In a practical sense influences represent discrete events that occur as a result of something affecting a particular node.

A practical example will make this concept clearer. Let us take a moment to look at the possible effects of influence in Figure 1-4. In this engine Lord Tarragon has a one-way negative relationship with the Goldsmiths' Guild. Positive events for Lord Tarragon have a negative effect on the Goldsmiths but there is no reciprocal relationship. Whatever the Goldsmiths feel about the Lord there is very little they can do to affect him directly. Similarly, negative events for Lord Tarragon are positive for the Goldsmiths in some way.

Exactly what constitutes a positive event for Lord Tarragon depends on the scenario. However, each time Lord Tarragon becomes stronger something bad happens to the Goldsmiths' Guild. These negative influences could include:

Losing an important civil case regarding their rights as an independent guild in which they were bribing the judge because Lord Tarragon feels more secure in his position.

Failing to secure a gold shipment contract with a neighbouring city because Lord Tarragon now has the power to give it to a favoured guild or mercenary company.

Losing the right to sponsor a key public event (like a fair) that generated considerable income.

We can reverse the three examples given above to show what happens when a negative event affects Lord Tarragon. In each case Lord Tarragon would have to agree to something that made the Goldsmiths more powerful.

EXAMPLE IN MOTION

All of this discussion of abstract models seems fairly far removed from the reality of the game. Therefore, let us build a simple engine and run it for a bit.

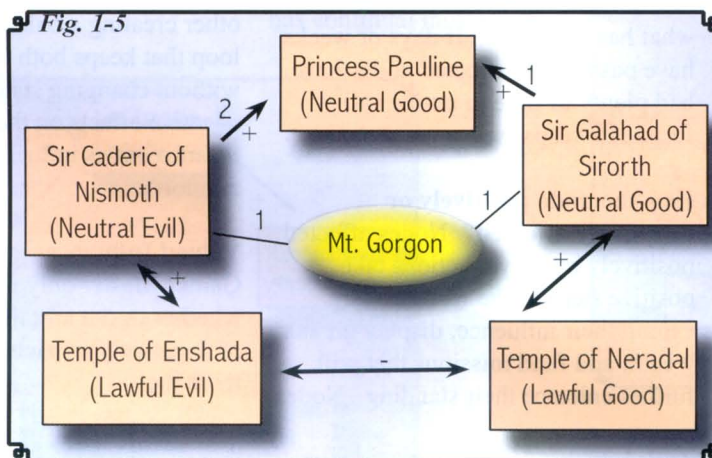


Figure 1-5: To Woo a Princess

Goal: If either line of influence to Princess Pauline reaches a value of 10 then she must marry the individual with that line of influence.

We can read this engine as follows:

The Princess Pauline must get married. She has two choices: Sir Caderic of Nismoth and Sir Galahad of Sirorth. So far Sir Caderic has been somewhat more attentive, however she likes Sir Galahad better (based on their alignments). Sir Caderic and Sir Galahad are in dispute about Mount Gorgon, a holy place located between their two castles. Each of the two knights has an alliance with one of the two competing temples in the region. The two temples are engaged in some kind of bitter struggle (the reciprocal negative influence).

Events the players could be involved with include:

- † Helping one of the knights increase his influence over Mount Gorgon
- † Undertaking missions for the knights to improve their standing with the Princess
- † Undertaking missions for one or the other of the temples, generating unintended side effects
- † Undertaking missions for the Princess to help Sir Galahad

Say that Sir Galahad employs the players to clear out a goblin infestation from Mount Gorgon. If they succeed he gains control over Mt. Gorgon by increasing the value of his alignment with it to 2. This is a positive event for him, giving him additional resources with which to woo the Princess. It is also a positive event for his allies the Temple of Neradal who gain in spiritual power because they now have access to the mountain. This is a terrible blow to the Temple of Enshada, which in turn cannot provide any priests for

the feast that Sir Caderic had planned for the Princess, which results in the Princess being less pleased with him (a negative event, reducing the value of his relationship with the princess by one). Since the princess has no reciprocal relationships in this engine, the chain of events stops with her.

However both Sir Caderic and the Temple of Enshada now suffer the effects of negative events. Having volition they will attempt to correct matters. Sir Caderic may well launch a counter ploy on Mt. Gorgon, trying to wrest control of it from Sir Galahad. The Temple may seek to gain a royal charter to minister to the sick and elderly of a large metropolis, increasing its wealth and status (a positive event). Both of these activities ripple though the engine, forcing the other nodes to respond.

Once the engine starts to run, our imagination is the only limit to how far we can take it.

The S&P Caption Competition #1

Welcome to our first caption competition! We would like to find out exactly what Mr Morden is saying and we need your help.

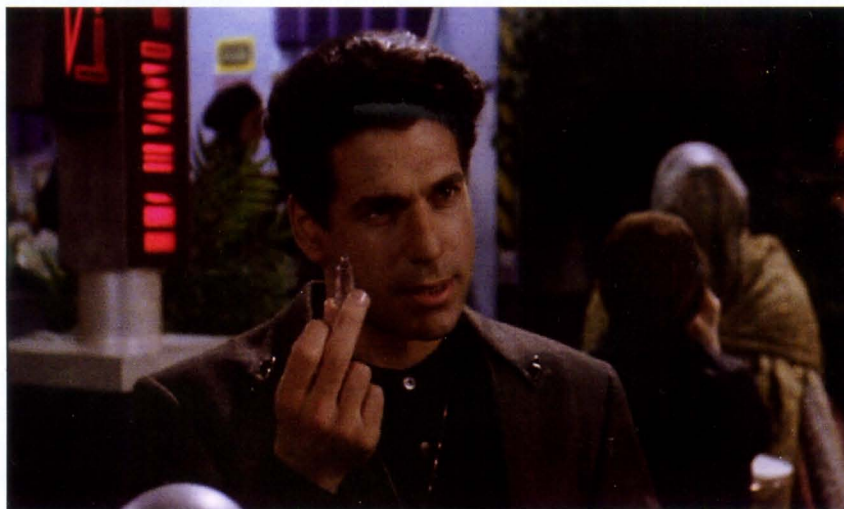
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The Cimmerian is coming!
CONAN

COMBAT IN MAGNAMUND

by Matthew Sprange

One of the big projects at Mongoose currently is the eagerly awaited Lone Wolf d20 roleplaying game, and what better place than Signs & Portents to give you an exclusive peek at one of the central elements of the game - the redesigned combat system.

We are aiming for a 'd20 Lite' effect, a simplified variation on the standard d20 combat system that more appropriately reflects the feel of the original books.

This is most definitely Work In Progress and to that end we welcome any and all feedback from you good people as to how you would like to see this great game develop.

So, if you want to be able to say, 'I had a hand in that,' read on, and let us know your thoughts.

Beyond the strong walls of cities and castles, the world is a dangerous place. A commoner may spend his whole life without seeing anything more violent than a nasty barroom brawl but many in Magnamund are not so fortunate. Dangerous creatures and monsters of pure evil stalk the land to trap and slay the unwary, and humans themselves have an amazing propensity to prey upon one another. Villages and townships may be raided and the traveller crossing vast tracts of wilderness is advised to be prepared to defend himself if he is to reach his destination safely. This article details the forthcoming combat rules for Lone Wolf.

The Basics of Combat

Combat is divided into rounds, during which each combatant will be permitted to perform one action. Each round is considered to represent 6 seconds of time.

Initiative

Before combat begins, every player makes an Initiative check (1d20 +

Dexterity modifier). The Games Master also makes one Initiative check for every monster and character under his control. Every character and monster will act in order of the Initiative check they rolled, with the highest scoring going first, the lowest scoring going last.

Actions

Every round, a character may choose one of the following actions to perform during his Initiative phase.

Attack: A character may move up to half of his base speed and attack an enemy with either a melee or ranged weapon. A character using an attack action can make as many attacks as he is normally allowed.

Charge: A character may move up to twice his base speed and make a single attack, regardless of how many attacks he may normally make. This attack must be in melee, not ranged combat. The single attack gains a +2 bonus to its attack and damage roll but the character performing the charge will suffer a -2 penalty to

Using Combat Rule from Core Rulebook I

Lone Wolf does not require the complexity of the full d20 System to detail combats, as they tend to be fast and furious in the lands of Magnamund. While the combat rules presented in this chapter have much in common with those of Core Rulebook I, you will find them much simpler to remember and use in the midst of an adventure.

Players may use the combat chapter from Core Rulebook I if they wish, as many enjoy the additional complexity in their adventures. These rules will fit into Lone Wolf seamlessly and without modification, allowing characters to take advantage of (or suffer from) attacks of opportunity, size modifiers, flat-footedness, etc.

his Armour Class for the rest of the round.

Move: A character may move up to four times his base speed during a move action.

Special: A special action is one a character may use to perform a special ability (such as cast a spell) or utilise a special item. A character may move up to half of his base speed and perform a special action. At the Games Master's discretion, many other miscellaneous actions may be considered special actions for the purposes of combat, such as picking a lock, hastily scribbling directions on a map or lighting a lantern. Anything that can be accomplished within 6 seconds should be considered a special action if it is performed during combat.

Attacks

To successfully strike an enemy in combat, a character must make an attack roll that equals or exceeds the target's Armour Class.

Melee Attack Roll: $1d20 + \text{base attack bonus} + \text{Strength modifier} = \text{AC hit}$

Ranged Attack Roll: $1d20 + \text{base attack bonus} + \text{Dexterity modifier} = \text{AC hit}$

If a character successfully hits a target, he will cause damage. Every weapon in Lone Wolf causes a specific amount of damage, added to which will be the character's Strength modifier. The total amount of damage is deducted from the target's hit point total. When a character's hit points sink below 0, he is considered to be dead.

Regardless of any modifiers and penalties, a character will always cause a minimum of 1 point of damage if he successfully hits his target.

A character's Armour Class is modified by his Dexterity and any armour worn, as shown below.

Armour Class: $10 + \text{armour bonus} + \text{Dexterity modifier}$

Saving Throws

There are many dangers that cannot be faced with a sword or bow – a gas-releasing trap, a powerful mental attack or a falling block of rubble. In such cases, a saving throw must be made. Saving throws are made against either Fortitude, Reflex or Will, as detailed below. In each case, the saving throw is made against a Difficulty Class specified by the Games Master.

Fortitude Saving Throw: $1d20 + \text{base save bonus} + \text{Constitution modifier}$

Reflex Saving Throw: $1d20 + \text{base save bonus} + \text{Dexterity modifier}$

Will Saving Throw: $1d20 + \text{base save bonus} + \text{Wisdom modifier}$

Movement

Every character and monster in Lone Wolf has a base speed score. This is the average distance a character will move in 6 seconds (one round) while walking and taking no other

action. Taking a specific action while in combat will affect the distance a character can move in a single round. The base speed for all humans is 30 feet.

Death

A character's hit points total represents how much damage he can take before succumbing to his wounds.

Critically Injured: A character reduced to 0 hit points is considered to be critically injured. He will be unconscious and unable to take any



action until healed. If he receives no healing within one minute, he will automatically die.

Dead: A character reduced to less than 0 hit points is dead.

Miniatures

Some Games Masters and players like to use miniatures during combat to keep track of where all the characters are at any one time. If miniatures are used in this way, assume a scale of 1 inch = 5 feet.

Melee Combat

Characters involved in melee combat rarely just stand around bashing each other until one drops – there are a great many options available to those

involved in battle and the competent combatant can gain a vital edge if he takes advantage of them.

Two Weapon Fighting

Though generally advised only for the skilled warrior, some characters choose to fight with a weapon in each hand. This allows them to increase their number of attacks in the hope that some will get through an opponent's defences, though at the cost of accuracy.

