



MONGOOSE PUBLISHING PRESENTS

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system™

Signs & Portents

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HEAD TO HEAD

*MONARCH AND MAXIMILIAN GET
THE WHICH WARMEK TREATMENT*

HAIL TO THE CHIEF

*INCORPORATING MICHAEL
GARIBALDI INTO BABYLON 5*

A WHOLE NEW ROGUE

*GETTING THE MOST OUT OF THIS
VERSATILE CLASS*

*PLUS... STRUCTURE OF EVIL, ILLUSIONISM UPDATE,
ELVEN MAGIC ITEMS, A: 2089 BRIMSTONE MISSILE
AND MUCH MORE!*

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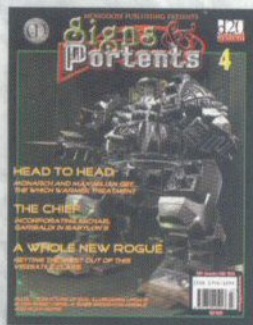
August Hahn has pillaged the plots of half a dozen stories to bring this tale of envy, revenge and vodka.



After just a month in the job, the office manager takes a wrong turn at Spandex Junction.

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On The Cover: The Volksmecha Maximilian, subject of our cross-over article with *Which WarMek?* magazine

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Editorial

Hi everybody,

Another month and something else to talk about. In fact, the hot topic here is probably the same one as you've been having – Ethics and morality.

That's right, of late I have listened to a lot of people talking about the substance of future roleplaying products, and what is, and is not, acceptable. All this got me to thinking about my own attitudes to gaming. If I were to take the time to analyse the characters I have played over the years, I'm pretty certain that the overall tendency would show a leaning towards the disreputable, with forays into the downright unpleasant. I can still remember playing a drug dealer in a Shadowrun campaign that ended up with my partner and me running an illicit night-club as a front for our operations which included a protection racket, gambling and certain types of vice, if you get my drift. What was odd though was that we didn't set out to be like that. I was just going to be another in my long line of professional gamblers, in this case a cross between Maverick and John Shaft, yet when opportunity reared its ugly head I hardly batted an eyelid as I dove into the seedy cesspool which our GM was suddenly forced to create in ever-widening detail.

It wasn't just me though, either. Another of the party quickly realised that what I needed was some urban muscle to protect my back (I wasn't too tough as I recall) and we were soon planning drive-by shootings of innocent folk in order to up the ante for our protection racket. What's more, the rest of the party openly tolerated what was going on, turning a blind eye when they discovered that a particularly pliable fence was a regular at our club and we had managed to 'encourage' him into drug dependency.

Anyway, I think you get the drift. And, before you start thinking 'I would never do that', take a step back and think about the number of people you have killed in gaming sessions down the years. There won't be many of us who don't soon lose count. Then there's all the bodies you have ransacked for loot, which, just because they are now dead (and *you* probably killed them) does not mean that their property is now yours.

Yes, indeed, morality is a tricky issue, and one that is perhaps best left comfortably at the back of one's mind once the d20's start flying. However, for those of you with an interest in the theology of such things, you might like to check out this month's Gaming Symposium. Shannon Kalvar is beginning a study of Good and Evil in roleplaying. It makes fascinating reading.

Sleep tight, and don't forget to check out the results of the Issue 1 Caption Contest on page 60.

Dan

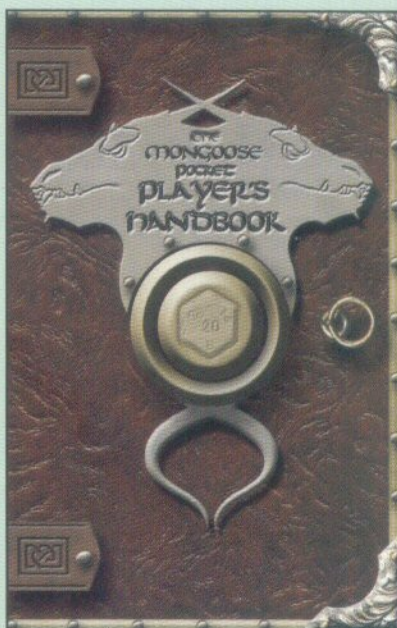


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Babylon 5 created by J. Michael Straczynski

EYE ON MONGOOSE

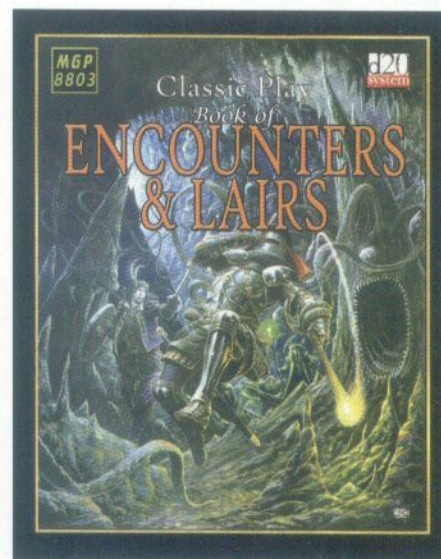
New Releases This Month



The d20 game is a simple, straightforward set of rules for roleplaying virtually any setting in any genre. It is easily adaptable, infinitely variable and can be altered to handle everything from giant robots to the subtlest of court intrigues. No matter what level of complication is added to the system to align it with the needs of a given game, the basics remain largely unchanged. This lets a group of roleplayers easily move from one setting to the next with their only learning curve being based on a few overlying rules changes rather than having to study an entirely new system.

With this book, a Games Master can take any setting or rules codex based on the genre he wishes to play and run with it. No other basic rulebooks are needed. This reduces the expense and paperwork required to play variant systems, making it easier for Games Masters and players alike to jump right into the games they want to play without having to buy books pertaining to games they do not.

In short, this is the Mongoose Pocket Player's Handbook- a simple guide to the rules of the d20 game. It contains exactly what a reader needs to play the game and nothing else. It does exactly what it says on the tin.



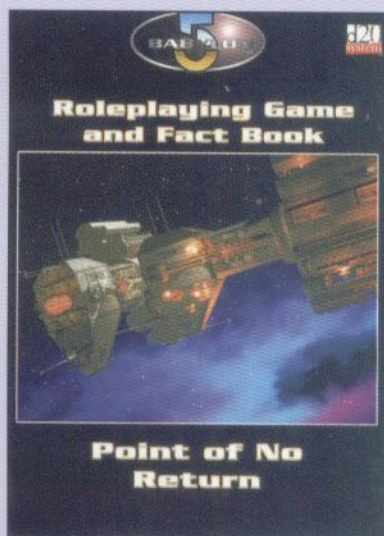
Continuing Mongoose Publishing's highly-successful Classic Play series, the Book of Encounters and Lairs (written by August Hahn, fast becoming one of the most prolific and well-known writers in the d20 industry), is a 256 page hardback that delivers a wealth of material for Games Masters to use in their campaigns. Containing a mix of encounter tables, fully-fleshed out encounters, as well as making allowance for a Games Master's own creatures. If your players adventure on land or at sea, then you need this book.

With detailed encounter maps, ideas for expanding and integrating the encounters as well as notes for Games Masters on how to interlink, develop and use even a random encounter to flesh out their games, the Book of Encounters and Lairs is the most comprehensive tome yet produced for monster encounters.

Also coming this month...

Encyclopaedia Arcane: Abjuration - Some are born for combat. Others become protectors. Defensive magic at its best.

Slayer's Guide to Titans - you all know the drill on SGs by now. It's a Slayer's Guide and it's about Titans. Oh, and Gareth Hanrahan wrote it.



The Fact Book for Season 3 of Babylon 5 finds the station in turmoil. Having failed to prevent war, the station is drawn into the very centre of the conflict. On one side it faces the corrupt President Clark and the sinister Nightwatch, while on another the suddenly virile Centauri Republic is flexing its muscles, having crushed the Narns. Who knows which way the Minbari and Vorlons will turn.

Then there's the Shadows. The newly-formed alliance against them is fragile and in its infancy. Can it survive with so much standing against it?

Will the mysterious Rangers be able to help? Who are they, and where have they come from? So much going on, and it's all inside this essential new release.

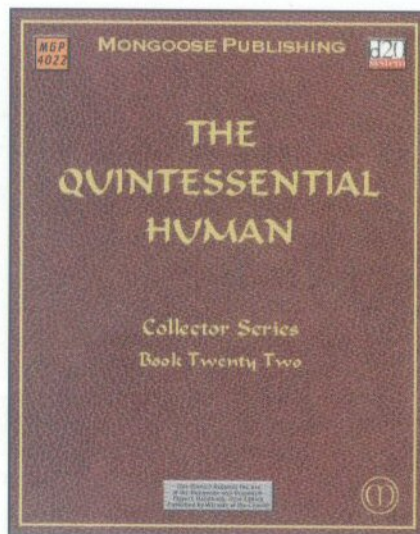
Full story arc details, character stats, new ships and equipment, scenario ideas and much more are here in this 128-page book.

In fact, there is everything you need to advance your Babylon 5 campaigns. It's time to bite the bullet, pick a side and prepare for battle!

Humans in the fantasy game environment are one of the few constants between the real world and the fantasy world. In an environment of surreal creatures, tremendous beasts, castles in the sky and the shimmering dance of magic, the presence of something as mundane as humanity must give us pause. We know ourselves well in the real world but how well do we know our strange cousins, the humans of heroic fantasy? What traits of ours do they share? Would they recognise us, or we them? How exactly did they come to exist alongside elves, dwarves and the other races, with whom they are oddly similar on the surface yet fundamentally different in essence? What can they teach us about a fundamental question common to both the real world and that of imagination, namely that of what it truly means to be human?

To many players, a human character is an ideal eidolon or avatar. It allows escapism while simultaneously letting you see yourself in your character's situation. There is no need to adopt an alien mindset or try to roleplay a person who lives by non-human values. Humans are and always have been the easy choice of race. On account of their versatility, they have unfairly been seen as essentially bland and uninteresting. It is not necessary to detail humans in the game world, because everyone already knows all about them. What is there to say about humans, the opt-out choice of character race, the race that offers nothing in the way of racial features but the increased versatility of additional skill points and bonus feats?

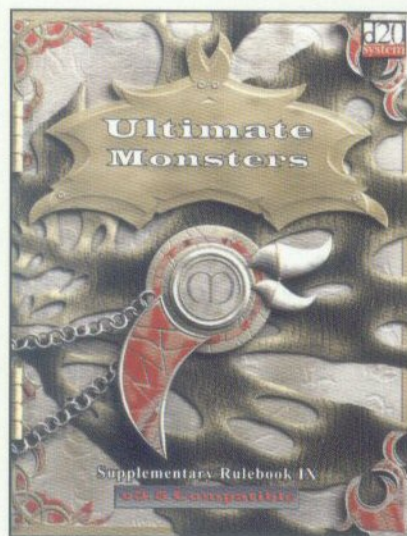
As it happens, there's quite a bit left to say, and this 128-page addition to the hugely popular Quintessential series says it all. No longer is the human simply the opt out choice when you can't find the enthusiasm to play something else. Now, humans rock!



Ultimate Monsters is the latest in the highly successful Ultimate Series, bringing together the best of the best of all that is d20. This 256 page, fully-illustrated, hardback is a monster in own right.

Covering all manner of creatures, from the denizens of the murky depths of the ocean to the soaring masters of the sky and everything in between, Ultimate Monsters presents you with a plethora of new creatures, both banal and exotic, benign and hostile.