A character may choose to fight in melee combat armed with two

melee weapons, one carried in each hand. Needless to say, each must be a one-handed weapon. The character makes his normal number of attacks with his main weapon and one extra attack made with the weapon in his 'off-hand'. This extra attack is made at the character's highest base attack bonus. Main and off-hand weapons should be designated before melee combat begins.

The main weapon suffers a -2 penalty to all attack rolls made with it while fighting with a second weapon. The off-hand weapon suffers a -4 penalty to its attack roll.

Ganging Up

A character assaulted in melee combat by more

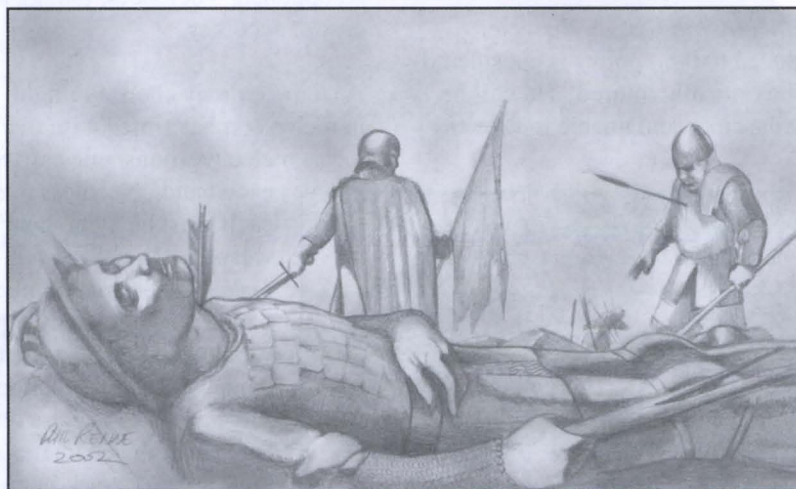
than one adversary is likely in very serious danger, as his defences are overwhelmed and his attackers find it far easier to strike him. Attackers ganging up on a character gain a +1 bonus to all of their attack rolls for every one of their number targeting the character in melee combat.

Disarming Opponents

Disarming an opponent in the midst of combat is a flashy and dangerous move but one that can grant a vital edge – after all, if an opponent has to use his bare fists to fight, he is unlikely to last very long in a pitched battle.

A character may choose to disarm

his opponent instead of attacking normally. In doing so, he must forfeit all of his attacks for the rest of the round, regardless of how many he usually has. In return, his opponent immediately gains a single free attack at his highest base attack bonus as the character attempting to disarm leaves himself open for attack during this flashy move.



The character and his opponent then make opposed attack rolls, with the opponent gaining a +4 bonus if he is using a two-handed weapon. If the character wins, he successfully disarms his opponent, dropping the weapon to the ground. It may not be retrieved by the opponent until he is able to disengage from combat or otherwise defeat the character. If the opponent wins this opposed attack roll, he manages to keep hold of his weapon and gains a second free attack against the character.

A shield may never be disarmed from an opponent.

Using a One-Handed Weapon with Two Hands

Though warriors tend to favour fighting with either two weapons or a weapon and a shield, a one-handed weapon may be made more effective by using it in two hands. A one-handed weapon must weigh 4 lb or more in order to be large enough to be used in two hands. All damage rolls made with a one-handed weapon used in two hands gain a +1 bonus.

Mounted Combat

Riding a horse or other mount into battle can make a character far more effective as he uses the weight, power and speed of the mount against his enemies.

A character on a mount gains a +2 bonus to all attack rolls made against any opponent on foot. In addition, all damage caused during a charge while

on a mount is doubled, unless a spear or lance is used – in this case, the damage is tripled.

If the mount a character is riding is killed during combat, the character must make a Ride check (DC 15) or suffer 1d6 points of damage and lose grip of any weapons carried as he falls to the ground.

and a skilled combatant may be able to shoot at targets much further away.

A target within half of the weapon's range score is considered to be within short range. All attack rolls are made with a +2 bonus to hit.

A target beyond the range score but at a distance within twice of it is considered to be at long range. All attack rolls are made with a –2 penalty.

No target beyond twice the listed range score of the weapon may be attacked. They are out of range.

Shooting Into Melee Combat

Cover

When arrows and bolts start flying through the air, many warriors will dive for cover. Characters taking cover will gain the benefit of extra protection and may avoid being hit by ranged weapons altogether.

When a character takes advantage of cover, all ranged attacks that successfully match or beat his Armour Class must face an additional miss roll, reflecting the amount of cover the character is behind. This miss roll is detailed on the table below. The Games Master is the final arbitrator as to the cover gained from any particular obstacle or condition.

Cover	Example	Miss Roll
One-quarter	Light fog, twilight, light foliage	10%
One-half	Wooden fence, standing at a window	25%
Three-quarters	Dense foliage, thick fog, wagon	50%
Near Total	Only head or other small body part exposed from behind cover	75%
Total	Total darkness, completely behind a solid wall	100%

Ranged Combat

All ranged weapons in Lone Wolf have a range score listed in feet. This is the maximum range a character may use the weapon without penalty. However, targets much closer than this distance are much easier to hit

Armour Class

Many factors can affect a character's Armour Class, including his Dexterity modifier and any armour worn. All armour provides an armour bonus which is applied to Armour Class. In general, no armour bonus will ever

stack – after all, a character may only wear one type of armour at any one time. However, an armour bonus from a shield and helmet may be stacked with that of other armour but a character may still only benefit from one suit of armour, one shield and one helmet at any one time.

Critical Hits and Fumbles

Whenever a character rolls a natural 20 on an attack roll (that is, rolls a 20 on his attack roll before any modifiers for Strength and base attack bonuses are applied), he will automatically cause double damage against his target. Damage is totalled for normally and then multiplied by two.

If a character instead rolls a natural 1 on an attack roll, he will automatically miss his target, regardless of whether his total attack roll is sufficient to hit the target's Armour Class.

Surprise

There will be times when one side in a combat completely surprises their enemies – during those few crucial seconds, the surprising side can gain a huge advantage, moving into position, casting spells or even slaying a few of the enemy before they can react.

The Games Master is the final arbitrator as to which side, if any, will surprise the other. This may be done through Listen or Spot checks to sense an ambush, for example, or it may be automatic if the Games Master rules that the surprised side had no chance to suspect the attack.

A side that gains surprise against its opponents will have a free combat round in which to act, making Initiative checks as normal. The surprised side will get no chance to act or react at all in this round, and will not make Initiative checks until the start of the next round.

Healing

Even the best warriors will eventually be wounded, reducing their ability to carry on fighting regardless of

the odds. Heroes and commoners alike will soon learn to take care of themselves after battle or risk being killed by a relatively soft sword thrust in the next fight.

Natural Healing

A character will automatically regain an amount of hit points per day equal to his character level. These will normally be regained after a night's rest but the Games Master is free to allow them to be regained at any suitable juncture in a scenario.

Characters taking advantage of full bed rest during the course of the day (and this means taking no other action other than recovering) will regain one and a half times their character level, rounding down, of hit points per day.

A character suffering from ability score damage will automatically regain one point back per day.

Long-Term Care

If a character is looked after and cared for by another during bed rest, he may regain hit points even quicker. The carer must make a Heal

check (DC 15). If successful, the resting character will regain twice his character level in hit points per day of bed rest. The carer cannot take advantage of bed rest while looking after others.

First Aid

If a character is wounded during a combat, he may receive first aid either from himself or another character. First aid may only be given once per combat and only when a character has been wounded during that specific combat. Furthermore, first aid must be performed either during the combat or within one minute of its conclusion.

The character performing first aid must make a Heal check (DC 15). If successful, he immediately restores 1d3 hit points to the wounded character (which can be himself). If performed during combat, this is counted as a special action.

First aid may also be performed on critically injured characters who have been reduced to 0 hit points – obviously, a character in this position cannot perform first aid on themselves. A Heal check (DC 15) is made as normal. If successful, the critically injured character will be made stable, though he will need rest to actually regain any hit points – no hit points will be restored through this use of first aid. If the Heal check fails, the character will be beyond help and will immediately die.



Now that you have seen where we are taking combat in Lone Wolf, why not go to the forum on our web site and tell us what you think?

www.mongoosepublishing.com is where it's at.

Ultimate Gameplay: Dungeon Delving

By Joseph Miller

Dungeon delving is a time-honoured tradition in most campaigns with adventurers searching dank rooms below long-ruined castles or exploring the deep and brooding lairs of dragons. These dark structures and cavernous chambers present unique prospects and problems for those bold enough to dare them. Over the years, many industrious explorers have trained themselves to fight within these subterranean confines, developed specialized equipment, and even created spells to aid them in their underground adventures.

Feats

The techniques developed in response to the distinct difficulties of dungeon delving are as varied as the subterranean structures explorers often face. This section presents feats that allow adventurers to make the best use of the underground environs they find themselves in and might just make the difference between life and death in the dark places of the world.

Cramped Quarters Combat (General)

You have the ability to strike your enemies with greater accuracy through cover, whether it be from other characters, crowded doorways or other objects, quite useful in tight quarters where packs of creatures and objects make fighting much more difficult.

Prerequisites: Base attack bonus +5 or higher, Blind Fight, Combat Reflexes, Dex 13+, Wis 13+.

Benefit: Targets without total cover only gain half (rounded up) the normal cover bonus to Armour Class when you make melee attacks against them.

Excellent Night Vision (General)

You can see farther in low-light and torchlight conditions than normal, which might just give you the edge you need to spot trouble before it spots you through the darkness.

Prerequisites: Alertness.

Benefit: You increase the distance you can see under low-light and torchlight conditions by one-half. Thus a human with this feat holding a torch that radiates light in a 20-foot radius would actually see 30 feet, while an elf would see 60 feet (20 feet x 2 x 1.5).

Normal: A character can only see out to the radius of any given light source without low-light vision and only double with it.

Improvised Weapon Proficiency (General)

You have a knack for using improvised weapons such as mugs, candelabra, chairs and other objects that can be found scattered throughout dungeon environs.

Prerequisites: Base attack bonus +1 or higher.

Benefit: You make attack rolls with items not intended to be used as weapons without penalty.

Normal: A character who uses items not meant to be used as weapons without being proficient with them suffers a -4 penalty on attack rolls.

Special: Small improvised weapons like a mug deal 1d3 points of damage, Medium-size improvised weapons like candelabra deal 1d4 points of damage, and Large improvised weapons such as chairs deal 1d6 points of damage. Games Masters may rule certain improvised weapons deal damage differently or have special features.

Marksman (General)

You are an expert at placing shots through even the tiniest of gaps in cover, which can come in quite handy when faced with creatures hiding in an underground guardroom or rock-strewn cavern.

Prerequisites: Base attack bonus +5 or higher, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Dex 13+, Wis 13+.

Benefit: Targets without total cover only gain half (rounded up) the normal cover bonus to Armour Class when you make a ranged attack against them.

Sightless Targeting (General)

You can target creatures by sound instead of sight, which is quite useful when fighting in dark dungeons or other confined quarters.

Prerequisites: Alertness, Skill Focus (listen), Wis 15+.

Benefit: You can cast target spells upon creatures that you cannot see due to concealment, invisibility or blindness on the part of the caster. In order to use this ability you must make a successful Listen check versus the creature's Move Silently check. If you beat the creature's Move Silently check by 10 or more, then you may target the creature with spells for this round as if you could see it. If the creature cannot be affected by the chosen spell then although the spell is still cast, it has no effect.

Normal: A character must be able to see and specifically choose a creature as the target of a spell with a 'target' entry under its spell format.

Tools of the Trade

There is a surplus of mundane items and magical devices created to aid those adventurers who explore the artificial and natural passageways beneath the earth. This section details equipment specifically designed for use in subterranean ventures.

Detachable Polearm Shaft:

Polearms can sometimes be too long for their own good and, when this is

the problem, detachable shafts can be the answer. Fighting with polearms in tight quarters can be difficult at best but by detaching a portion of the shaft from the weapon you can reduce the unwieldiness of the weapon in just such circumstances. Polearms with this enhancement work normally until a portion of the shaft is detached. It takes a full-round action to detach or reattach a portion of the shaft. Once a portion of the shaft is detached the weapon reduces its reach by 5 feet, weighs 4 lb. less than normal, suffers a -4 penalty to its attack rolls (the polearm essentially becomes a new weapon type), and reduces weapon size by one category. A polearm can add one additional detachable portion for every 5 feet of reach it has beyond the initial 10 feet.

Special: A character can take an exotic weapon proficiency feat with a particular type of “detached” polearm to negate the -4 penalty associated with wielding a shortened polearm.

Detachable Polearm Shaft: Wt. +1 lb. (for each portion); +2 gp (for each portion).

Sconced Staff: The quarterstaff is a common weapon amongst adventures and the torch is a common item, so it was only a matter of time before some intrepid explorer married the two together. Designed with dungeon delving and convenience in mind the result of this merger was christened the ‘sconced’ staff. Essentially a quarterstaff, the sconced staff has one end slightly thicker than the other and is crowned with a special sconce that sinks into the shaft. Specially designed torches and even sunrods can be fitted into the staff’s sconce. It takes a full-round action to fasten and unfasten a torch or sunrod from the sconced staff. The wielder of this weapon can attack with either end of the sconced staff, but suffers a -2 circumstance penalty to attack rolls made with it because of its unbalanced weight.

Sconced Staff: Size: L; Damage: 1d6/1d6 (+1d4 fire damage if torch is lit); Crit: x2; Range Inc: -; Wt: 5 lb. (without torch); Bludgeoning; 5 gp.

Sconce Staff Torch: 1 lb.; 1 sp.
Sconce Staff Sunrod: 1 lb.; 3 gp.

Seeping Gas: Pit traps, pressure pads and secret doors are common occurrences in many dungeons, but not always spotted in time or even at all. This alchemically treated substance creates a thin, green, translucent gas. After a round the seeping gas fills four 10-foot cubes and begins to disperse through every crack or opening in the area. The seeping gas provides one-quarter concealment for those within it. It also allows those within the cloud to make a Search check (DC 10). If successful the searcher finds any telltale green eddies wherever a pit trap, pressure pad, secret door, or other cavity lies. A Search check is made to inspect a particular 5-foot-by-5-foot area. The gas lasts for one minute.

Seeping Gas: 1 lb.; 50 gp.

Magical Items

Peeper’s Lens: This finely crafted lens, when placed upon a surface (a wall, door, or other appropriate object), allows a character to see through it to the distance of their normal vision. This item does not see through walls or doors beyond the surface the peeper’s lens is placed upon. The item does not allow magically enhanced senses to work through it, though a character’s natural darkvision and low-light vision does still work. If the chosen locale is magically dark, the character sees nothing, nor can the lens detect illusions or other misleading effects. Lead sheeting, 1 foot of metal, 5 feet of stone, 10 feet of wood or dirt, or magical protection blocks the item’s line of effect. The item only functions on the plane of existence the character is currently occupying. **Special Note:** The peeper lens cannot see ‘into’ walls, doors, or other solid objects, rather, it sees past them. For example, one cannot see whether a door has a trap mechanism built into it, but it can see what is on the other side of the door.

Caster Level: 5th; Prerequisites: Craft Wondrous Item, *clairaudience*/*clairvoyance*; Market Price: 40,000 gp; Weight: -.

Goggles of the Bat: These pitch-black goggles fit snugly over the wearer’s eyes. Even though these lenses are opaque, when placed over the eyes of the wearer they grant him the bat’s blindsight (as per the bat’s sight spell). Both lenses must be worn for the magic to be effective and continue to work even if the wearer is blinded.

Caster Level: 5th; Prerequisites: Craft Wondrous Item, *bat’s sight*; Market Price: 30,000 gp; Weight: -.

Spells

Fervent prayers and well-researched spells are often as good as any training technique or device in dealing with the hardships of the hollow places of the world. This section introduces new divine and arcane spells developed for use in dungeon delving and underground confrontations.

Bat’s Sight

Transmutation

Level: Sor/Wiz 3

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Target: Creature touched

Duration: 1 hour/level

Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless)

Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

The subject allows the subject to ‘see’ by emitting high-frequency sounds, inaudible to most other creatures, that allow them to locate objects and creatures within 120 feet. While this spell is in effect the subject receives a +4 racial bonus to Spot and Listen checks. A *silence* spell negates the above effects and forces the subject to rely on its normal vision. *Material Cost:* A pair of bat’s eyes.

Chill Rock*Transmutation [Cold]***Level:** Drd 3**Components:** V, S, DF**Casting Time:** 1 action**Range:** Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)**Area:** 10 ft. by 10 ft. stone surface/2 levels or a stone object smaller than a 10 ft. cube**Duration:** 7 rounds**Saving Throw:** Will negates (object)**Spell Resistance:** Yes (object)

Unattended, non-magical rock gets no saving throw. Enchanted rock is allowed a saving throw against the spell. An item in a creature's possession uses the creature's saving throw (unless its own is higher). On the first round of the spell, the rock becomes chilly and uncomfortable to touch but deals no damage (this is also the effect on the last round of the spell's duration). During the second (and also the next-to-last) round, icy coldness causes

minute/level (D)

Saving Throw: None**Spell Resistance:** No

You can detect non-magical complex traps (i.e. those with DCs higher than 20). The amount of information revealed depends on how long the caster studies a particular area or subject:

1st Round: Presence or absence of complex traps.**2nd Round:** Number of complex traps and the location of each. If an aura is outside the character's line of sight, then the caster discerns its direction but not its exact location.**Each**

Additional Round: The mechanism or trigger for one particular complex trap closely

heat rock deals no damage, but the water around the affected rock boils. *Heat rock* counters and dispels *chill rock*.

Holy Seal*Abjuration [Good]***Level:** Clr 3**Components:** V, S, DF**Casting Time:** 1 action**Range:** Touch**Target:** The door, chest or portal touched, up to 30 sq. ft./level in size**Duration:** Permanent**Saving Throw:** None**Spell Resistance:** No

Round	Temperature	Damage
1	Cold	None
2	Icy	1d4 cold damage
3-5	Freezing	2d4 cold damage
6	Icy	1d4 cold damage
7	Cold	None

pain and damage to those touching the rock. In the third, fourth and fifth rounds, the rock is freezing cold, causing more damage, as shown below:

Any heat intense enough to damage the creature negates cold damage from the spell (and vice versa) on a point-for-point basis. Underwater, *chill rock* deals no damage, but ice immediately forms around the affected rock. *Chill rock* counters and dispels *heat rock*.

Detect Complex Traps*Divination***Level:** Brd 4, Sor/Wiz 4**Components:** V, S**Casting Time:** 1 action**Range:** 60 ft.**Area:** Quarter circle emanating from you to the extreme of the range**Duration:** Concentration, up to 1

examined by the caster.

Note: Each round, the caster can turn to detect things in a new area. The spell can penetrate barriers, but 1 foot of stone, 1 inch of common metal, a thin sheet of lead, or 3 feet of wood or dirt blocks it.

Heat Rock*Transmutation***Level:** Drd 3

As *chill rock* spell, except that it deals fire damage and makes rock warm, hot, and searing as shown below:

Round	Temperature	Damage
1	Warm	None
2	Hot	1d4 fire damage
3-5	Searing	2d4 fire damage
6	Hot	1d4 fire damage
7	Warm	None

Any cold intense enough to damage the creature negates heat damage from the spell (and vice versa) on a point-for-point basis. Underwater,

A *holy seal* spell cast on a door, chest or portal magically seals it. An object so sealed may be opened by making a successful Strength check to break, making a successful Turning check versus 5 HD plus 1 HD per 2 caster levels, or by dealing negative level damage equal to 1 plus 1 for every 2 caster levels (e.g. *enervation*). Channeling negative energy (or casting *enervation*) causes the sealed object to shatter open, whereas positive energy causes the door, chest or portal to simply unseal. Add +15 to the normal DC to break open a locked door, chest or portal affected by this spell.

Focus: The cleric's holy symbol.

Unholy Seal*Abjuration [Evil]***Level:** Clr 3

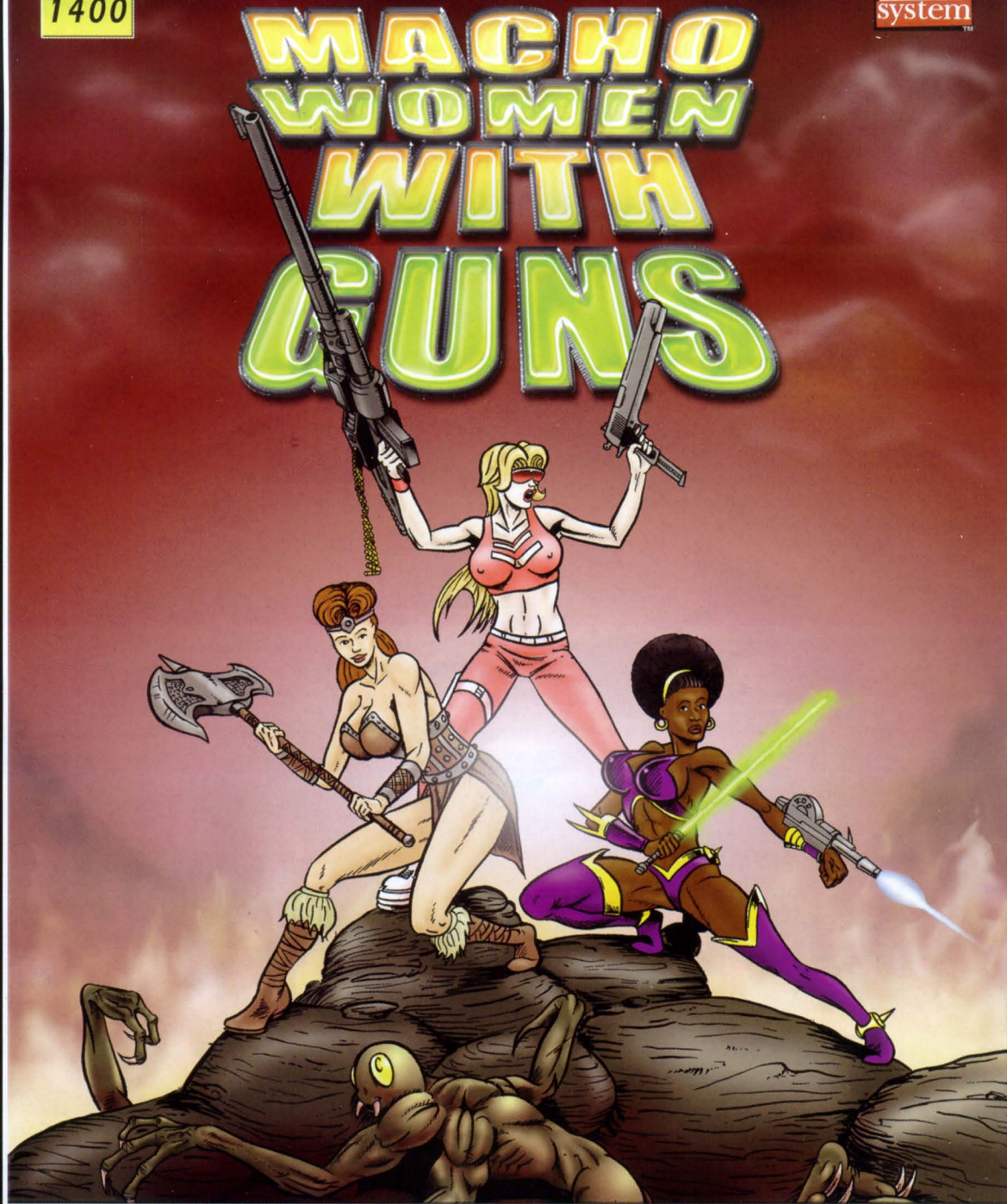
As *holy seal* spell, except that channeling positive energy causes the sealed object to shatter open, whereas negative energy causes the door, chest, or portal to simply unseal.