Buy it! It might just save your life!



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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Q&A

Ultimate Prestige Classes I

Q **Buccaneer**, Up Close and Personal ability: Is it correct that the ability only applies to 'Small' weapons? If so, should the class be altered to scale the ability for Small creatures? Or should the ability be applied to 'light' weapons, so that medium size buccaneers can use the classic pirate rapier with the ability?

A This ability is aimed at allowing the Buccaneer to fight in the cramped spaces offered during shipboard combat. It is reasonable to allow this ability to be scaled for small creatures using small weapons, but it will not apply to light weapons such as the rapier.

Q **Student of the Dragon**, Thunder of the Dragon ability: It seems there is a line missing between the second and third to last lines of the ability. What is the missing text?

A The missing text should read *damage on a successful hit. The student may use this* This should be placed after 'double normal' and before 'ability three'.

Ultimate Arcane Spellbook

Q Could you please say what the missing text is on Page 173, behind the artwork?

A '...bones are just fine) but no sentient creature must have lived within the settlement for at least 50 years.

Once cast, a number of skeletons will animate in accordance with the size of the settlement as it was when it was inhabited. A small village will yield between 60 and 600 skeletons, a town between 800 and 8,000 and a city between 1,000 and 10,000. The skeletons will be under the caster's complete control until destroyed. A destroyed skeleton cannot be reanimated again and, once cast, this spell may never be cast again by any other wizard in the same location.

The skeletons are unable to venture further than 25 miles from the settlement. Any ordered to do so will instantly crumble to dust and are destroyed.

Arcane Material Component: Ruined, deserted settlement and a collection of items from the ruined settlement worth

Bob Roberts of the Rulesmasters has had a busy month. Even so, he has found time to put together a list of some of the most frequently asked questions we have received.

at least 5,000 gp. The items are consumed in the casting, the settlement itself remains intact after the skeletons have risen.

XP Cost: 10 XP per skeleton raised.

Raise Death Fleet

Necromancy

Level: Sor/Wiz 9

Components: V, S, M, XP....'

Quintessential Monk

Q Since the Monk has been redefined in 3.5, will there be an update to the Feat Pre-requisites to the Monk prestige classes?

A After reviewing the Prestige Classes in the Quintessential Monk book, we feel that there is no need for any major revision to these classes.

Quintessential Fighter

Q On page 21 it states that to become a Master Bowman you need the Quick Shot feat. I have examined all the books that I have and can't find it.

A This feat should have been called Rapid Shot and can be found in the Feats section of the Player's Handbook.

Quintessential Sorcerer

Q In regards to the Arcane Blade Prestige Class (which is amazing) listed in the requirements is the ability to cast keen edge is there any way of removing this and instead up the BAB to +6 instead of +3.

A We would probably not recommend this as without the ability to cast this spell he will lose out on some of the higher level abilities, the casting of Improved Keen Edge to start with. However, in your own games you can do as you, the Games Master decides.

Quintessential Bard

Q Under the Prestige Class Soul Taker, the informational paragraph for the 4th level ability 'Enrapture' is missing from the page entirely.

A The text below should help:

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

Quintessential Druid

Q In the Quintessential Druid, you mention the feat Companion Focus, but it is not explained anywhere in the book. What is this feat please?

A This feat was replaced by the Extra Companions feat in the Feats section page 40 of the *Quintessential Druid* book.

Encyclopaedia Arcane - Familiars

Q On Page 7, the summoning ritual mentions that the improved familiar feat will enhance the CR of the summoned familiar. The Improved Familiar is not in that section.

A The Improved Familiar feat is in the Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting book and will give a bonus of +2 to the CR of the familiar you are summoning using the table on page 7.

Encyclopaedia Arcane - Divination

Q The Savant Prestige Class has an Attunement feature, the details for Attunement II and III are missing what do these give the character?

A The modifiers increase by +1 for each extra Attunement gained, these stack so by Attunement III you will have a total bonus from this ability of +3.

Encyclopaedia Arcane – Chaos Magic

Q At level 7 I can take the feat Immutable Will, but the only ability it has effect on is level 12: Purge Chaos. Does this mean 1) I get Purge Chaos also at level 7, or, 2) does this mean I can take the feat before I get the ability?

A The answer is number two, you may take the feat before you gain the ability, this helps with planning your characters advancement.

Sheoloth – City of Drow

Q You continually mention these 'ovarisites' throughout the book, what are they?

A Due to a lack of space we could not include all the details we wanted in Sheoloth, however we were able to include the Ovarisites within the Quintessential Drow book.

Babylon 5

Q Is the text for the Independently Wealthy feat correct? I would have thought that someone who is wealthy could at least afford to rent one of the cheapest rooms in Bab5 on an ongoing basis without getting another job. Otherwise, they'd hardly be wealthy, would they?

A This feat is fine. The prices for accommodation are very high when you compare them to say getting accommodation on Mars. Most on world accommodation would cost a lot less (50 credits, for a reasonable place) than on a space station where you have to pay for everything.

The major item with this feat is the extra 1000 credits at the start. 100 cr. extra per month may not sound much but, when added to the salary, it makes a nice bonus.

Q On the B5 character sheet, there is a box titled Sub Damage. What is it for?

A This box is for recording the Subdual Damage your character takes.

Q Vorlon Ships have DR and Adaptive Armour. Which comes first?

- 1) Do you halve the damage first and then reduce the incoming damage? Or
- 2) Do you take the DR from the damage first and then halve the damage due to adaptive armour?

A Number 2, you take the DR off the damage first and then half the damage.

Tales from

MONGOOSE HALL

Casper's Diary

Ian Barstow

The party is looking somewhat depleted now. Rudel has left us, what with having taken up a few more acres of land and his senior ploughman suddenly being taken ill. With Rafe having vanished on his release from the pokey, we are down to three, but as often seems to happen in these cases, as we leave the town to head back to the smugglers' hideout (as we have now determined it to be) we meet an Arabic-looking bloke striding across the plains – as you do. Bulwei, being a bit thick, asks what sort of snow that is on his clothing, only to discover the existence of sand.

The overly armed brute from down south turns out to have a boring name beginning with 'B', which I quickly corrupt to 'Bhagwan'. It turns out that Bhagwan has recently been roughed up by gnolls who had killed his horse and left him for dead. Bhagwan turns out to be another barbarian, so we are turning into a party of hoodlums, although our new ruffian is lawful good, which should be interesting.

When we get to the house who should be waiting for us but Rafe, sitting brazenly on a wall watching us approach. Thirty feet or so away we stop to discuss the matter. Bulwei is all for ignoring him and pressing on, while I intelligently point out that technically he is directly in our way, plus he must be an escaped convict and it is our duty to re-arrest him. This plan meets with initial support

from Bhagwan, who points out that in his land they amputate hands for this sort of thing. I think this sounds like jolly fair punishment, and suggest

Ian's Roleplaying Tips #867

*This Will All End In Tears**Which of course it invariably does.*

we do it immediately. Bhagwan then has second thoughts and changes his mind, as does Eresindo. I point out that this will all end in tears.

Meanwhile Rafe just gormlessly sits on the wall watching and waiting. It strikes me that this would be a good opportunity to put things right, if a chap so wanted, but Rafe clearly thinks differently. As we approach him he attempts some mealy-mouthed justification of his actions, which I suitably rubbish. We have a brief verbal exchange and I wipe the floor with him. It's good to be the king. We gurus like nothing more than a good theological argument. Suddenly Rafe leaps off the wall, rushing past and into the house, catching us all by surprise.

I once more take the lead role as scout and, to my credit, actually manage to do my job for a change. Cunningly sneaking up to the trap door, which leads down to the cellars, I overhear Rafe grassing us up to the smugglers, and volunteering to help them ambush us. The temptation to say I

told them so is too much – *I told them so!*

I go back and inform the rest of the crew that Rafe has dropped us in it, and we come up with a counter-ambush plan, which will consist of me making a racket at the top of the trap door while the rest take the stairs and burst in on the confused smugglers. I duly take up my place and after a few minutes begin talking to myself, discussing nothing in particular in an attempt to sound like four people. This mainly confuses the smugglers who decide to attack me just as the rest of the party heave into view (notice the nautical term there – good, eh?).

As Eresindo erupts into the room, killing his target with two well-placed arrows, I slam down the trap door on the bonce of the smuggler coming up, giving him a serious headache. Meanwhile the two barbarians are making a complete hash of things and enter a contest with the smugglers to see who can go the furthest number of rounds without hitting anybody. Four rounds later they are still going hard at it, although Eresindo has thinned them down some more, due to him being totally powered up specifically for this purpose [*I am not! – Paul*].

Eventually somebody thoughtfully points out to Bhagwan that the idea of owning two swords is that you can use them both. Hmm...another daft barbarian from the look of it. Speaking of which, Bulwei finally pulls his finger out and does 34 points



of damage to one of the smugglers, turning his upper parts into muesli. I lift up the trap door and put a crossbow bolt into Rafe who is attempting to do an impression of a barrel in one corner. David looks across hurtfully at me, like he hasn't ever shot a party member or anything. Rafe's yelp attracts Bulwei – oh dear. True to form, Bulwei strides over and puts our former chum into negative numbers, only for me to rush over and stabilise the rat. Hey, I'm a medical halfling, after all. It's my duty as a healer. Anyway, it's actually the only thing I do well apart from hide. For his part, Bhagwan comes over and swiftly amputates Rafe's left hand in the name of law and order – he'll never play the fiddle again. We discuss the additional amputation of his head but I point out that as it is my duty to try and keep him alive we

would be unduly delayed while I tried to stitch his head back on.

As this fight has just about petered out, we decide to split the party up. I'm actually looking a bit battered, due to my Con not yet being up to par (in other words, Bulwei couldn't wait in the town until I healed up properly) so I am left with the unconscious Rafe whilst the others pursue the remnants of the smugglers down to the caverns.

A short amount of scrapping later the lads come back, to discover that I have looted, erm...searched the bodies adding a mouldy scarf and 5gp to the mighty haul. At this rate I'll need to live on elven time to build my monastery. Still, we now have definite proof that this place is a storage facility for smugglers and

that's enough to take to the mayor. Furthermore it's 250gp each, which is nice.

Back at the town we get healed up, make the two-fifty and get given a handful of local militia to go back and sort out the smugglers. We then go to the local flea market down at the docks to sell the collection of contraband we have liberated. I get bored so head to the local hedge wizard's place in search of novelty magic items. I succeed in exchanging three rubies for two twigs and a rock, which, I am assured, are really magical. As I leave I overhear the hedge wizard planning new carpets for the whole place. It seems I may have been 'done' again. One day I'm going to play this Power Class - you get to live well.

Meanwhile, back at the docks, the rest of the team is approached by a lithe, bald human covered in tattoos who has a proposition for them. Sadly this just turns out to be David's new sorcerer character and not somebody offering season tickets to the Blue Flamingo disco lounge. One disappointment after another, it seems. Still, the bald geezer, who introduces himself as

Ian's Roleplaying Tips #402

Back To Names Again

SORRY to harp on about this, but this seems a good time to point out that it is always best to pick an appropriate name. In this case, let's look at David's new creation, Sabah Karambunai. To me this says Fat African Wrestler - not Slim Pale Sorcerer. But I could be wrong. You be the judge.