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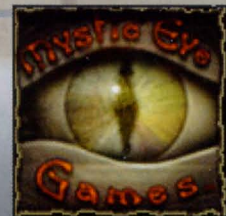
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UPGRADES: ARMOUR!

by Wade Nudson and Kenneth C. Shannon III

'Murder Two, this is Airmaiden. We are approaching your drop zone. Make ready to fall on my command. Be warned, we are picking up trace signatures of at least three Guardsman Meks-- all within three kilometres of the compound.' Captain Thatcher's voice nearly purred through the radio from inside the cockpit.

In the plane, for that matter, Mathis thought. A nice safe plane. Lieutenant Mathis looked below him at the dark grey clouds covering the ground. No moon tonight, but the bright stars gave the cloud layer a faint, eerie glow. Mathis clicked over to his squad frequency and relayed the information.

'Roger that, Airmaiden. Crows! Listen up! At Airmaiden's command, we are dropping into hostile territory! This is the first hot drop for some of you. Jenkins, you stick with Porter! Haskell, you stick with Farnham! We've drilled for this for the last month. Follow your orders and we're heading back home in 36 hours! Do you hear me?'

'Sir, yes sir!' Nine voices shouted back over the com at once. Good men, these. Mathis hated the fact some of them were going to die tonight. Taking on Meks was never a picnic and the Crows always walked away scared. Even when they won. Mathis calmed himself, taking deep breaths and listening to the roar of the wind.

'Murder Two, make that five Guardsman Meks, one of them Centaur class. Prepare to drop in 30.' Thatcher and her damned radar. It sounded like she was having fun.

'Crap,' Mathis muttered. A Centaur most likely meant a mobile howitzer. Not good.

'Sir, what was that?' came back over the comm.

'Nothing, Haskell. Mind your clamps and cut the chatter. Crows, ready!' Mathis felt his heart pumping hard.

'4...3...2...1... Crows away!' Thatcher purred again kissing her boys farewell. *'Good luck Murder Two. You're going to need it.'*

'Crows 5 and 10, go! Crows 4 and 9, go! Crows 3 and 8, go! Crows 2 and 7, go! Crow 6, go! Airmaiden, this is Murder Two, we are away.' Mathis gripped both clamps and pulled hard, releasing himself into the thin atmosphere. The rest of his men were already plummeting towards the ground, some three kilometers away.

In this article, we give you an overview of some of **Upgrades: Armour's** specs and present a few new, exclusive technologies, which can be used to enhance any Armageddon: 2089 campaign.

Upgrades: Armour is the first supplemental product for Armageddon 2089 from **Mystic Eye Games**. Due out this month, **Upgrades: Armour** provides a detailed look at a new player on the battlefield (the powered battle armour trooper), an old player (the multi-legged Centaur WarMek) and some of the mercenary teams which incorporate these units into their battle plans.

With the lesser world states unable or unwilling to come up with the cash to buy and maintain state-of-

the-art Meks, these groups often turn to powered battle armour and older, multi-legged Centaur WarMeks to get the job done. Meanwhile, some mercenary corporations prefer to have their equipment a bit lower key than the massive Meks. These groups also use the armour – but with state-of-the-art upgrades – where WarMeks would be unsuitable or unsightly.

Take a look!

Powered Battle Armour

With WarMeks on the battlefield, efficient infantry support became impossible. Too many soldiers died from flak and shrapnel when WarMeks opened fire. Few soldiers could keep up the gruelling pace of combat set by the large, mechanised artillery platforms and none could withstand the punishment of being

caught by even peripheral damage. When WarMeks moved forward, they moved alone or with treaded or wheeled vehicles. Until now.

War often requires a subtle touch and WarMeks are anything but subtle. A mission might include the destruction of a drug czar's compound, routing of a dictator's forces, or neutralising an enemy airfield. A WarMek squad could handle any of these tasks with ease. But suppose the czar's laptop has irreplaceable data on it, hostages are being held within the dictator's palace, or an experimental prototype spy plane is hidden in a hanger on the airfield? Precisely defined operations are where powered battle armour forces excel.

Powered battle armourers are to WarMeks what 20th Century Special

EXCLUSIVE TECHNOLOGY

New Aircraft: The US Pelican

In 1967, American spy planes took pictures of a giant monstrosity lying on an airfield in Kaspisk. Over the next few years, further investigation shed little light on this Caspian Monster. The enormous aircraft was the invention of Rostislav Alexeyev and was known as an ekranoplan. This new type of aircraft used a phenomenon known as ground effect to carry massive payloads over water at very high speeds. The plane never went into mass production, and after the Cold War was over, test flights were cancelled and most of the giant planes were dismantled.

In the early part of the 21st Century, there was renewed interest in moving massive payloads of machines and men over vast distances as rapidly as possible. American aerospace engineers returned to those spy photographs and the thick dossiers accompanying them. The result was the Pelican, the largest aircraft ever flown. Eighty years later, well into the Armageddon Wars, the Pelicans are still being made and flown as one of the quickest ways to move WarMeks, tanks and heavy artillery across the oceans.

The secret to the Pelican's amazing lift comes from its down-turned wings. The down-swept wings, when flown at low altitudes, prevent lift-robbing vortices from forming and generate a cushion of air beneath the aircraft. This lift is actually stronger the closer the plane is to the ground. The Pelican operates best at 20 to 50 feet of altitude, and burns half as much fuel as an aeroplane at high altitude.

The Pelican can carry a full brigade, which is equivalent to 3,000 people and 8,000 tons of equipment.

Leviathan Soft Armoured Aircraft; DV 0 (-10 Size); hp 1000; DR 50; **Spd** 300; Acc 50, Dec 100; Han -10 (-10 Size); **Cargo** 2.8 million pounds, or 1300 metric tons; **Pilots** 2; Weapons 4 x Lancer 2-pack; 2 x 30mm Autocannon (400 shots); **Equipment** Defensive Interceptor x4, Countermeasures Launcher (20 x flares), 20 x Window; Advanced Comms Processor, Identify Friend or Foe System, Ray-Tek Optimal X-200 Air Tracking System; **Signatures** Radar 15 Magnetic 5 Infrared 25; **Weight** 3.2 million pounds, or 1450 metric tons **Cost** \$3,000,000,000



A PELICAN LAUNCHES ARMOURERS TOWARD AN UNWITTING TARGET

Forces were to mobile artillery. While tanks and howitzers could pulverise enemy cities, encampments and front lines to hot ash, they lacked the finesse needed to kill or capture individual targets. Members of the Special Forces were called in to rescue hostages, capture leaders or political figures, or aid in peacekeeping in controlled territory.

Armourers, also known as Knights, Cavaliers, Crows, or Ronin, serve this strategic function in the world of Armageddon 2089. While WarMeks are used as mobile, agile, heavy artillery platforms capable of creating massive swaths of destruction, armourers are used for lightning-fast precision strikes. In other words, where wholesale devastation is the norm for Meks, battle armourers make war as personal as a punch in the face.

New Battle Armour Chassis

Powered Battle Armour is worn much like the suits of platemail knights wore nearly five centuries ago. But unlike bulky suits of heavy metal, powered battle armour is just *worn*. The specialised pressure-sensitive pads and feedback relays make wearing and using a battle suit as easy as wearing your favourite jeans and T-shirt. It does not take any skill to wear a suit, but using a suit is a different story.

Powered Battle Armour chassis come in five sizes, each designed to specialise in a core set of functions. A squad of powered armourers will consist of several types of chassis, each tweaked to perform a required role.

- **The Grunt Chassis:** The Grunt is the most basic chassis. While it does play a role in the training of new armourers, the Grunt chassis sees more use in the civilian sector. Fitted with construction and utility packages, Grunt chassis can be found in nearly any industrial setting from constructing skyscrapers, undersea domes and space stations, to factory floors, HAZMAT crews, and civilian search and rescue teams. Additionally, many private organisations employ the Grunt chassis in their security operations.

- **The Scout Chassis:** Designed to be fast and agile, the Scout chassis excels at moving through enemy lines quickly and quietly. With plenty of space for sensory arrays, Scouts move ahead and 'paint' the targets for their fellow armourers. Often armed with heavy sniper rifles, the Scouts provide excellent cover as heavier armourers move in for the kill.

- **The Soldier Chassis:** By far the most widely used military chassis, the Soldier chassis is built to be sturdy enough to carry the arms and

EXCLUSIVE TECHNOLOGY

New Armour Coating: Smart Camouflage

Camouflage paint chips and cracks when armour plating takes damage, rendering it ineffective after a single hit. Engineers at the KinetiK Corporation have started developing camouflage resistant to damage, effectively able to heal itself. They have managed to embed microscopic carbon nanotubes in the polymer paints, to make the surface electrically conductive. Embedded along with the nanotubes are tiny paint-filled capsules, only a micron wide. There are millions of them in every square metre of plating. Any damage to the paint coating disrupts the electrical charge floating across the carbon nanotubes and causes the capsules to open, releasing their paint onto the armour plating and sealing the surface over.

This effectively gives camouflage paint 'hit points' representing the smart camouflage paint's ability to heal itself. Once the points are reduced to 0, the microcapsules for the area are depleted and the camouflage is ineffective. It requires one power point to fill a gap in the camouflage's paint. KinetiK offers smart camouflage paint jobs in all its standard colours.

Smart Camouflage Hit Points

Mek Size	Head	Torso	Each Arm	Each Leg	Cost
Battle Armour	10	30	15	15	\$3,500
Tiny	20	60	35	35	\$9,100
Small	24	72	42	42	\$10,400
Medium	28	86	50	50	\$13,000
Large	34	103	60	60	\$16,900
Huge	40	123	72	72	\$22,100
Gargantuan	48	148	86	86	\$28,600

armament required to keep pace with heavy WarMeks. With enough armour to take on a tank and enough weapons to destroy one, the Soldier chassis sees the most use in the front lines and as flanking support for WarMek teams.

• **The Assault Chassis:** Sometimes referred to as the 'Poor Man's Mek', the Assault chassis can carry as much firepower and armour as a small Mek. While a bit slower than other military chassis, there can be no doubting the Assault chassis' place on the battlefield. When battle armour squads are called on to destroy something, the Assault armourers get it done.

• **The Command Chassis:** No squad enters combat without its leader. No leader enters combat without his Command chassis. Nearly as much armour as the Assault chassis, as many weapons options as the Soldier chassis, and the sensory array options of a Scout chassis, the Command chassis is an ideal suit for any

commander, no matter the situation.

New Armour Equipment

The equipment used by powered battle armour makes them versatile enough to be as effective at building bridges or space platforms as they are in frenzied firefights. Modular packages, or modpacks, can be quickly switched out to optimise the battle suit for any situation. Light machine guns and gas grenade launchers for crowd control. Welding torches and buzz saws for engineering projects or small gatling lasers and railguns for taking down enemy WarMeks. Powered battle armour is as customisable as it is versatile.

A variety of sensory arrays are available as well as armament. Nearly every sort of radar or surveillance system available to WarMeks can be found on battle armours, though not always to the same specs! A WarMek has little need to worry about finding the space for a cubic metre of sensory gear. Armourers, on the other hand,

are far more cautious about space and weight. Squads quickly learn to make use of drag-and-drop arrays and share information to make the most of what they can carry into a hot zone.

Outside of purely military applications, armourers also have at their disposal an assortment of utility packages. Flight packs, climate shields, biological and chemical shielding, packages for underwater and vacuum operations, and engineering tools are all available to every chassis. This allows them to operate in every portion of the globe, be it arctic or tropic, underwater, or high orbit.

New Armour Feats

There are dozens of new feats available to armourers in **Upgrades: Armour**. Armour feats let armourer characters specialise in particular areas of physical or electronic warfare. Armour feats also allow characters to tailor their battle suit and armourer skills to a particular style of play. Some examples appear below.

Overclock [Armour]

You can call forth immense amounts of power from your fuel cell for a short period of time.

Prerequisites: Tech Savvy.

Benefits: With your specialised knowledge of electronics and fuel cell technology, you can manipulate the cell processor to put out 150%

of the cell's normal output for a number of rounds equal to 1d4 + your Intelligence bonus. By placing an overclocking switch within your voice controller or wrist keypads, you can activate the increased output at will. Once the time period is up, the fuel cell will only operate at 50% efficiency until you can make repairs to it. It takes a full day (8 hours) and a Technical check (DC 20) to repair a burnt out processor. Failure indicates a retry must be attempted.

Dextrous [Armour]

You can wear a suit of battle armour like a fine leather glove.

Prerequisites: Dex 15+, Tech Savvy.

Benefits: Your skill at manipulating an armour's joints and fine motor controls, coupled with your understanding of low-friction technologies, grants you a +2 Dex bonus when wearing your favoured armour.

New Armourer Class

To go along with the new battle armour chassis, **Upgrades: Armour** presents an entirely new core class called The Armourer, which leads characters through a career as a Knight in powered battle armour. Characters develop abilities such as the Favoured Chassis ability, which grants them bonuses when wearing their preferred chassis configuration. The Career Training abilities gives them skills and bonus feats along a particular career path, be it as a comms officer, combat officer, scout officer, or squad leader.

New Mek

Not only are definitive rules for powered battle armours presented in **Upgrades: Armour**, but several all new WarMeks are detailed as well! Designed by co-author and d20 luminary Jason M. Parent, a number of exciting WarMek designs are covered in detail from the slow and ponderous IPEX Exquisite chassis WarMek 'Centaur' with devastating firepower, to the Sniper 88, a long-range hitter from TAK Industries.

EXCLUSIVE TECHNOLOGY

New Weapon: Active Denial Systems

Ray-Tech has succeeded in turning its millimetre wave technology from sensory applications to more direct combat use. The Active Denial System sends a beam of electrons through vacuum tubes to produce millimetre long waves, which can be aimed and focused with a flat parabolic surface antenna. These waves can be concentrated into a 6-inch diameter spot. Designed for crowd control and to disrupt 'human shields', the ADS generates intense pain not able to be withstood for more than a few seconds, even by the most stalwart warrior.

The ADS creates a cone of millimetre waves. Anyone not wearing some sort of radar shielding or electromagnetic protection faces a Will save (DC 15) or is forced to move from the beam's path. The DC increases by +2 for each round, with no maximum. After the DC reaches 21, all those remaining take 1d3 points of energy damage per round as the microwaves begin to boil and cook their skin and insides.

Ray-Tech produces two versions of this crowd disperser, one for battle armours and one for WarMeks. As a battle armour weapon, it is considered a light weapon pack.

	WarMek Weapon	Battle Armour Weapon Package
Cost	\$15,000	\$3,000
Mass	0.5	25kg
Hard Points	1	-
Power Points	5	5
IR Signature	-	-
Damage	Special, see text	Special, see text
Area of effect	60m cone, 20m wide at base	30m cone, 10m wide at base
Critical	-	-
Ammo	-	-
Damage Type	Energy	Energy

New Rules

New rules are presented for such extreme combat situations as HALO (High Altitude, Low Opening) drops into hostile territory, an Non-Player Character mercenary squad who specialise in getting in and getting out all on the corporate dollar, and more.

New Prestige Classes

Upgrades: Armour include the Mekstalker, Mekhunter, Squad Commander, Cold Blooded Killer, Bitter Ex-Mek Pilot, and Mechanised Guerrilla Fighter.

New Mercenary Squads

A Murder of Crows: Corporate mercenaries at their finest. The Crows specialise in striking deep into enemy territory by way of HALO insertion. The Crows are one of several teams of mercenaries who use strictly battle

armour and avoid the exorbitant costs of WarMeks altogether.

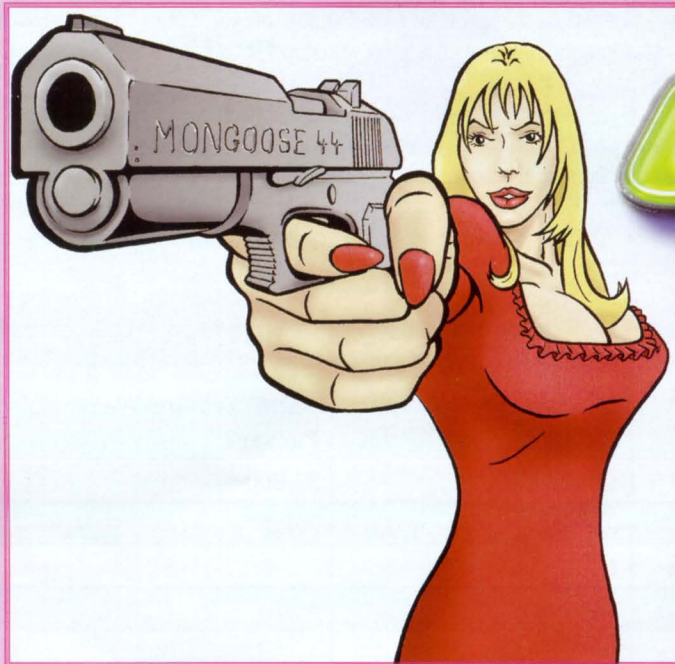
The Djibouti Guard: Desert warriors who fight for their homeland, the Guard finds its strength in a near perfect mesh of WarMek and battle armor technologies.

The Dragonslayers: Teams of well-equipped and highly-trained battle armourers, Dragonslayers' only goal is to bring down enemy WarMeks.

Designed to be used as a source book of opponents against your WarMek players, as the basis for a powered battle armour campaign, or as a source of new technology for existing campaigns, **Upgrades: Armour** is a must-have supplement for any Armageddon: 2089 game.

Welcome to the world of...

MACHO WOMEN WITH GUNS



Macho Women with Guns is due for release this month, but what on earth is it? In answer to this question we present a brief introduction to the ravaged, post-apocalyptic nightmare that is Macho Women with Guns.

The world as we know it is gone, swept away by the tsunami-like tide of history and the rash actions of pride stricken men. Washed away, the simple joys of celebrity worshipping magazines, daytime TV and chocolate. In other words the world as we know it has been turned into Hell on Earth.

Early in the 21st century things changed, things went wrong. The world was ripped apart as a great war tore nations apart while horrific plagues and devastating economic collapse sapped the very essence of those the war had spared. Temperatures continued to rise as the long-term effects of global warming were finally realised. Millions of square kilometres around the equator now lie in blasted ruin, rainforests have

been reduced to skeletal wastelands while barren desert has claimed the remainder. As the world looked set to rebuild itself after the traumas it had suffered a powerful earthquake levelled most of the major cities, already weakened by the terrors of global conflict. Some more pious survivors surmised that God's wrath had finally been visited on his subjects, as the horrors described in the pages of Revelations manifested themselves across His creation.

Towards the end of the 20th century, fuelled by a culture of obesity and crash dieting the population of the West toiled under the weight of their own enhanced proportions. The exponential increase of the planet's waistlines was curbed only by the occasional publication of the latest celebrity diet in the glossy magazines that littered the newsstands of the time. Threats of contractual agreements with doctors and increased taxation on food did little to dissuade people from their unhealthy lifestyles.

Desperate measures were required and while some insisted that their condition was due to big bones, water retention and deep-seated psychological problems stemming from a troubled upbringing, the governments of the West could no longer endure the drain on their health systems' resources. Deaths from heart disease rose due to overly furred arteries and road traffic accidents suffered an increase as people waddled into the road but were unable to clear the distance before being hit by oncoming vehicles. To combat this growing problem government agents were placed into the population armed only with a copy of the Catkins Diet.

By January of 2000 these same agents had uncovered the true cause of the excessive weight gain.

For decades foodstuffs had been imported from around the world. Countries that had long suffered the gradual expansion of the West and its insidious culture were now the primary sources for Western sustenance. Farmers across the globe were forced to produce ever-increasing quantities of food for foreign markets for ever-decreasing income. Never had it been considered by the West that these same countries might also have been intelligent enough to develop a means with which to strike back at their distant oppressors. With the advent of genetic modification struggling governments were able to

engineer their crops to incorporate unhealthy levels of cholesterol, salt and sugar. Incorporating the addictive qualities of opiates also ensured a constant demand for their produce and allowed these countries to set their prices, no matter how extortionate. This was deemed a clear and present danger to international security.

Well, that is what the F.B.I. said, so it must be true. Right?

On the 10th March 2000, motivated and armed with this irrefutable evidence Henry W. Walsh, President of the United States addressed representatives of both the United Nations and the European Union. By the 4th June, after months of wrangling with the international community at such austere venues as Brussels and Geneva and in the face of stiff opposition from many European nations, President Walsh stamped his feet, cried briefly and screamed for his mommy before leaving the meeting. Concerns were raised as to the mental health of Walsh and the following day's tabloids were alive with speculation about the premier's state of mind and the likelihood of his being the subject of an alien abduction. State department officials were quick to respond, however, assuring international journalists that the president was fit and healthy, but disappointed by the narrow-minded and near-sighted decisions of the international community.

At 07:20 on the 16th June President Walsh addressed the United States. The exact words of his address

are lost in the annals of time but the basic tenets survived in a single quote; 'Let's stomp those <<Static>> right now!'

Having stabbed a pin into a map to decide where exactly the U.S. would strike first the entire world descended on North Africa to either back their American allies or fight desperately to stop them or just get

was turned into a bad road warrior movie. None of those sent to war ever returned.

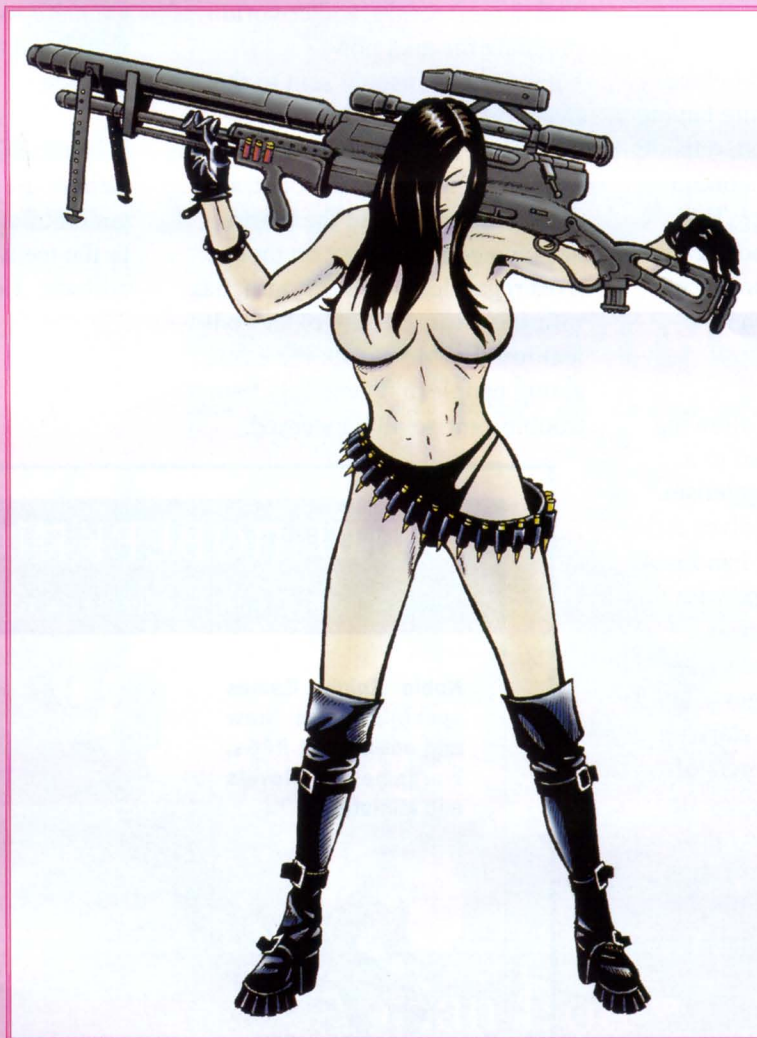
Perhaps they died. Perhaps their ability to read a map was as limited as their knowledge of geography. Perhaps they feared the type of homecoming Vietnam veterans suffered. Whatever the truth, they are gone and are not mourned.