Sabah Karambunai, knows how to get around Bulwei. He too is looking for the Snow Witch, who apparently emasculated and killed all the menfolk of his village, as you do. I arrive back in time to ask why they didn't kill him (the question of emasculation didn't come up, for some reason) but

apparently he was out stoat-baiting, or some such thing.

Loaded up with our new arcane-wielding maestro, we plan our attack on the smugglers. Our plan is characteristically simple. Without the aid of any magical healing (in other words, Eresindo is away this week and we forgot to buy any potions) we will go back to the cavern and await the return of the smugglers, who we will then kill. Hands up who thinks this is Bulwei's plan.

For the next 10 days we hang around town waiting for our carefully placed militia scouts to report the smugglers' boat coming down the river. Matt charitably allows the militia to actually know what the boat looks like – presumably it has a sign or registration plate with 'SCUMBAGS AHOY' on it or similar. The alternative of having me spend another week in town preaching my own brand of guruism (21gp from my Profession check, before you sneer) is clearly too much for the rest of the party to bear.

Eventually we get the nod and head out at high speed (or Bulwei carries me – you can take your pick). Sure enough we conceal ourselves in the cavern just before a rowing boat loaded with smugglers arrives. I have already offered my magic twigs around, only to be rejected by Bhagwan ('I ain't wearing no twig, fool') and Sabah (presumably too intent on learning the correct technique for the Boston Crab).

Ian's Roleplaying Tips #82

Yellow Liquid

You can always TRUST yellow liquid. Always. The darker, the better. It will make you feel better. Unless it's goat's urine, of course.

Bulwei, however, reluctantly puts a twig around his neck, leaving one for me. Am I now empowered? We will see...

As the boat heaves into view, we see a huge smuggler sporting a nasty hook where his left hand should be standing at the prow. Presumably he has spent some time in Bhagwan's neck of the woods and got off with what passes for a caution thereabouts. The ambush is sprung when Bhagwan rises from the water Apocalypse Now-like to drill a smuggler with his longbow. Bulwei attempts to shoot another but a natural '1' means he is wading around looking for his bow instead. Sabah whacks out a magic missile and my crossbow begins hitting as well.

In fact, this is the beginning of the Casper From The Matrix show, as I start a run on the dice that you would not believe. Having drawn the attention of the villains, I get attacked, drop my crossbow and proceed to disarm my smuggler with a pressure point attack to the arm (my favourite little bit of *Quintessential Monk*) before belting him in the throat preventing him from further speech (not that he was actually saying very much...).

Meanwhile, 'Captain Hook' has given Bulwei a caning and put him out for the count, as indeed is Sabah, who presumably got hit on the head with a puny metal folding chair or fell out of the ring or something.

As such it's down to me and Bhagwan, and we do it in style, carrying on the stream of hot dice throws. Suffice to say that we are able to loot enough 'yellow liquid' from the corpses to repair our fallen chums.

Now disguised as smugglers, we decide to risk an audacious assault on the main boat itself, aided by Macca and Roe, the two militia men who we have just remembered were with us. I should mention at this point that none of us is anywhere near full hit points and we have run out of yellow liquid, having had to tank up Bulwei yet again. Not for the first time do we find ourselves undertaking ridiculous odds. If we survive I doubt if it will be the last, either.

At this point I have a moment of inspiration and, leaving all my weapons in the boat, drop over the side and swim out for the far side

Ian's Roleplaying Tips #1

The Dinus Nine Club

The ultimate status symbol of the fighting adventurer. If you've been down to -9, then you are somebody. Less than that and you weren't even in danger.

of the ship, intent on sneaking up behind the smugglers. Bizarrely this actually works, and I get on board in time to attack a man by the poop deck (Frankie Howerd would be proud). I become aware of the arrival of the rest of the party thanks to Bulwei's Richter Scale-damaging war cry. Within seconds we are embroiled in another vast punch up.

This time it's Bhagwan's turn to go down early, worked over by a longhaired heavy who turns out to be a level 5 fighter. We are currently flirting with level 2, so this is hairy (world of puns, this issue...). There's also a level 3 wizard amongst the smugglers, and he puts Sabah on his back yet again, surging him towards membership of the -9 Club. Suggestions start coming in about now that Sabah might earn the nickname 'Rugrat' due to the amount of time he spends on the floor.

With just Bulwei and me left – the two militia men were about as much good as using a cabbage as a parachute – there are still several smugglers left, including Big Long Hair. Having popped the wizard with a well-placed punch in the nuts, I leap on the pirate leader's back as Bulwei pulls out another massive critical hit, sending him to the Smugglers' Den In The Sky. This is just as well, as Bulwei is on nine hit points and I'm down to three.

So, at this point three lizard-like creatures and another human smuggler come out from down below, intent on finishing us off. Luckily they are all related to Sabah and thus perform abysmally, hitting each other in the back with javelins and generally rolling about like the Keystone Cops. Having dispatched them we head down to see if we will ever come across any decent loot. Before we do though I stabilise Sabah at the dreaded -9, but upset Rich by healing Bhagwan at -8, thus denying him entry to the Club. Cruel, aren't I?

The boat now appears empty, but as we enter the first cabin, the flapping of wings from behind a large chest disturbs us. Intrigued, I take a peek and come face to face with a little dragon. Being a nice sort of halfling, I grin and get licked for my trouble. On a whim, I lick the dragon-thingy back. This turns out to be a good call and, to cut a long story short, I inherit a pseudodragon as a pet. David in particular is green with envy. Bwahahaha! I name the little chap Guy, and proceed to feed him with whatever I can find in the cabin, getting psychic flashes in return.

At this point we split up to search the rest of the ship. With Guy's help I negotiate my portion of the boat, discovering the captain's cabin, which is suitably replete with a variety of goodies, including the ever-popular locked sea chest. This is clearly too much of a temptation, even for an innocent halfling. With Guy egging me on by means of psychic pictures of a chest full of gold pieces, I bend over. . .

In the meantime, Bulwei heads off to the prow of the boat, finding a fortune in weapons, brandies and silks. It seems that the smugglers are intending to arm the local lizardfolk who they will then get drunk and dress up as girls. Obviously this is just my theory.

He finds a number of secret cabins, one of which holds a terrified little blue lizardfolk. Clearly this little chap

is not particularly relieved to have a heavily armed maniac open the door, so he panics, careering off the walls in attempt to get out. Losing patience, Bulwei gives him a friendly pat on the head, rendering him unconscious.

Prior to leaving the boat Bulwei heads to the captain's cabin, only to find me unconscious in front of an open sea chest, a large pirate's boot on my right arm and white powder all over my face. I'll say no more...



THE PEOPLE'S ARMPIT, IN ALL HIS GLORY. . .

What can have happened to Casper? Tune in next month to find out exactly why the world's favourite halfling doctor has taken to cross-dressing. And remember, be careful out there, there could be a GM about.

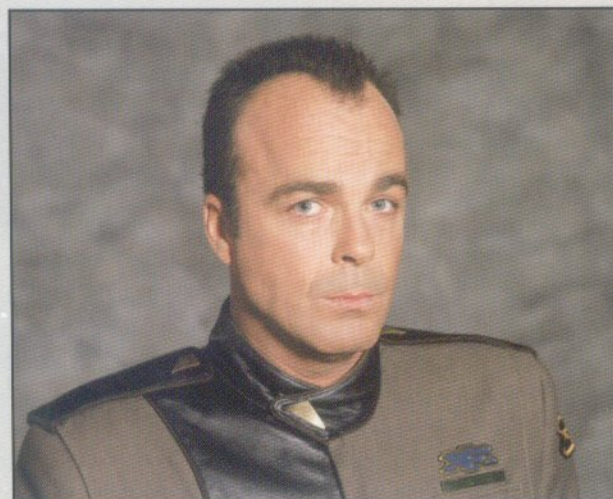
Hail To The Chief

Incorporating Babylon Five
Characters into Your Campaign

Lizard

Probably the meanest guy on Babylon 5, Michael Alfredo Garibaldi is not somebody you want to make an enemy out of. Just ask Alfred Bester... if you can find him, that is.

Chief of Security Michael Garibaldi



Garibaldi, the cynical, suspicious-bordering-on-paranoid, and often unlucky Chief of Security on Babylon Five, is almost certain to interact with player characters in a wide variety of ways – and unless the player characters are working directly for him or are operating in wholly above-the-board ways such as few bands of player characters in the entire history of gaming have ever done, these interactions will put them at odds.

This leads to some problems; namely, how to accomplish the following:

- a) Keep the player characters from ending up in holding cells, spaced or subject to death-of-personality.
- b) Maintain Garibaldi's stature as a character of great competence and skill. Simply put, if a gang of low-level player characters can get away with major crimes under his nose, then, he isn't *really* Garibaldi.

Garibaldi's role in the series is to be the man who always knows what's going on and who can be trusted to accomplish any task assigned to him. He is street-smart, strong willed, well connected and good in a fight. He has a temper, but he controls it most of the time, to the point where it only rarely gets him in trouble. He is a pivotal figure in many of the key

the orders of his superiors if he feels those orders are unjust. If forced by duty to act against someone whom he likes or whom he feels sympathy for, he may well deliberately allow them to escape, or at least give them a fair shot. Against those whom he does not like, however, he will use all the legal tools – and many extralegal ones – at his disposal against them.

'Every day I get up, and I hope nothing will happen. I'd love to be just bored out of my skull for 24 hours, and I guess I keep hoping that someday, somewhere I'll make a difference, that at the end of the day everything we've gone through here for the past few years will mean something.'

Garibaldi as an Ally

It is obvious that the player characters do not want Garibaldi as a foe, especially if he really hates them as opposed to mildly disliking them. That possibility is covered below; for now, let us discuss Garibaldi if he were on the side of the player characters. This can be achieved in several ways:

events of the series and survives both the series and the turmoil that follows it to become one of the wealthiest and most powerful men in the solar system.

Garibaldi is the enforcer of the law, but, as with many of the command staff, he is willing to bend it when it serves his purpose. He will bully, threaten, or intimidate suspects, and he is quite willing to act contrary to

- a) The player characters, or at least some of them, work for Security. This means they are directly answerable to Garibaldi, which limits their ability to engage in unauthorised extracurricular activities, but it also means that, if he trusts them, he may either order them to do things he does not want to be caught doing himself, or allow them to exercise their own judgement in solving problems via non-standard means. This is also

a great way to solve the problem of motivating player characters. 'Something's happening. I need someone to solve it. That's you. Get on it.'

'If you ask me, the universe is going to hell in a handbasket.'

b) If not directly working for Security, the player characters are part of EarthForce or otherwise in the general chain of command. If there's a problem with drugs being smuggled from Medlab into Downbelow, a PC who works in Medlab may be asked to assist Garibaldi in his investigations. If he does well, Garibaldi may peg him for future assistance. (Dr. Franklin's strong ethics may well cause Garibaldi to pass him by if the issue at hand is too morally grey.)

c) The player characters could be civilian or alien contacts. Garibaldi knows a lot of people in a lot of places. He is also, sometimes, willing to overlook petty crimes that hurt no one in favour of those acts which threaten the lives of others. In short, someone who occasionally slips some alcohol or other mild drugs past security might be given a bit of a free ride, *if* he regularly provides information on more serious offences. (Of course, being known as an informant is not likely to lead to a long and healthy life...) Alternatively, there are plenty of groups which value law and order (especially when applied to others), from Brakiri merchants to Centauri diplomats, any of whom would be ready, willing, and able to co-operate with Security.