Many women who remember the time before the war would say 'Good riddance'.

The war was not the end of the world's troubles. In the closing years of the war a terrible plague swept over the earth carried far and wide by increasingly chaotic weather patterns. The plague seemed to target only the Y-chromosome and left those few men the war had spared, after hours of excruciating pain, dead. Men are scarce now, maybe one male for every ten females. Women have, as a result, taken their place as the dominant gender, controlling the remnants of the

civilised world, oppressing men under their stiletto heels.

Several theories explain the occurrence of the plague. One such theory is that the plague was unleashed by one of the European nations. Lusting after beautiful American women a nation of Mediterranean heartthrobs decided to wipe out the male population of the U.S. and make a move on their lady folk. The plague was a little too much of a success, killing off



the best seats for the impending hostilities. The war killed millions of men from around the globe as governments rallied their troops and military might to fight. After the fifth consecutive year of warfare, conscription became commonplace as political powers, desperate to ensure their own supremacy, poured seemingly endless resources into the conflict.

Man had brought about his own destruction as the war went from nuclear to biological and the world

the remaining male populace and spreading to the rest of the globe.

Those men who now remain seem immune to the effects of the plague by some freak of birth. The birth rates of male children are undeniably down, however, leading to barbaric cultures of slavery and subjugation in which men are treated as second-class citizens or mere property, precious but inferior.

Global Warming was not helped by the war, the temperature having risen to such a degree that, outside of the extreme north, it is bikini weather most of the time. The radiation from the sun, power plants and nuclear fallout has produced hideous mutations, which now threaten the land.

The economic collapse following the war and the plague led to a wholesale collapse of capitalism. Forced to fend for themselves rather than rely on government handouts, many died, unable to cope with this drastic change to their lifestyles. Others starved to death as pizza deliveries failed and burger joints closed. Besieged by the starving and unemployed, the owners of stores across the land packed up their goods and fled. They now band together for self-protection against the vast numbers of unemployed having created a new homeland.

Then the earthquake struck. Its destructive power confirming what many had suspected all along. The San Andreas Fault was torn asunder opening the earth to the core and revealing a gateway to hell. This gateway had lain dormant since time immemorial. As a result the West Coast of the United States has been rent into little more than a series of islands. These islands carry on much as before, churning out pornography, movies and pornographic movies, which are then traded for the goods they need. These islands are also one of

the few refuges of mankind. San Francisco, now an island of its own, escaped the horrific effects of the plague; it's high population of homosexuals and those of alternative sexuality were busy swapping make-up tips and having manicures as the crippling plague swept overhead desperately seeking testosterone.

The demons of the netherworld populate the area now. Unemployed succubi sent to the overworld to make themselves useful are forced to mix with record executives and movie producers who refuse to accept the world has changed and carry on their lives regardless. This, in turn, has infuriated some of the older gods; jealous, they now walk the earth, eating people and generally being troublesome to all concerned.

In the wake of such monumental destruction and the sudden proof of the existence of the Devil, church attendance skyrocketed. Religion is back with a vengeance, but dark times call for strong measures. To combat the threat and help restore order the Vatican has exercised its new found popularity and staggering wealth by sending The Sisters Of Our Lady Of The Sacred Chopper to help restore order to the world and to combat the demonic menace.

It is into this world that you now step, mighty heroines for a new generation. Scantly-clad, armed to the teeth and overloaded with attitude. Let's bust some balls!

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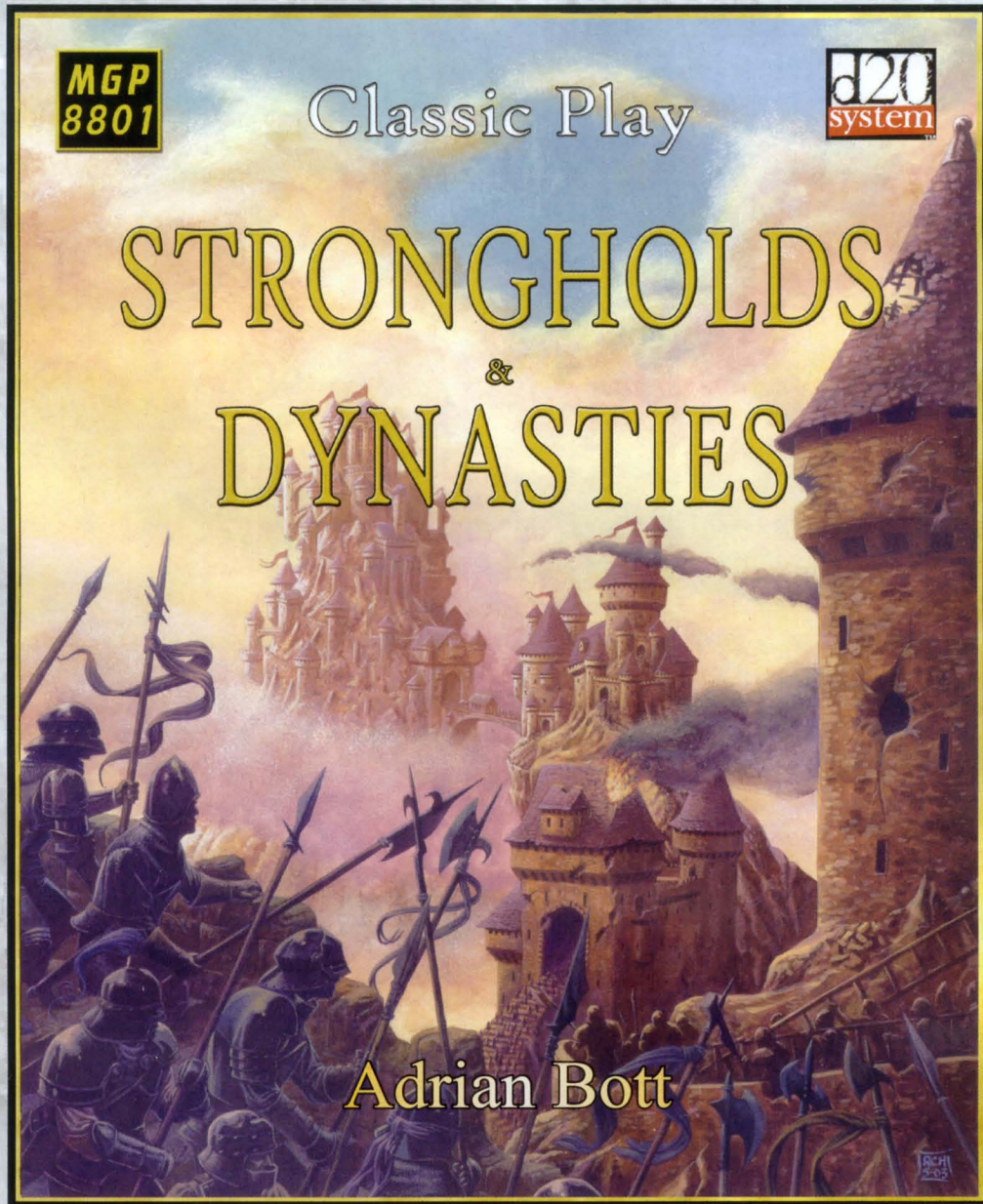


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WHISPERS IN DARKNESS



A BABYLON 5 SCENARIO
FOR 3-5 BEGINNING-LEVEL
CHARACTERS

BY LIZARD

Whispers in Darkness is a Babylon 5 scenario set in 2258 and is suitable for advanced Games Masters who can set the scene in their own campaigns. It offers starting parties the opportunity to get into the Babylon 5 universe and the station itself.

General Plot

Someone is tipping off raiders as to where Babylon 5 Starfury patrols are patrolling, so the raiders are either where the Starfuries are not, or are there in overwhelming force. Monitoring of incoming/outgoing traffic is proving nothing. Anti-raider efforts have been spectacularly unsuccessful of late. Starfury patrols either arrive too late, or arrive to face extremely heavy resistance, with raider ships well-positioned prior to the arrival of Babylon 5 forces. The players must locate the 'insider' who is sending information to the raiders.

Getting the Players Involved

This adventure makes the assumptions that the players will not be playing the main characters from the TV show, and will be low-level. Following the style of the TV series, it is also assumed the players are not necessarily a party which seeks adventures, but individuals with their own complex, and often conflicting agendas. Thus, the following is a breakdown of ways to involve the players in the hunt for the traitor.

Agent: Assuming the agent is not working directly for the raiders

Your objective - unmask the raiders!



themselves, almost any employer will have some reason to want the raiders stopped. While the player may not be asked directly to help with the current crisis, he may consider that doing so will be valuable to his employers, and thus worth taking on as a side project.

Diplomat: The raiders may have been hitting ships of the diplomat's people particularly hard, or an important individual was killed in an attack. Either way, the diplomat sees advancement of both himself and his cause in dealing with this latest problem.

Lurker: Lurkers are likely to have been drawn in by personal ties. They may know someone killed in a recent assault, or they may owe favours to – or want favours from – other players with more direct links. They are also excellent sources of information.

Officer: Any officer in EarthForce could have been tasked with looking

into this problem. If he is a Starfury pilot, he may have more personal reasons to get involved, as well. Officers of other governments have many of the same motives as diplomats.

Scientist: Technical specialists may be asked to help with discovering how the spy is transmitting information without anyone detecting the signal. Any scientist may also see winning the favour of another character as a good thing.

Soldier: Soldiers working for EarthForce, as with officers, may simply be ordered to become involved. Others may work as guards or assistants to other characters.

Telepath: Anyone interested in hunting down a spy will certainly be interested in hiring a telepath. Licensed telepaths may need to overcome their desire to obey Psi Corp's rules, while those from other

raiders will be more willing to use their abilities directly.

Worker: Anyone involved in cargo handling, space transit or any similar field will have had bad experiences with raiders, or know someone who did.

What Is Going On?

As many suspect, a pilot assigned to one of the Starfury wings has been sending information to the raiders. (It may also be that more than one pilot is involved; see below.) This can be done without detection thanks to contraband technology indirectly provided by N'Grath to the pilot. See 'Quantum Paired Transmitter', below. The pilot regularly sends information to the raiders, alerting them to ship movements, launches and so on, giving them ample time to react.

There are, thus, two mysteries to uncover: First, who is sending the information to the raiders, and, second, how are they avoiding detection?

Since the exact nature of the characters and their interrelationships is unknown, this scenario is not set up as a sequence of fixed events. Rather, the key facts are presented, and a number of possible settings and events are detailed, along with full stats for all the relevant Non-Players. This will allow the Games Master to pick and choose the events as needed, and the story will flow more organically from the individual characters, rather than forcing highly disparate individuals along a set path.

However, there is an overall structure to the plot, as follows:

Act I: Getting involved

Act II: Tracking down the culprit

Act III: Revealing the truth. . . and the consequences

Act I: Getting Involved

There are several ways in which the players can become directly involved in events. Some possibilities are noted below:

Raider Attack!

If any of the players are Starfury pilots themselves, the best way to open the adventure, at least for them, is with a bang! The character's squadron will be sent to a jumpgate in a nearby sector to await the arrival of an Earth transport, which they are to escort to Babylon 5. When they arrive, they are swarmed by raiders. A number of Delta-V Light Fighters (see p92 of the *Babylon 5 main rulebook*) immediately close in on the Starfuries, seeking to hold them off while the transport ship, which arrived earlier than scheduled, is attacked and looted. It should be emphasised to the players involved that this is not normal or expected; the raider ships would only have been in position if they had known the Starfuries were coming.

Post-Attack, at the Zocalo

If none of the players are directly involved in flying, it is probable they have friends or associates who are. There should be angry, disgruntled pilots all over the place. Someone is likely to have died recently. Anger

in the thick of it, but not necessarily all on the same side. Any security personnel (including players) who try to stop will be berated by the pilots, who will ask why they are here, harassing people, instead of figuring out how the raiders are always one step ahead.

Assignment

If the players work for anyone in particular, especially agents, officers, or diplomats, they will be called for a meeting following the latest debacle. While the exact wording will vary, the summary will be the same: The current situation is approaching crisis. Transport ships are talking about abandoning Babylon 5. Governments are dubious of the ability of the station to provide security for trade and diplomacy. Insurance rates are increasing. If the players are directly involved in EarthForce, the situation is seen as even more dire. Each failure is played up by forces, human and alien, which opposed Babylon 5 in the past. One way or another, this has to be resolved. If the players work for security, they



and alcohol combine, as always, into the inevitable barroom brawl. Either a merchant or worker who lost friends to a raider attack blames the pilots for not doing enough to stop the attacks, or an alien claims that the raiders are simply a front for some more sinister plot, which is why the defences have been so ineffectual, or a pilot decides he's tired of risking his life for people who show no gratitude and, wham, the fight is on! The players should be

will be told that working on this is now top priority; if they are pilots, they will be told to watch their fellow pilots and report any odd behaviour to security; if they work in other areas, they will be told simply to keep their eyes open.

Non-Player Character Stats

Suitable opponents can be in Chapter 6 of the *Babylon 5 main rulebook*

JUST HOW SERIOUS IS THIS CRIME?

Very.

The crime is treason leading to the deaths of fellow soldiers. The punishment is mind-wipe. This should be kept in mind when roleplaying both the innocent and guilty suspects. If caught, they face the complete loss of their identity. In practical, though not technical, terms, the death penalty. They will act accordingly.

Act II: Tracking Down the Culprit

Once the players are involved, the next step is locating who is responsible. This is difficult, as the person involved has not been boasting or bragging, and has left few clues. The one thing all the suspects (see below) have in common is that none of them are personally, directly profiting from their actions. This means checks of bank accounts, changes in spending behaviour, and so on, will turn up nothing (except as noted below).

Identifying the suspects

The patrol sectors change on a daily basis, and it is usually not until showing up for duty each day that the pilots know where they will be patrolling. This means that the signals needed to be sent early, or even at the point of launch.

It is unlikely players will have legal access to all the Starfury pilots' personnel records. Individuals in EarthForce, acting under orders, will have access to such records, of course, but not private financial data, communication logs, and so on, unless they have sufficient evidence to place an individual under suspicion. . . simply reading through everyone's personal mail in the hope of finding a smoking gun is not permitted. Attempting to crack security is also possible, though, again, without a specific suspect in mind, the odds of finding the right person are slim – and while Garibaldi might be willing to turn a blind eye

to some illegal activity if it leads directly to a culprit, he will almost certainly not overlook someone simply prowling around in random files to see what he can find.

However, one thing which will come up, if anyone thinks to look, are correlations between compromised missions and pilots assigned to them. While there is no perfect smoking gun -- that is, no one pilot was involved in every compromised mission, or missed every compromised mission -- three names show an exceptionally high correlation between missions flown and missions which were believed compromised.

Once the players have identified the three most likely suspects; Angela Morales, Richard Chen and Michael Fargo, all Starfury pilots, they will probably begin looking for other evidence. The following are some of the more likely clues they will come across during their investigations.

† Analysis of the station's normal communication logs will show no unusual signals, though, of course, the contents of the 'usual' signals are encrypted. If anyone decides to check if the logs themselves have been tampered with somehow, a Technical check (DC 20) will show very tiny irregularities in the timing sequences – there are sections where the regular ticks of the timestamp are off by a few milliseconds. Added up, all of them together are not more than

a second off, but most of the deviations occurred just as the ships were launched.

Further research (a DC 15 check) will indicate that, of all the things which could interfere with the signal tracking, the most likely is a quantum spin communicator being used. Quantum spin communicators are extremely rare, and highly illegal to possess by private citizens, although it has been known. . .

† If the players go back over two months – a month before the problems began – they will find, in the records, a very poor attempt at cloaking a signal headed towards no known system. This is from Angela Morales, and it is to her brother, Robert. The relevant conversation went as follows:

Robert: 'Don't preach to me! I do what I have to do! It's better than risking my life every day for a tiny room and a tinier paycheck!'

Angela: 'You think there's a future in what you're doing? You think you're going to strike it big and retire rich?'

Robert: 'Better chance for me than for you! You're just going to be their servant until you die, like Mom and Dad. Not for me!'

Angela: 'What if I see you? What if I have to shoot you?'

Robert <sneering>: 'Better not miss if you get the first shot, because I won't.'

Robert is a young man, about 19 or so, with distinctive facial scarring typical of gang members.

† Checking with the casinos will show that Richard Chen has run up excessive gambling debts, and owes a lot of money to T'lok, a minor-league Narn loan shark who has established a small, stable business which he runs

GETTING ON TRACK

The core plot consists of narrowing down the suspect list. However, it is possible players might veer away from the pilots to pursue other angles. If this seems to be taking the players further and further away from the plot, it may be necessary to nudge them back in the right direction. Some options for this include:

- † Having a player overhear a pilot talking to a friend about how the fact that there is a traitor flying with them makes them nervous.
- † Having a pilot talk about 'not knowing where we're flying until we launch'.
- † Having a character's superior or contact say that they will investigate one angle, while the player should 'check into the pilots'

with reasonable efficiency.

If the players can gain access to the surveillance cameras for the casino area, they will have records of T'lok talking with Chen. A DC 15 Gather Information check will reveal Chen's gambling problems; a DC 20 check will reveal the link to T'lok. Bonuses to the checks should be given if the players are 'regulars' at the casino, or have any ranks in Knowledge (Babylon 5). Any players who are pilots might have overheard Chen discussing his problems.

T'lok has no criminal record and there are no grounds for arrest. If asked about Chen, he will first deny knowing him; if any evidence is presented, such as the video, he will say, 'Oh, *Chen*! I am sorry, I still have trouble with the human accent.' (If a Nam spoke to him, he would say 'All human names sound alike to me.') 'Yes, I helped him out when he needed assistance – it's my pleasure to share with others. However, he paid me back some time ago, and I haven't had any opportunity to help him since then. Give him my best wishes.'

- † Michael Fargo seems clean. A Forgery check (DC 20), though, will show that his personnel records are faked. A genetic

scan shows that 'Michael Fargo' is actually Milton Ford, who has a healthy list of warrants for a string of burglaries. There is no indication of him having committed violent crimes, however. If confronted about this, he will of course deny it; if the genetic evidence is presented, he will break. 'Yeah, yeah, look, I used to do that stuff...it was wrong, I know. I was a dumb kid. I finally got wise and had a friend clean me up, give me the new face and the new ID, and joined EarthForce on the up-and-up. It was right after the Minbari War, so they didn't look at the records too long, you know? Not too many people left, back then. I kept my head down and my nose clean and here I am. Please, I'm sorry about what I done, but it was so long ago...I've worked hard since then, put my life on the line for Earth. I've paid it back!' If he is not the traitor, any Sense Motive check will give the impression he is being honest; if he is the traitor, a Sense Motive check (DC 25) or a telepathic scan will be required to realise he is hiding something.

- † All three suspects have been seen meeting with N'Grath at some point in the past few months. Each will have an excuse:

The Telepath Problem

- † Running a mystery when telepathy is available can be difficult. While player telepaths will be low-powered if this scenario is run for beginning players, as intended, they can still cause trouble. There are several things to keep in mind.
- † Scanning without permission is illegal, at least for human telepaths. The evidence found by telepathy would not be admissible. Scanning an *innocent* is even more problematic. Some slack might be cut, behind the scenes, if a telepath fingers a traitor, but any unauthorised scan of someone who is wholly innocent is going to be trouble. Even if the telepath is non-human, treaties will still protect the right of Earth citizens to be free of unwarranted 'alien mind probes', especially given the growing xenophobia on Earth.
- † The traitor will not, most of the time, be consciously thinking of his treason. An 'accidental' scan will not reveal anything, unless circumstances have been arranged to cause it to be likely that the traitor will be thinking of his crimes right at that moment.
- † Since unauthorised scans are illegal, even if the players do use telepathy to pick out the guilty party, they must still find other evidence before they can get legal action taken. (Of course, the players may not wish to take legal action. . . see below.)

As a last resort, it is always possible that the guilty party has had some training in mind-shielding. Very few mundanes learn such skills – the most likely of all the suspects to have done so is Michael Fargo.

The Quantum Paired Transmitter

This device is not manufactured by any current major race, but like the chameleon net and similar artefacts, enough examples have been recovered that it is not considered a one-of-a-kind item, though it is still extremely rare. The device consists of two parts, a transmitter and a receiver, which use photon entanglement to communicate instantly and undetectably. The transmitter, which is owned by the guilty party, resembles a small bead of glass, with a faint, green, inner luminescence. There are slight indentations in the surface; when pressed, the glow brightens. At this point it is active and will convey vocal communication to the receiving unit. The raiders always have someone monitoring their receiver.

As the name implies, the two halves of a paired transmitter are always linked. It is not possible to use a receiver from one set with a transmitter from a different set.

The raiders recovered the current set from an attack on an exploration ship operated by Universal Terraform and subsequently arranged for it to be transported, via N'Grath's networks, to a chosen agent on Babylon 5.

This item will bring up to 10,000 credits on the black market.

Angela: If the players haven't revealed they know something is up with Angela's brother, she will claim she met with N'Grath to try to secure some mildly illegal Centauri beverages to bring back to Earth with her. If the issue with her brother has been raised, she will claim she just wanted N'Grath to arrange for the delivery of a data crystal to him, one containing assorted recordings of them together with their parents.

Richard: Richard will admit he met with N'Grath if some evidence is offered, but will claim he was just trying to get some money moved through the station without it being logged to his personal accounts and taxed.

Michael: If the players have presented evidence that he is not who he claims to be, he will say that he dealt with N'Grath to try to send money, anonymously, to the family of the man he killed. If the players either do not present, or do not have, such evidence, he will insist that the growing crime on the station has made him nervous, and he was trying to secure a weapon for personal protection. He will also claim that N'Grath wanted too much, and he does not have such a weapon.

Act III: Revealing the Truth... and the Consequences

So, who is guilty? This is up to the Games Master. All of the suspects have a strong motive; all have been in contact with N'Grath. All also have plausible excuses for their actions *other* than being guilty of the crime in question. This does not mean they are saints – all three are guilty of something, though not a crime as serious as sending information which endangers the lives of their fellow pilots, the security of the station and free trade in the sector. Even the innocent have something to hide, and that can be used for later plot hooks.

The ultimate proof is the paired transmitter. The guilty party will not let such a rare artefact out of their sight, even for a few moments. It will be with them at all times (except, perhaps, while bathing). Anyone caught with it is *almost* certainly guilty. If the Games Master wishes to be truly underhanded, he may have the guilty party plant the device on another suspect though this will only happen if the players tip their hand too soon – the transmitter is far too valuable to simply dump indiscriminately.