As an ally, Garibaldi is incredibly useful. He can 'divert' security teams away from the player characters to give them a window in which to operate. He can provide otherwise illegal weapons or other items. He can give access to top-security files. He can tap into a network of contacts that stretch through the entire

station and outwards into explored space. By doing his bidding, or getting him on your side, and you have an unparalleled resource – but not one who is easily fooled

or exploited, and one who will always remember favours owed – or debts to be repaid. He is also unlikely to allow one or two acts for 'the good guys' if these would cause him to overlook acts that violate laws, morality or common decency.

Garibaldi as an Opponent

As with most of the Command staff, Garibaldi is competent, ethical and well supported. Furthermore, unlike most of the staff, he has a broad support network on Babylon 5 and beyond, a network of contacts and informants that provide him access to information which others do not have. He is also a skilled combatant, easily capable of holding his own in a fight. While it is not a good idea to have any of the major characters in the Babylon 5 series directly opposing you, Garibaldi is one of the worst possible choices for an enemy.

The simplest solution to the problem is, of course, to do nothing of which he would disapprove. This is not always an option for player characters, who tend to be involved in illegal activities on a regular basis.

Even more so than with Ivanova (see S&P Issue 2), allowing the player characters to regularly 'get away' with activities under the nose of Mr.

Garibaldi undermines his character considerably. Players familiar with the series will find their suspension of disbelief curtailed if the major



characters do not act with the same skill they have been shown, time and again, to possess. While there *is* a definite thrill in getting away with such an act once, the thrill is lost if it becomes too easy.

So, how do players manage to pursue their larcenous activities and not run afoul of Garibaldi?

First off, he is only *one* man. Babylon 5 is rife with crime, especially in Downbelow. Smuggling, drug dealing and mugging are commonplace, unfortunately, and if the victim

is 'just another lurker', the crime is unlikely to get a lot of attention from

'You're starting to irritate me, Mr. Franks, and I don't like being irritated. It gives me gas.'

Security. Garibaldi has the pulse of the station, but is not aware of, or personally involved in, every petty theft that occurs. Only if a crime is especially severe, or if the victim is someone with influence, will he become personally involved. As a side note, if players begin to assume they can get away with

anything simply by being small fry, have a seemingly random person involved in their acts be someone Garibaldi is close to – an old friend, a trusted contact, a former lover. Overconfidence is to be avoided.

Secondly, he can be stymied by sufficiently powerful forces. If the player characters are working for

the player characters to 'get away' with something can give a Games Master a reason to torment them with Mr. Garibaldi's ongoing quest for vengeance whenever the story would be served by it.

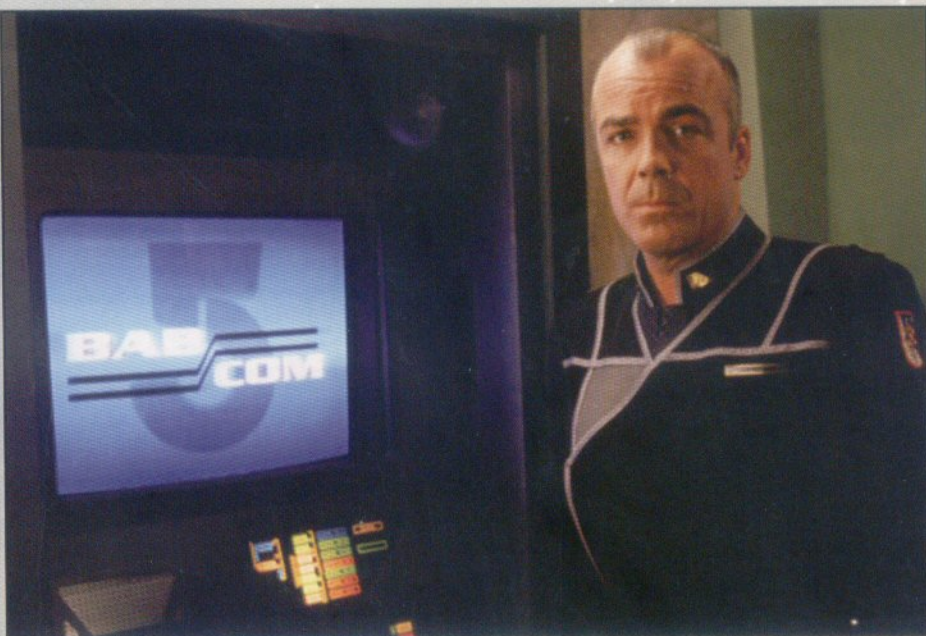
Preserving the Arc

Garibaldi is one of the most important characters in the storyline, and one of

credibility; indeed, keeping him *out* of the line of fire when things get hair is much harder to justify. The lethality of the Babylon 5 combat system (especially compared to other d20-based games) means that a good shot from a PPG can bring him down. For reasons noted above, this is not good. The arc could survive Garibaldi's death, but not easily, and it will take a lot of work to keep the story on track while retaining plausibility.

Keeping Garibaldi alive is relatively easy, though. He is a good combatant, savvy and not easy to lure into an ambush (his near lethal shooting at the end of Season 1 was the exception, not the rule). He has ready, heavily armed backup at his call. He has plenty of favours owed. Killing him 'accidentally' is very difficult.

As a final note, Garibaldi's greatest weakness – his alcoholism – is unlikely to come up in a way player characters can use. He does not regularly slip on and off the wagon. He fell off twice in the course of five years, once in the first season, and through a large part of the fifth. However, with that said, bringing up the issue in play can, with the right group of players, add depth to the character and to the group. Perhaps a PC is working for Security, and is also dealing with alcoholism? Garibaldi might be more forgiving of lapses, having been there himself, and he may involve himself personally in helping the PC recover.



themselves, they may have little recourse, but if they are backed by a powerful Brakiri syndicate, a Centauri noble house, or Psi-Corps, and are acting to further the aims of such groups, pressure from outside Babylon 5 can be brought to bear. This will not work time and again; characters who are often caught become liabilities, not assets, and will be 'cut loose' rather quickly, but it can save the player characters once or twice.

However, it should be noted that one of Garibaldi's main character traits is a strong desire for justice, or, some would say, vengeance. He pursued Bester for decades in order to get his revenge. Even if a PC avoids immediate punishment, he cannot sleep easily. Allowing

the hardest to replace, because many of his most important actions are not things which could be just as easily done by, say, Zack Allen. To mention just two examples, his relationship with Lise Edgars is what placed him in the position to find out about the anti-telepath drug, and he was

trusted enough by Sheridan to be able to lure him into a trap. If the same events (Psi-

Corps finding

and stopping Edgars, Sheridan being captured) are to occur, and they should if the arc is to be maintained, than at least two other people will be needed, as finding one character who manages to fulfil both those roles will be difficult.

Unlike many of the other characters, Garibaldi is likely to be exposed directly to danger without straining

'Commander, this little breach of security isn't going to affect my Christmas bonus, is it?'



SECURITY CHIEF MICHAEL ALFREDO GARIBALDI

Game Stats and Biography (Season 2)

'Win, lose or draw, this thing's going to know it was in a fight.'

4th Level Human Officer (fleet) / 6th Level Soldier

Hit Points: 33

Initiative: +6 (+2 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)

Speed: 30 ft.

DV: 15 (+5 Reflex)

Attacks: +13/+8/+3 melee or +12/+7 ranged

Special Qualities: Branch Specialisation (fleet), Covering Fire, Rallying Call

Saves: Fort +8, Ref +5, Will +7

Abilities: Str 16, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 12

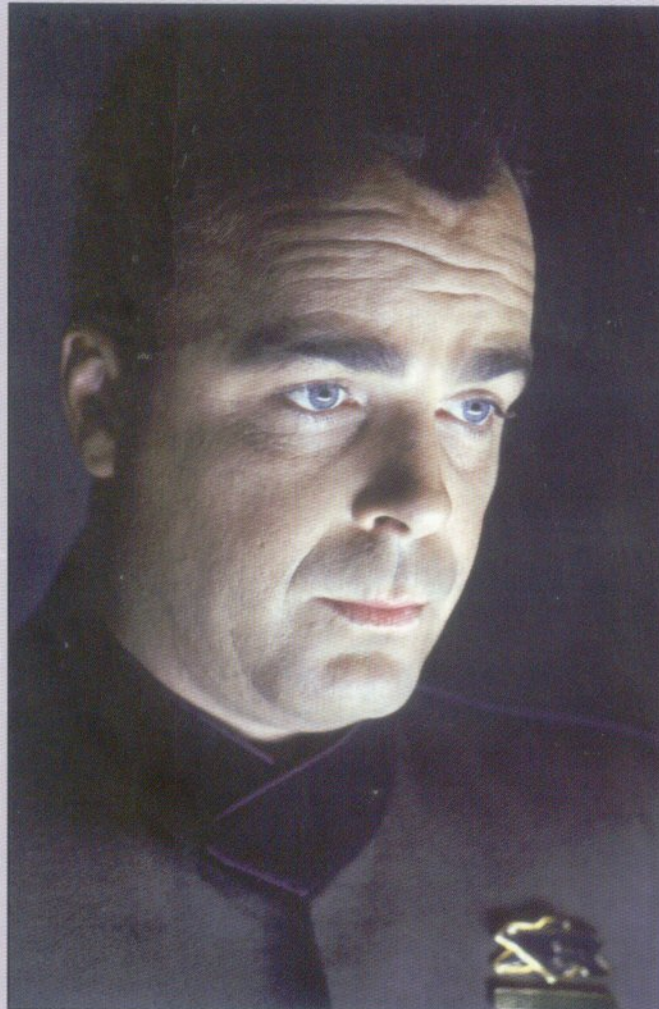
Skills: Balance +5, Bluff +6, Climb +4, Computer Use +7, Concentration +6, Diplomacy +4, Intimidate +9, Listen +5, Jump +5, Pilot +8, Sense Motive +9, Spot +9, Survival +4, Technical (space travel) +5

Feats: Alertness, Data Access, Improved Initiative, Point Blank Shot, Rapid Aim, Spacecraft Proficiency, Weapon Focus (PPG), Weapon Specialisation (PPG), Weapon Proficiency (spacecraft weapons)

Standard Equipment: Earthforce wrist link, EF-7 PPG.

Michael Garibaldi's colourful career in the past has led some to speculate that his assignment to Babylon 5, under the insistence of Jeffrey Sinclair, may be his last chance to make good before he is forced to leave EarthForce altogether. He has coped admirably with personal issues of the past to become a highly effective Chief of Security and, as Sinclair once said, the station could not be run without him. Criminal elements on board Babylon 5 have learnt to respect Garibaldi's intuition and expertise, for no one knows the station as well as he does.

At the end of 2258, Garibaldi was shot in the back while uncovering the plot to assassinate President Santiago. He remains in critical condition under the ministrations of Dr Franklin, who has, as yet, been unable to rouse him from his coma.



OGL CYBERNET

CYBERPUNK ADVENTURES

August Hahn

everybody's talking about cybernet - find out why.

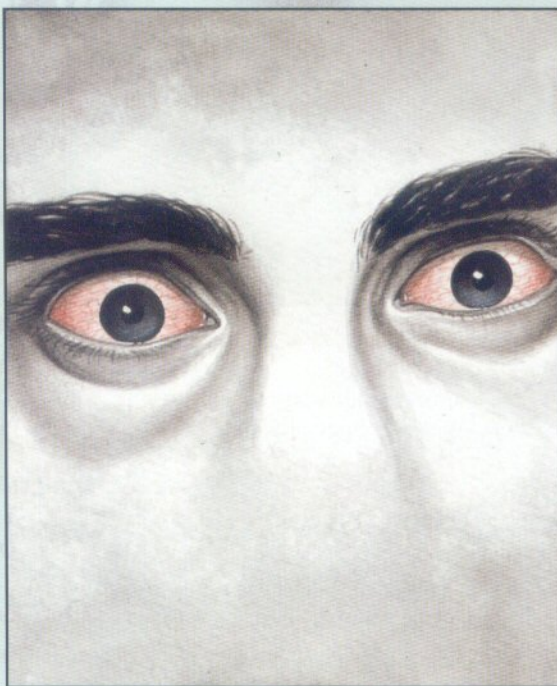
William Gibson wrote *Neuromancer* in 1984. Phillip K. Dick gave us dreams of electric sheep in 1968 and Harrison Ford showed us what Deckard looked like in 1982. No matter how you view it, the roots of the cyberpunk genre are rather dated in the year 2003. For those of us who adore the genre, there is no denying that the truly great works, the ones that shaped the setting and provided us a glimpse of a future that was almost our own but seen through the proverbial 'glass darkly', are the efforts of men in decades past. For many, the idea of cyberpunk seems a little out of place – a setting that echoes the fears of Y2K and might be better off consigned to history.

In a way, that is valid. The information crash, the one that was supposed to come upon us like a Sword of Damocles and punish us for relying on two-digit date numbers in all our computers, simply did not happen and, when it proved itself to be a non-event, the rest of the panic and tragedy that surrounded Y2K broke like a wave on the shore. Our computers were safe; ergo, we were safe. The fear of the machine left us and we moved past the need for a digital nightmare like the one that awaited us in the pages of *Snow Crash* or *Mona Lisa Overdrive*.

Or did it? In my eyes, we are closer to the Tyrell Corporation and the idea of Big Brother than ever before. Y2K may have slipped past with nary a whisper, but, in its wake, we have entered a world where computers have become so pervasive that even businesses with no internet connections at all have

everything with a keyboard and a phone line, making the human animal more digital than physical.

That is *exactly* the message of cyberpunk. Man, giving way a little more each year to the machines, eventually finds himself not only dependent on them but actually beholden to them. We might not be at the point of complete societal collapse if the networks of the world all failed one day, but we are getting there a little more every day. Think about this; how many times have you been prevented from accomplishing something, even something as simple as taking out money from the bank, because 'the computers were down'? Imagine that helplessness a thousand-fold and you begin to see that the shadow of cyberpunk did not slip away as 1999 became 2000; it just recompiled.



to have a website to compete in the global industrial market and nearly every home in the world either has a computer in it or is planning to acquire one. Email is more frequent than regular post and even high school courses now have an internet equivalent. It is possible to do almost

everything with a keyboard and a phone line, making the human animal more digital than physical. That is *exactly* the message of cyberpunk. Man, giving way a little more each year to the machines, eventually finds himself not only dependent on them but actually beholden to them. We might not be at the point of complete societal collapse if the networks of the world all failed one day, but we are getting there a little more every day. Think about this; how many times have you been prevented from accomplishing something, even something as simple as taking out money from the bank, because 'the computers were down'? Imagine that helplessness a thousand-fold and you begin to see that the shadow of cyberpunk did not slip away as 1999 became 2000; it just recompiled.

OGL cybernet

CyberNet, the new game from Mongoose Publishing, seizes on that fear, that helplessness, and weaves a campaign book out of it in the image of the cyberpunk genre. All the staples of the setting are here; mechanical body augmentation, hard-edged characters built to survive in the harsh setting, corrupt officials and, of course, the overwhelming presence of mega-corporations. The Web, seen in this game as an all-encompassing

computer network that those skilled in its use can enter as a self-aware stream of data and navigate like another world, is a hallmark of the genre and no game would be complete without it.

OGL CyberNet is a core game and, as such, it hands Games Masters and players all the tools they need to make a campaign in the cyberpunk setting that fits their view of how a dark world of the future would appear. All the classic elements are presented in an open framework, with suggestions and ideas for how to incorporate them. Nothing in the book is mandatory, allowing readers to decide what they wish to use and what they might want to replace with something that fits their unique perspective on the future imperfect.

chapter by chapter - introduction

OGL CyberNet starts out with an Introduction that encapsulates the cyberpunk genre for those who might be new to the concept and provides a refresher for those who know the setting and those who might want to see it in a new light. After presenting the basics of the game in a simple, straightforward format, the Introduction ends with a piece of short fiction that echoes the kind of gameplay players and Games Masters might look forward to with the new system. For a genre with its roots in science fiction books and literary journals, there is no more fitting way to start CyberNet than with a story.

The next chapter, Conventions of Cyberpunk and Roleplaying, builds on the basics given in the Introduction and sets it all into a roleplaying game context. Dice and their place in a d20 game, topics that often mystify newcomers to roleplaying, are thoroughly explored. A selection of quotes describes the cyberpunk setting in detail and set the tone

for the game. After these, references to works of the past give everyone playing an equal footing in the very uneven terrain of the shattered world of CyberNet.

cybernet and ability score

The OGL CyberNet book is a core rulebook first and foremost. In the CyberNet and Ability Scores chapter, attributes are described and the simple mechanics of a d20 game are given in language that even a beginner can follow with ease. Several charts in this chapter put the world of CyberNet and the characters who inhabit it into perspective, including something missing from many other d20 products, a table of equivalencies for the basic statistics in the game. Sure, a computer hacker in CyberNet might have a Wisdom of 12, but aside from bonuses, what does that really mean? Charts like this one tell you. Also given in this chapter are the

rules for Self, a secondary statistic based off Charisma. Self is the force of personality and self-awareness that a character needs to overcome the soul-chilling effects of cyberware. As a character loses more and more of his original body, having it replaced by plastic and metal, this value decreases by a variable amount based on the latest device or item being installed. As the value of a character's Self score dwindles, his behaviour becomes more erratic until he finally succumbs to cyber madness and loses his sense of individual identity.

cybernet characters

The next chapter, CyberNet Characters, is the roleplaying heart of the book. Here, players are introduced to the framework that will provide them with their alter egos in the dark tomorrow. Classic stereotypes for the genre, such as Webcrawlers (CyberNet's version of computer hackers with the ability

wisdom equivalency table

Wisdom Score	Modifier	Equivalent
3	-4	New-born Infant,
4	-3	Extremely elderly person
5	-3	Most infants or 'dense' children
6	-2	Elderly person with Alzheimer's
7	-2	Teens with no concept of cause and effect
8	-1	Children or adults with 'no common sense'
9	-1	Slightly impaired elderly person
10	0	Average child
11	0	Average adult
12	+1	Focused child with a strong sense of responsibility
13	+1	An adult who learns from his mistakes
14	+2	Soldier trained to resist interrogation
15	+2	Monastic persons who place no value on materialism
16	+3	'Enlightened' adults (Zen Buddhist, theologians)
17	+3	Nearly unshakeable willpower
18	+4	Mind like a rock; virtually impossible to bend or break
19	+4	Possible only through advanced training or cybergear
20	+5	Possible only through advanced training or cybergear
21	+5	Possible only through advanced training or cybergear
22	+6	Possible only through advanced training or cybergear
23	+6	Possible only through advanced training or cybergear
24	+7	Possible only through advanced training or cybergear
25	+7	Possible only through advanced training or cybergear

to enter the Web) and Soldiers, can be found here along with new takes on criminals in the CyberNet genre (called a Jacker in these pages) and social-based characters with charm and panache (also called Connections). These classes are fleshed out here with special abilities and talents that allow each player to make a character that is as unique as they are. Variable class abilities chosen by the player at certain levels of advancement allow for multiple members of the same class to bring different assets to a team.

What makes each character truly special is the combined effect of talents and class abilities, especially when they multiclass into different class types to bring new capabilities into a single whole. A special mechanic exists for each class that provides a unique power for that class *only* if it is the first class level taken by a given character. Thus, two characters might be multiclassed Corporate/Professionals, but they will excel at different things depending on whether they were a Corporate at first level or a Professional instead. As a preview of this special trait, both classes' unique ability is given here.

Example Unique Abilities:

- **Acumen (Unique Ability – Corporates)** Corporates who choose this class as their first character level gain the ability to accurately predict business trends and capitalise on them in a variety of ways. Beginning at 2nd level, when a corporate gains his first Edge Die, he may double the result of any Edge Dice spent to influence Knowledge (business) or Profession skill checks. He may also double Edge Dice results when making Wealth checks to purchase products made by his company or one of its legitimate affiliates.
- **Expertise (Unique Ability – Professionals)** Professionals

come from their previous walk of life with a special mastery of some skill that is integral to the role they used to play. When this feature is gained, the player chooses one of his class skills to apply his **Expertise** to; this decision cannot be changed once made. Any failed check using that skill may be re-rolled once per session (or every four full hours of play). Professionals also win all ties that result from contested rolls using their **Expertise** skill, regardless of total skill ranks.

As the Acumen ability mentions, this chapter also provides information on a new class ability that every character in the game receives, Edge Dice. These are special dice accumulated through play at each level of experience. At any time, a character can spend an Edge Die (the value of which improves at certain levels depending on the character class) and add its result as a bonus

to all die rolls made in the current round. Edge Dice are more effective if used at the beginning of a character's round, as they modify every roll made thereafter, but their use can be declared at any time, even as a reaction to another character's action or an event in-game. In this way, experience and style allow characters to get out of scrapes and accomplish feats of skill that their normal abilities would not otherwise support.

An accompanying chapter farther in the book provides a number of setting-appropriate advanced characters for players who want to take their adventures to the next level through multiclassing. The special abilities provided by advanced classes like the Gunslinger and the Master Thief allow for adventures in the world of tomorrow that go beyond the ordinary and straight into the realm of high action and even higher danger!

skills and feats

The next chapter, Skills and Feats, rounds out all of the information a



player (or the Games Master, who has to provide everyone else in the world the player characters have to interact with) needs to build a complete character. The CyberNet Skills chapter handles the rules for any task a character might wish to, or in the heat of battle have to, perform. Skills are given in a genre-specific context with a short example of how each one applies in a world ruled by greed and shackled by machines.

Example CyberNet Skill:

Intimidate (Cha or Str, Character's Choice)

'Hello there. Sleep well? I'd like to introduce you to Bulldozer. He isn't very social, but he really wanted to meet you. I do hope you'll reconsider telling us that passcode. I'll leave the two of you to get acquainted. Oh, mind his muzzle. I am not sure I tightened it properly and he has a tendency to eat people if it comes off.'

Check: With a successful check, a character can forcibly persuade another character to perform some task or behave in a certain way. A character's Intimidate check is opposed by the target's level check (1d20 + the target's character level or Hit Dice). Any modifiers that a target may have on Will saving throws against fear effects apply to this level check. If the character succeeds, he or she may treat the target as friendly for 10 minutes, but only for purposes of actions taken while in the character's presence. (That is, the target retains his normal attitude, but will answer questions, offer limited help, or take simple actions on the character's behalf while intimidated.) Circumstances can dramatically affect the effectiveness of an Intimidate check.

There are limits to what a successful Intimidate check can do. The character cannot force someone to obey his every command or do something that endangers that person's life. If the character fails by more than 5, the target may actually do the opposite of what the character wishes.

Try Again: No. Even if the initial check succeeds, the other character can only be intimidated so much, and trying again does not help. If the initial check fails, the other character has become more firmly resolved to resist his intimidator, and trying again is futile.