If the players believe they have hard evidence proving one of the three is guilty, they have several options. It is quite likely some of the players may disagree about what to do, and may take conflicting courses of action. This is entirely in the spirit of Babylon 5.

Some possibilities are:

- † Present the evidence to the authorities, and have the suspect arrested and tried. As humans, all three suspects are under Earth jurisdiction. However, if one or more of the players is an ambassador or agent for a race hit hard by raiders, they may demand the suspect be turned over to their justice.
- † Deal with it directly. A PPG shot in the dark, some sabotage of a Starfury, or an exotic, nearly undetectable Centauri poison slipped into a drink at the Zocalo can all remove the traitor without anyone being the wiser. Unless, of course, someone chooses to investigate *that* death.
- † Blackmail. Not everyone on Babylon 5 is a shining knight -- indeed, few people are. Some might be willing to overlook treason, if it means an advantage to themselves later. Someone willing to sell out to raiders will probably be willing to commit other crimes, as well.
- † Nothing at all. File the information away for future use. It could be used to earn favour with Garibaldi or Sinclair, if revealed at the correct time, or to permit blackmail in the future.

If the players confront the guilty party, but do not show they have proved his guilt and simply walk away, said party will know the noose is drawing shut, and will act accordingly. See the individual descriptions, below.

The Suspects

Three suspects present themselves:

Richard Chen
3rd Level Human Officer (Pilot)
Hit Points: 11
Initiative: +1 (Dex)
Speed: 30 ft.
DV: 10
Attacks: +3 melee or +4 ranged

Special Qualities: Rallying Cry
Saves: Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +5
Abilities: Str 11, Dex 12, Con 11, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 12
Skills: Pilot +7, Sense Motive +6, Computer Use +5, Spot +6, Listen +6, Knowledge (gambling) +4
Feats: Dogfighter, Evasive Action, Spacecraft Proficiency, Weapon Proficiency (spacecraft weapons)

Of Asian origin and in his late twenties, Richard is stockily built, with close-cropped black hair and bright blue eyes. He is always crisply dressed, and moves with careful precision. His record as a pilot is superb. He is easily offended and quick to anger, a trait which has landed him in more than one brawl and has earned him a few scars. He has, or had, a serious weakness for gambling, one which may have caused him to make a particularly bad deal to get out of debt. Richard has a number of casual friends who might be sources of information, but has no truly close comrades.

Possible motive: Richard owed a large amount of money to T'Lok, a Narn loan shark. He recently paid this off, but there is no record of the money entering his accounts, or any obvious source of sudden wealth. No one at the station casino will remember him winning big any time in the recent past, either. The money could well have come from the raiders.

Explanation if innocent: Chen actually won big on a trip off-station,

but didn't want to pay the associated taxes. He paid N'Grath to launder the money. What was left went to T'Lok. He's giving up gambling. He will be quite angry with the players for 'harassing' him for the 'minor' crime of laundering a few thousand credits. If any of the players work for alien governments, he'll threaten to lodge a formal complaint. (Whether he does or not is up to the Games Master) If the players work for EarthForce, or are private agents, he will make

(electronics) +6
Feats: Skill Focus (Pilot), Iron Will, Spacecraft Proficiency, Weapon Proficiency (Spacecraft Weapons)

Angela is in her mid-twenties, of the type more likely to be described as 'striking' rather than pretty. She has an athletic build, and a businesslike demeanour. Her family is military; she lost both her parents during the Earth/Minbari war. She and her brother Robert were raised by an



similar threats ('Your commanding officer is going to hear about this!').

Actions if guilty: If he thinks the players are closing in and have evidence, he will try to flee the station. If he has to fight to escape, he will, but not against overwhelming odds.

Angela Morales
2nd Level Human Officer (Pilot)

Hit Points: 9
Initiative: +2 (Dex)
Speed: 30 ft.
DV: 10
Attacks: +2 melee or +4 ranged
Saves: Fort +1, Ref +3, Will +6
Abilities: Str 10, Dex 14, Con 11, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 14
Skills: Pilot +9, Computer Use +6, Spot +6, Listen +6, Technical

aunt, but they drifted apart. She followed her parents into service; he did not. Any investigation of her background will probably reveal his criminal record, with a note that he disappeared some five months back. Angela has no close friends on the station, and is seen by those who do know her as committed to her job, with few interests beyond that.

Possible Motive: Investigation will show that her brother is working with the raiders, having drifted there after a life of progressively serious crime. She is trying to keep him alive, even at the cost of betraying her allegiance to EarthForce.

Explanation if innocent: She deeply regrets her brother's choice, and almost certainly would not

fire on him, but she will not betray EarthForce either. She is scared of the secret leaking out, however, because she thinks others might suspect her of exactly what she is now suspected of. If she can convince the players that she is innocent, she will ask them not to talk, and promise to try to get transferred elsewhere, so she will not have to face that choice.

Actions if guilty: Given the seriousness of the crime (see above), she'll run. She might well join her brother if she can get away. She was willing to let other pilots die to protect her brother; she'll kill to protect herself if she has to.

Michael Fargo

2nd Level Lurker, 1st Level Human Officer (Pilot)

Hit Points: 10

Initiative: +1 (Dex)

Speed: 30 ft.

DV: 10

Attacks: +4 melee or +4 ranged

Special Qualities: Lurker's Knowledge, Survivor's Luck, Rallying Cry

Saves: Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +0

Abilities: Str 13, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 11, Wis 11, Cha 15

Skills: Bluff +7, Search +5, Escape Artist +6, Gather Information +7, Listen +5, Sense Motive +5, Pilot +5

Feats: Lightning Reflexes, Run, Point Blank Shot, Spacecraft Proficiency, Weapon Proficiency (Spacecraft Weapons)

Michael Fargo always looks tired. A tall, thin man in his mid-thirties, with blond hair, he seems a bit old for his relatively low rank. He joined EarthForce late in life. According to him, he did it after the Earth/Minbari war showed him the need to serve his planet. He moves through several social circles with relative ease, but always shows the same face – a basically 'nice guy' who likes the 'simple things' in life, such as beer, women and sports. If any of his closer friends can be convinced to talk about him, they will say he sometimes slips into periods of brooding melancholy and that he occasionally says or does things

which are out of character. His only black mark is a few days in the brig for getting involved in an exceptionally brutal bar fight about six months ago; the records also show he went out of his way to make amends with the man he injured. If asked about this, he will admit he was drunk and lost control, but that it has not happened before and he has a handle on it.

Possible Motive: He is concealing a criminal past and has been living under a false identity for the past eight years. This exposes him to considerable blackmail opportunities.

Explanation if innocent: He is guilty of the crimes on his record, and of the forgery, but he has indeed been totally clean since then. His career as a petty crook ended in a violent moment of tragically poor judgement, when he killed a bystander during a robbery, whom he thought was drawing a gun. Wracked with guilt over this, he took all the money he had to buy himself a new life and dedicated himself in service to Earth. He *is* a murderer, but one trying to reform. How the players react to this is up to them. They could let him go on with his false life, demand he leave the station, or turn him in. More nefarious players could blackmail him themselves.

Actions if guilty: If Michael Fargo is the traitor then his actual personality is very different from that presented. Rather than being driven to service by guilt, he created a new identity solely to get away, and has stayed in EarthForce because it seemed better than the alternatives. He may well be wanted by underworld figures, so he is actually safer as a pilot. The guilty Fargo is utterly ruthless. He will kill to get away if he can, as soon as the opportunity presents itself. If he feels the players suspect him and are at all likely to catch him, he will plant the transmitter in the Starfury of another suspect and then lead the players there, saying something in the order of, 'Hey, I know what you're snooping after, and I have to tell you. . . Angela's been acting real

odd. When I flew past her on our last sortie, I noticed she seemed to be talking to someone, but she wasn't transmitting on our channels. I'd check her ship out, if I were you.' (He is as likely to finger Chen; the Games Master should pick whichever innocent will be more likely to be believed guilty by the players, or whichever one has the most plot potential.)

Follow-ups

This scenario can spin off several additional storylines. Some concepts are:

† **Revenge:** The raiders are going to want to know who ratted out their inside man. If the players were blatant in their investigations, someone may come looking for them.

† **Connections:** The investigation will certainly put the players in contact with several individuals, such as T'Lok, who may be useful in the future. Any players working for a higher power, such as EarthForce or a corporation, will have impressed their superiors. (Assuming they did the job well.)

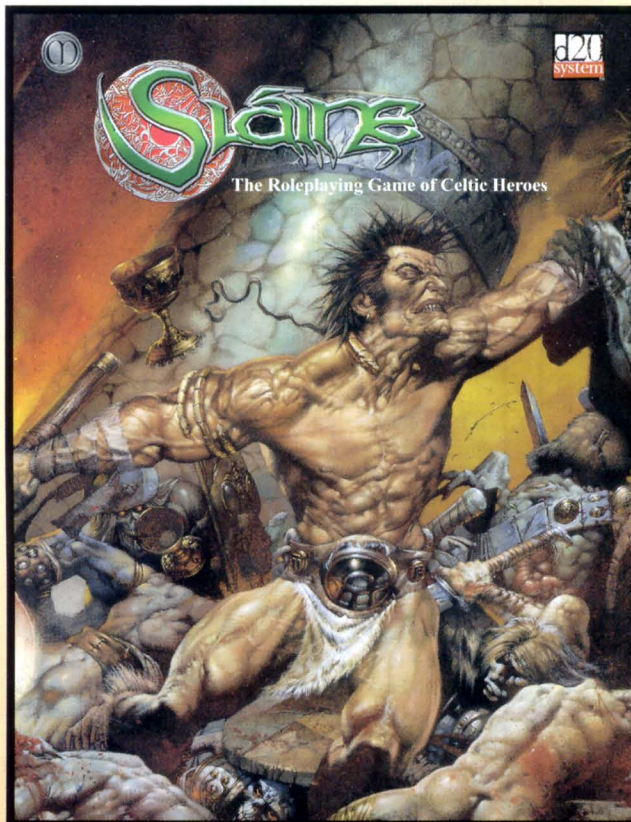
† **Ambush:** It may be possible to use the transmitter to lead the raiders into an ambush. This will only work once, of course, but that may be enough.

† **The Transmitter:** If the players retain control over the transmitter, others may want it, to study the exotic technology. Mr. Morden might have a use for it, as its possible his 'associates' could recapture the receiver with ease. All the players have to do is say what they want in exchange...



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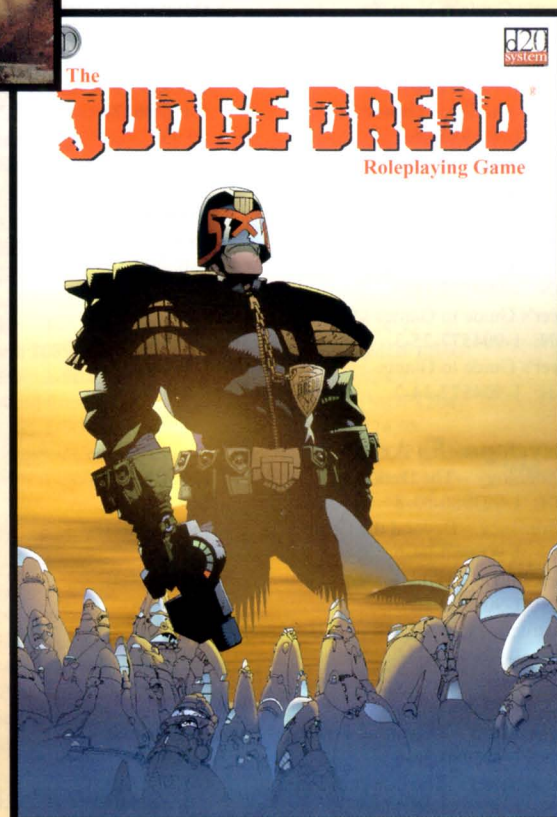
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