Special: A character can Take 10 when making an Intimidate check, but cannot Take 20.

A character immune to fear effects through cyberwear cannot be intimidated.

A character may add a +2 bonus to his or her Intimidate check for every size category the character is larger than his target. Conversely, the character takes a -2 penalty to his check for every size category the character is smaller than his target.

A character with the Confident feat gets a +2 bonus on all Intimidate checks and on level checks to resist intimidation.

Time: An Intimidate check is a full-round action.

The feats section of the chapter is much the same, with each feat given in a context that allows players and Games Masters to see right away where it fits in context with both the world of CyberNet and their character in particular. Some feats are a standard part of the futuristic setting, open to anyone who wants to take them, while others are specialised and provide a special bonus to those few characters qualified to select them when a feat slot becomes available.

Example CyberNet Feat: Cyber-Tolerant

You accept the intrusion of cybernetics into your body much easier than others do.

Benefit: When rolling the Self loss for a piece of cybergear, you only suffer half the personality damage roll. This benefit affects the die roll itself, and as such it affects any grade of cybernetic item. This feat also reduces the permanent personality damage inflicted by cybernetics by 1 point. This reduction is off the total amount, not per die.



Finishing Touches

Important enough to the genre to warrant a chapter of its own, *Finishing Touches* puts the 'punk' in a cyberpunk character. This chapter provides ideas and guidelines for transforming the statistics and abilities of a newly made character and breathing life into them through attitudes, appearance and motivations. The chapter offers special charts to augment these suggestions, letting players and Games Masters randomise this part of the character creation process. With these charts, a character's fashion preferences and even personal attitudes can be determined.

Example Finishing Touch Chart:

Flesh for Fantasy (Roll as often as you like but keep in mind, too many of these and there is not much left of you. For some, that might not be a bad thing.)

Finishing Touch chart

The last part of this chapter offers advice on naming characters, ensuring that while there might indeed be a Bob the Soldier in a CyberNet game, he will hopefully be in the minority.

This section also gives the real names of the iconic characters that appear in the rulebook's fiction sections; information that intelligent characters will keep to themselves should their paths ever cross in a dark alley.

Equipment, Tools of the rebellion

Okay, this is the chapter that most people will probably turn to first – this one, and the accompanying *Cybergear*. This is where all the tech appears alongside special devices for getting by in a violent world and the perennial favourite of CyberNet characters the world over; distressingly big guns. The Weapons and Armour section of this chapter alone takes up more than a dozen pages. Professional equipment and services ranging from hotel rooms for the night and even dry-cleaning can be found in this chapter, breathing life into even the most mundane shopping trip.

Of course, when your local mall is in a demilitarised zone downtown, shopping is rarely a boring experience to begin with.

No list of weapons from the future would be complete without acknowledging the effects that cybergear would have on firearm development. This chapter takes that into account, presenting for your ballistic pleasure violent treats like the following:

Example CyberNet Firearm: Salvo Multishot-9

The Salvo is a small-signature, automatic handgun that chambers and fires small-calibre ammunition at a very high rate. The recoil on this weapon is so massive that, because it only fires in automatic mode, it requires the stability of a cyberarm to control. The Salvo's loud noise, heavy firepower and sleek design make it very popular among cybered gangers in the Sprawl. Most other soldiers find it too inefficient to be of much use.

Self Cost: None

D20 Roll	Tattoos, piercings, and more...
1	Body Purist. This is the skin you were born with and you'll do what it takes to keep it intact.
2	You have your ears pierced. Once. That is enough for you, and you have no interest in more.
3	Your back is one massive tattoo canvas showing your likes, dislikes, dreams and nightmares.
4	Cosmetic cybergear is so chill. You either have or want as much as you can get.
5	Your tattoos and your cybergear are interwoven, making your body a continuous work of art.
6	You love earrings and earcuffs. You sound like a wind chime when you walk.
7	All of your exposed cyberwear is polished, painted or otherwise decorated distinctively.
8	Your taste in piercing and tattoos shows your cultural heritage in unique and flashy ways.
9	You like little letters on your knuckles that spell (or misspell) simple, threatening words.
10	The only tattoo you have is a mark of some prior military service or the name of a loved one.
11	Your preferred body modification is cyberware. Anything else is just pointless.
12	You love internal modification. At least one of your limbs can store items one way or another.
13	Novelty contacts are as far as you are willing to go. There are some real freaks out there!
14	Your people practice ritual scarring. Like it or not, you have as well.
15	You have active holo-tattoos, creating lines of living line across your decorated flesh.
16	Memory glass. From black cybershades to retractable armour, the best art comes from within.
17	Body art is king! If someone skinned you, your hide could hang in the Louvre, baby.
18	Name a body part. Yes, it's pierced. Yes, it hurt. Yes, you'll do it again when you can.
19	If you could fit another piercing on your ears, you would do it. Maybe if you went to all studs.
20	Your friends call you Ironman. You avoid magnets and going outside when there is a storm.

Weapon	Damage	Critical	Damage Type	Range Increment	Rate of Fire	Mag	Size	Weight	Purchase DC	Restriction
SALVO MULTISHOT-9	3D6	20	PIERCING	30 FT.	A	120 BOX	MED.	5 LB.	17	MIL (+3)

cybergear

Metal meets flesh in this chapter, defining the thin red line between man and machine that he has willingly become. Cybergear has all the genre classics, from metal arms to slots in the skull. If a character wants to augment his skills or have a grip that can crush steel pipes, this is the first and last stop for all the mechanical power he could ever need. And, as no preview for the CyberNet game could be considered definitive without some technological toys to look over, feast your analogue eyes on these.

Example Cybergear:

For Legs:

- **Leapers:** Resembling kickers and utilising most of the same hardware, leapers create a slightly longer sustainable force that uses multiple stabiliser centres implanted in the legs and torso of the user to allow tremendous feats of leaping acumen. A set of leapers add a minimum jumping distance of 1 foot to 20 feet (depending on grade), selected by the user, to any Jump check made. This extra distance is added to the end result of the roll, always allowing the user to make a 20-foot leap without even making a roll if desired. A character fitted with leapers is no longer limited by height when making Jump checks. This modification requires both legs to be replaced; it is ineffective in a single cyberleg.

For Cybereyes:

- **Amplified Vision:** A character with amplified

vision can purchase this option for one or both cybereyes at no additional cost; the modification is completely internal and interfaces with whatever hardware is available. A character with amplified vision sees colours in sharper relief and can make out fine details better than normal. This translates to a +2 cybernetic bonus to all Spot and Search checks made when sight is the key determining factor for success (Games Master's discretion). A character with amplified vision may not benefit from it and flare compensation in the same round; the latter supersedes it on any round when it activates.

And For Inside the Body:

- **Joy Button:** A fetishist's dream come true, the joy button is an expensive speciality modification listed here to show the kinds of things cybernetics can accomplish for those with enough money or imagination to desire such things. At the push of a button, located anywhere on the user's body (and generally found in some strange places), all the character's pain sensations are turned into pleasure. The more intense the pain, the more visceral the pleasure. In some cities, this modification has led to such outlandish and dangerous behaviour by its users that it has been banned outright, but those with the right connections

can still find it for an exorbitant price.

narcotics and custom drugs

Distasteful as some might find it, the idea of chemicals for every purpose and drugs for every mood is a key component in many visions of the cyberpunk setting. As such, they have a place here in the CyberNet rulebook and what a place it is! In this chapter, not only will readers find dozens of example chemicals for use in their games but a system for generating every aspect of designer substances for themselves. Suggestions on how to limit (or not limit, as the desires of the campaign might be) the role of drugs in the campaign and what impact trafficking in illegal narcotics will have on game play are also included, making this chapter useful from any angle of the drug debate.

Example Designer Drug:

Hellfire: This drug hurts all the way down, as its addicts tend to say. An acid-derived form of PCP with a healthy dose of designed neuro-stimulants, Hellfire makes its users feel like they are on fire and opens their senses up to a world of input that is mostly real but partially comes from subconscious hallucinations. A character on Hellfire can endure incredible amounts of punishment, though people who push themselves too far often expire messily when their dosage runs out.

fame, fortune, and other hazards of having a life

This chapter picks up where the equipment chapters and the character creation guidelines leave off, detailing the facets of roleplaying that have

Drug	Type	Save DC	Initial Effect	Secondary Effect and Duration	Addiction	Withdrawal	Overdose	Purchase DC	Restriction #	Craft DC	Time
Hellfire	Injected	18	+2 Constitution	+4 Constitution, 2 hours	20	-1d4 Con, 16	3, DC 14	14	Illegal (+4)	28	24 hrs.

little to do with material goods and statistics and focus far more on who a character knows rather than what gun he is carrying. The rules for Wealth are also here, allowing characters to accumulate a stockpile of financial insecurity, while purchasing equipment is also detailed so that when people have a rare opportunity to buy something without getting shot at first, they know exactly how to do it.

Special rules are in this chapter for Allegiances (social circles that react better to a character and that share their goals, contacts (special characters that, depending on their level of loyalty, would take a bullet for a player character or fire several more of them at his enemies), and the effects of the Reputation that all characters develop as they advance in level and perform heroic deeds of note or infamous acts of savagery. It takes all kinds to make a dark tomorrow, after all.

The web

Last, but certainly not least, the book wraps up with an in-depth look at the framework of a world within a world, the information realm of the Web. Another term for the hyper-developed Internet of the future, the Web is everywhere and everyone from street dealers to the CEOs of major corporations use it to one degree or another. Whenever money changes hands or email is sent between a buyer and a jacker looking to score what he needs, the Web touches everyone's life in a CyberNet game, whether they want it to or not.

Unfortunately, running the Web in a game can be a frustrating experience for any player who is not directly involved in the digital action. Suggestions are given in the chapter for running an excursion into the Web without leaving non-Webcrawler characters feeling neglected or left out of the action. These suggestions run the gamut of finding ways to make the other team members functional within the Web itself or setting things

up in a round-by-round setting that gives every player equal time.

The Web provides rules for special programs, class abilities and structures found in the web, allowing those who can travel the data lines to experience an immersive alternate reality with its own set of paradigms and challenges to overcome. For those who can deal with the reality shift, great power awaits them. Those who cannot get to join the legions of would-be hacker lords who sip their food through white straws in mental wards the world over, their brains fried to near-collapse by a deadly jolt of electricity or scrambled by data overload at the pixelated claws of a defensive ICE construct.

In closing

The cyberpunk genre is alive and well, with excellent works on the subject flowing from the keyboards of talented writers year after year. Anyone who thinks the genre has seen its golden days long behind it has obviously never heard the same actor who gave us Johnny Mnemonic proclaim, 'I know Kung Fu.'

CyberNet is much the same proclamation for Games Masters and players alike, letting them say in much the same tone of wonder and amazement, 'I know cyberpunk.... Or least, I can roleplay it with CyberNet.'



Time

to

play

the

game

WHICH WARMMEK? *Magazine*

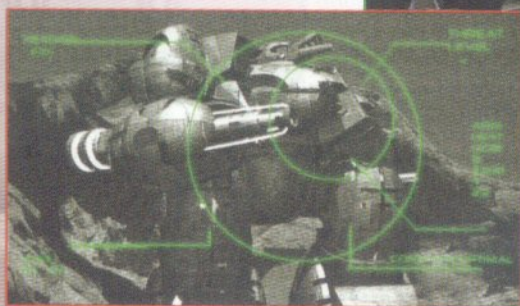


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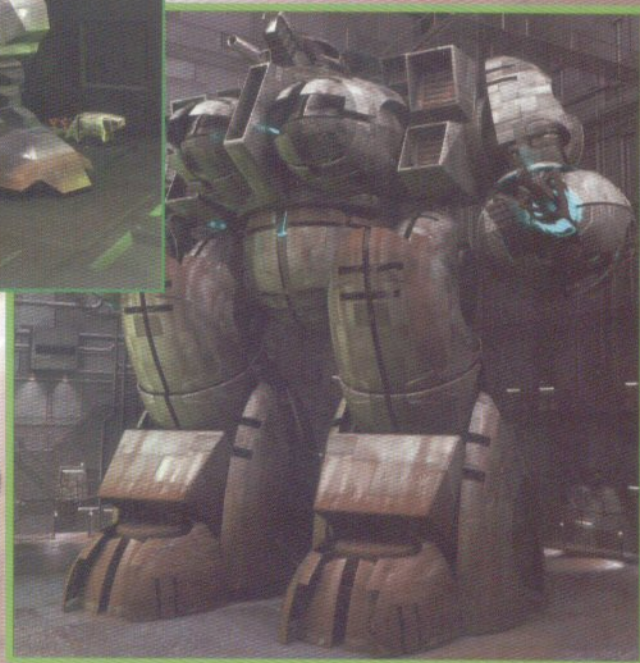
THE REALLY
USEFUL SECTION

NBC SUITS, STUN GRENADES,
HI-IMPACT SPEAKERS TIPS

PHAT HOG 2089!
*Monarch vs.
Maximilian in
the test of the
year!*



Lima Trade Fair -
Trash or Treasure?
Griff and Lars head
down south, but this
ain't no siesta!



SPECIAL REPORTS
FAKE TANS IN THE
COCKPIT - WORTH IT?

MAX KNOWS MEKS -
IPEX BLOWOUT WITH
THE PHAT HOG



TESTED

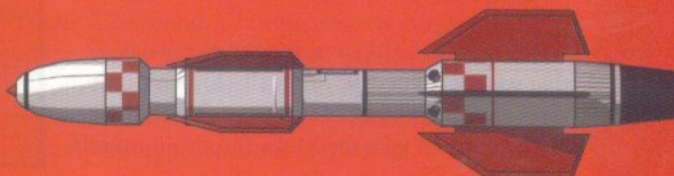
BRIMSTONE MISSILE

THE CASSANDRA BOX

**EASY-USE SUBNUCLEAR
MUNITIONS**

**ONBOARD QUAD STEREOS
BEER COOLERS**

Celebrity Interview: Captain Al
Fennell from The Widowmakers
Talks Shop, Shades and
Senoritas!



THE PHAT HOG 2089 ROADTEST

MONARCH VS. MAXIMILIAN

BATTLE OF THE GIANTS

By Max Fernandez, Griff Petersen and Lars Koenig

Introduction ■

Griff: Today, we get to play with some very big toys indeed. When I walked into the hangar I felt small, as if I'd been shrunk down to the size of an ant. To the left, I looked up at the almost squat looking chromed, glinting view of the Maximilian, Volksmecha's top-of-the-range Mek. To the right, the Monarch – distinctive, recognisable, the flagship of Royal Ordnance. Sure the Survivor and Survivalist make the Monarch look a little dated in comparison, but it's the Monarch everyone remembers, the Monarch that first wowed the world with what Royal Ordnance were capable of and made every corporate WarMek company in the world start reaching for their requisition forms.

So, it's the battle of the giants. Don't ask us how we got them, don't ask what we had to do and how many contracts signed in blood we had to fill in. Just be glad we've got them, because unless you're unlucky enough to be stuck in between them on a battlefield, this is as close as you're going to get to both at once. Believe that!

Max: Sometimes life can be a little confusing, and this has been one of those weeks. Somebody should have put a warning with this job – don't roadtest a Mek with the same name as you. What, you think I'm not serious? Try going into the *Which WarMek?* Typing pool and hear, 'wow that Max is so big and powerful' or 'I'd sure like to get my hands on that Max and hit the redline'. See what I mean?

Anyhow, like Griff says, it's not every day that we get to hardhat the really big boys, so after the official testers went out, I took the opportunity to take the Meks for a spin myself.

For this month's big test we went out and scoured the world for the two Meks we'd most like to drive into a battlezone. The kit on offer was pretty impressive, but after sleepless nights the team finally selected the Volksmecha Maximilian and the Royal Ordnance Monarch to duke it out.

The Tale of the Tape

Maximilian Fact

Details

Top Speed: 72KPH (assisted), 60KPH base.

Weight: 176 tons.

Power Plant: Tokamak RX4JQ with a Silverstream coolant system running 22x4 at 100, 29x9 at 376.

Armaments: 4 Bodkin penetrator missiles, 2 Lancer-lite missiles, One throughfire large laser.

Crew: One pilot-gunnery officer.

Sensors: Volksmecha's integral Diamond chipped Impulse radar, Infrared Advanced scanner.

Safety Features: E24 EMP shielding, Torvak NBCLiteshield. Hardwired Escape Cocoon.

Cost: \$191,961,800



Monarch Fact Details

Top Speed: 36 KPH.

Weight: 196 tons.

Power Plant: Tokamak L1A1T high-energy fusion plant with IceyKool™ coolant system running 24x6 at 120, 31x11 at 450.

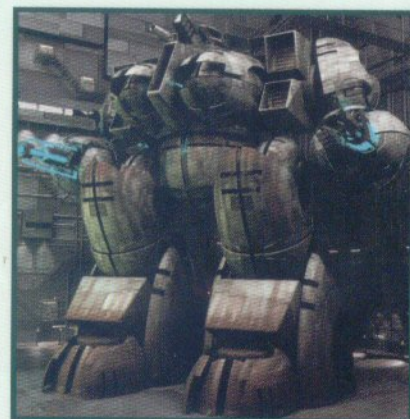
Armaments: Two Op-Tek 412 pulse-fire gatling lasers, Particle accelerator, 400mm Railgun.

Crew: One pilot and one dedicated gunnery officer.

Sensors: The stock Monarch comes without any enhanced sensor capability.

Safety Features: Double escape cocoon.

Cost: \$223,570,500.99



Style Notes ■

We took our usual collection of secretaries, hairdressers and beauty technicians, got them drunk and then let them thumb through the pictures. Here's what they had to say:

'That spike's a bit phallic isn't it, touch of overcompensation going on?'

'I like it, it looks *so* hard. German? I'm not surprised, my car's German and it lets me do my hair in the chrome as well.'

'Well I prefer the British one, I mean, you've got to haven't you. Besides, it's bigger and everyone knows size matters.'

'The monarch looks tougher, but that other one, the Maximilian? That looks a lot more stylish, If I saw a man next to either, I'd be far more likely to go up to the German one; means he cares about his looks as well as what he's packing!'

Griff: Well, there you have it, the airheads have voted and the Maximilian scored 7 out of 10 for style, the Monarch lagging behind with a paltry 6. No doubt we'll have the usual letters from female Mek pilots, who we totally support, but, for the lads, check out the photo shoot on page 102 for pictures of our bevy of style girls draped over the Meks at the party that night. Adults only mind.

Test Definitions ■

Griff: Given these aren't some cheap knock-offs from Peru like those we were testing last issue, we weren't able to gleefully destroy them at every opportunity. In fact, our insurance company sent a team down who winced through every step, shot and scratch; one even looked like he was going to have a heart attack as they went head to head. Not tested to destruction but as close as we could get. As well as style, we'll be hitting the ranges with Gunnery, both Ranged and Cityscape as well as a variety of Motion tests which you should all be familiar with by now. On top of that there's Safety, Detection and Ground-to-Air.

Max: Bah, insurance goons be damned! As soon as they were out of sight I took out the *Which WarMek?* Get Into Anything keys and went to work. You can bet your ass that I didn't keep those suckers in the green, homes.

Lars: Salim a'Kam, our chief test pilot took the machines through their paces, being joined by Tor Magnus who piloted the Monarch in the head to head, with Daisy Delaney as the gunnery officer. All have spent at least a week playing with, I mean testing, the Meks, so they were familiar with their controls and systems.

Dr Lee Edberg, PhD, MSc from The University of Oxbridge was on hand to offer his structural and mechanical engineering expertise in our tests.

Volksmecha declined to send a representative to the test and have declared, for the first time ever, that they refuse to uphold our findings. Sour grapes breed in Germany as well as France it seems. Looks like we can add Volksmecha to Egide in the list of advertisers happy for the good press, but not for the bad.

Max: Disappointing to see that Volksmecha didn't have the stones to show up for the test. You'd think they were sensitive about something. . .

Gunnery ■

Lars: The points at first looked pretty evenly spread when we came to the Gunnery test. Both Meks are well equipped, both use top of the line systems and were loaded with brand leader ammunition. The Maximilian had a distinct edge throughout the Range tests; with its bodkin and lancer missiles it was able to outpoint the Monarch in shoot after shoot. And then we came to the Assault test, the defining category for their class. The Monarch quite simply blew the Maximilian's score away. One shot, one kill abounded, on penetration, the Catastrophe™ test and the Cityscape Adaptation test. The laurels for this had to go to the Monarch. Not to say that the Maximilian is poorly armed, just that nothing is so well-equipped as the Monarch and its children.

Max: I'm telling you, *compañero*, you get in deep and dirty and the Monarch will fry any other puppy out there. Sure, the Maximilian works well at range, but too much combat these days starts and ends in exhaust-fume range, you know what I'm saying? Taking both through the Catastrophe™ test, I can tell you that the Monarch handled everything with panache and style, plus even with jarring set to maximum, I still got no interference with the on-board quadraphonic system.

Motion ■

Griff: Without doubt, the Maximilian outshines the Monarch in all bar one Motion test, that being Stability – certainly the least glamorous of the movement performance criteria. With its top speed of 72.4KPH kilometres an hour, the Maximilian is the Assault Mek equivalent of a souped-up, stripped-down and tricked-out Ferrari running on NOX. Speed is only one aspect of the test however and, while the Cold-start to one mile distance saw Volksmecha's behemoth edge out the Royal Ordnance leviathan, the Monarch achieved full power 7.2 seconds faster. That's 7.2 seconds of firing time or movement assuming the Mek was surprised and needed a crash start. Okay, so both Meks needed a little cooling down and recalibration time after their crash starts but those seconds could certainly be significant out in the field.

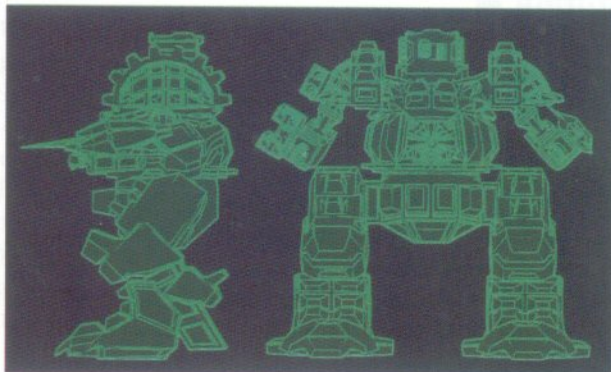
Jinxing sees the Maximilian once again outperform the Monarch, able to turn and weave on both open and rough terrain, only the Cityscape testing ground saw the Monarch equal the Maximilian and that's because the Monarch went *through* the obstacles rather than around them!

Max: No question, in a stand up roadrace the Maximilian is going to smoke the Monarch, but what really counts is *handling*. Speed junkies like Griff always forget that Real Life™ isn't a straight line. Sure, so Tor might have cut corners in Cityscape, but Salim knows the rules just as well, if not better. After all, he did help me write them! What I'm saying, *gente*, is that buildings are there to be trashed. You think when I took the Big Bus out on a night cruise I didn't slice a few corners? So, some guy comes up short a kitchen. Would you want me to play soft when I'm testing for you? I think not, *hermano*.

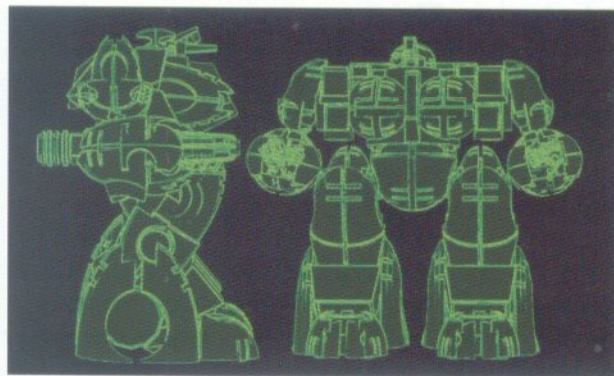
Safety Features ■

Griff: Being as Max is a stranger to this part of testing, I was left with the responsibility of making sure all the boxes were ticked. Once again, the Monarch wins out, for the simple reason of its Escape cocoon. Both machines are equipped with EMP shielding, albeit the Monarch's has a 3% performance and degradation advantage. The Maximilian is better shielded for NBC environments but its cocoon's inability to eject meant it lost nearly 20% of its points in this category. Word to the wise, if you can't launch out, you're toast.

Lars: This did tend to make the Ejection test rather one-sided, although I never cease to feel a degree of satisfaction seeing Tor go vertically through the sound barrier. Still, the Monarch scored high on expulsion distance, easily outscoring the best from the Scout Mek megatest two months ago. With a standing score of 137 metres, it's a safe bet that a Monarch driver is going to walk away from a subnuclear hit on a regular basis. The same can't be said of the Max. What the heck were VM thinking?



Maximilian: Will it make Phat Hog or just scrap iron?



Monarch: Curvy and attractive or a tub of lard?

Ground-to-Air ■

Griff: The Monarch's ground-to-air capability is significantly lacking. It was a simple decision to award this to the Maximilian, with its missiles and large laser combination it has a significant advantage over the Monarch and would certainly make a better choice for any Mek company looking to maintain, or advance their anti-air capabilities.

Max: OK, so this was a gimme. But hey, that's why they created AA Meks, ain't it?

Detection ■

Lars: This was, quite literally, the easiest detection test ever. Given the range of our sensors and the struggle they usually have to pick up scout Meks, we were amazed at how quickly they picked out the two Meks concerned. Of course, assault Meks aren't exactly subtle, but the Monarch has a very slight advantage. Not enough to really shout home about though. The Monarch won by a gnat's breath.

Max: Detection!? Detection my ass. You seen how big these puppies are, *homes*? This ain't about detection.

Griff: Max is, of course, his usual subtle self. Sometimes it can be quite handy to open a door rather than kick it off its hinges. . .

Conclusions ■

Lars: The Maximilian's faster. It's cheaper and, for its money you get what you want. It's got that 10-year parts and service guarantee (assuming no battle damage of course), as well as the diagnostic linkup to Volksmecha when something goes wrong, with a human on the other end to take your call. Its UAV launch system can offer a potent launch multiplier, or offer a scouting option, something most assault Meks are notably lacking in. But, despite all that, my money would go on the Monarch.

Why? Because it's hands-down the best damn WarMek on the planet. Spun diamond chassis, Particle Accelerator and a Railgun. There is *nothing* more scary to a Mek driver than to see a Monarch coming up close and personal. Sure, the Maximilian might stand up to a bit more damage, but the Monarch doesn't have to – anything that gets into range will quite simply be toast before it gets the chance to scratch the Monarch's paintwork. As the test showed, one on one the Monarch just took everything the Maximilian had and then blew it away in one of the most destructive and awe-inspiring fusillades I've ever seen. If you have the money and you're looking for a top-quality heavy assault Mek to play at the front of your pack, take the Monarch. You won't regret it.

Griff: I'd love to agree with Lars, I really would. I mean, the Monarch is a natty piece of kit, it's got the patriotic fervour going for it in my case and it truly does shine. But...there's something indefinable about the Maximilian. State-of-the-art German engineering combined with a true eye for detail. It almost feels as if the Max is lovingly put together, evoking the feel of hand-crafted vehicles from the start of the century whereas the Monarch is a sheer brute, everything piled on – off the production line and onto the battlefield where it will perform pretty much as any other Monarch. Now, I've piloted three Maximilians in the last year and they each have their own, slight, quirks. Some might say that's shoddy engineering. I call it distinctive craftsmanship. If you want a heavy WarMek that won't get left behind when the rest of your team advances to contact then buy the Maximilian. If you want some brute slugger, go for the Monarch. Me, I prefer style over weight anytime.

Max: So, we're 1-1 and it's down to the Big M to make the call. Let's look at the facts. On style the Maximilian slightly edges it. For my money it's a touch angular, but you have to respect what the ladies say, *amigos*. Shooting's a split trip, but on the Trashometer™, the Monarch came out way ahead. Motion was another notch on the Maximilian's butt, although it let itself down on houseclearing. Obviously the guys at VM never feel the need to take a shortcut. Safety's a one horse race. Without an ejector, the Maximilian can quickly turn into a designer hearse. When it came to detection, the Monarch came out ahead again, albeit by a short head. Ground-to-Air went comfortably the other way. So, let's take a look at the final test scores and see which machine came out on top.

The Lowdown ■

Style



Gunnery



Motion



Safety



Ground-to-Air



Detection



Totals



Max: Well, *compañeros*, this turned out to be just as tight as we were expecting. However, there always has to be a winner. It's not often I find myself agreeing with Lars, but I think he calls it right this time. The Monarch definitely edges it. Whether it's going through homesteads, frying assaulting ground-pounders, sending Tor into high orbit or just downright Thuggin' and-a Buggin'™, it comes out ahead. My grandpappy rode with the Angels down New Mexico way, and I can tell you, he'd be impressed. So, what more can I say? The Monarch just wins out and I'm giving it my Phat Hog™ award for 2089. Remember – Max Knows Mek™!

WINNER
PHAT HOG 2089



Royal Ordnance Monarch

Max Knows Mek, The Catastrophe test, Thuggin' and-a Buggin', Phat Hog and Real Life are all trademarks of Which WarMek? magazine, and all rights as of 2089 apply. Be warned – we sue.

More Most Wanted

P.J. Maybe



The JUDGE DREDD
Roleplaying Game

Real Name: Philip Janet Maybe
Class/Level: Citizen 9
Hit Points: 40
Initiative: +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)
Speed: 30 ft.
Defence Value: 16 (+6 Reflex)
Damage Reduction: 0
Attacks: +6/+1 melee, +7/+2 ranged
Damage: By weapon
Special Qualities: Prior Life – inventor
Saves: Fort +3, Ref +6, Will +7
Abilities: Str 10, Dex 12, Con 11, Int 17, Wis 14, Cha 13
Skills: Appraise +7, Bluff +15, Computer Use +13, Concentration +8, Disguise +7, Drive +5, Forgery +11, Hide +9, Intimidate +9, Knowledge (law) +7, Knowledge (financial) +13, Listen +7, Medical +10, Move Silently +9, Perform +9, Search +8, Sense Motive +6, Spot +5, Streetwise +12 and Technical +17
Feats: Fool Birdie, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Luck of Grud, Skill Focus (bluff), Skill Focus (technical)
Possessions: advanced electrical toolkit, SLD 88

Justice Department

268-651.7

Sector 190

Internal Memo – Eyes Only

Subject – P.J. Maybe

The above named perp first came to the notice of the Department in prog 539. He appears to be a harmless juve, but be informed, he is anything but. In the event of judiciary contact, you are advised that any level of pity or sympathy is inappropriate, regardless of any apparent loss sustained by the subject.

I expect you all to come down hard on this runt. And remember, be forceful out there.

Deputy Sector Chief B. Cooksey

History File

Young P. J. Maybe always seemed to be an ordinary juve – if somewhat stupid. However, this was a carefully contrived act – at a very young age, P. J. realised that people would expect too much from him if they found out how smart he really was. Beneath the dense exterior lurked a highly intelligent, coldly calculating psychopath. Maybe committed his first murders at the age of twelve – early in 2109 he used a home-made robot loaded with a lethal poison to kill Frank and Roda Swindley. These murders had been ‘for practice’ – the victims had been chosen at random from the vid phone directory and there was little chance of the judges ever connecting Maybe to the crime.

Maybe waited a year before continuing his murderous career. His uncle Fustus was the owner of Emphatically Yess, a trouser manufacturer that had the contract as the sole supplier of the Justice Department’s trousers. There were only three things standing between

Maybe’s parents and great fortune and power – Fustus Yess and his sons, Watt and Wilbur. P. J. set about eliminating them. He tampered with the gyro control of Wilbur’s hovercar – the resultant crash killed Wilbur and seven bystanders. Next, he visited his cousin Watt and treated him to a piece of home-made candy – unfortunately for Watt, Maybe had spiked it with SLD 88, a powerful hypnogenetic that rendered him totally open to suggestion. Maybe suggested Watt should jump out of the window. Despite his reassurances that the ground was very soft that day and it would not hurt, the forty-storey drop proved to be fatal.

The sudden death of two high profile businessmen in such a short time attracted the attention of the judges but Maybe maintained his act of stupidity well enough to avoid suspicion. He still needed to deal with uncle Fustus. Maybe again made use of his home-made robot, but had refined his technique – instead of poisoning his victim, he infected Fustus with the rare but incurable Purple Sore

Fever. It took three months for Fustus to die, but Maybe could afford to be patient – the Yess fortune was worth waiting for. P. J. now had nearly everything he wanted.

Maybe lived in luxury for a year before he was forced to go back to his criminal ways. Rival trouser manufacturers Hoss Bros managed to win the prized Justice Department contract, leaving Emphatically Yess under threat of bankruptcy. P. J. was forced to do something about it, but this time was determined not to kill anyone – it would be far too suspicious if his rivals started dying mysteriously as well! With access to more money and better facilities, Maybe had been able to improve on many of his methods – he had synthesised SLD 89, a new variation of his old hypnogenetic drug. Again using his poisoned candy routine, he dominated Chester Hoss, ordering him to tell the absolute truth at all times. Chester appeared on a tri-D discussion program, boasting how his company planned to put all their rivals out of business. He was soon committed to a sanatorium before his actions could ruin the company, but his brother Algar somehow managed to retain the Justice Department contract.

Obviously, this was not good enough for Maybe's purposes. Using a home-made robot simulacrum Maybe organised a meeting with a known stookie glander. Everything seemed to be going to plan, until the real Algar arrived. Suddenly coming face to face with his exact double, Algar gave chase but should have looked where he was going – he ran into a cargo truck. He probably would have survived had he not encountered a pair of muggers, who beat him to death as a 'punishment' for only carrying 150 creds. This would have been a perfect result for Maybe, but there was another witness – Judge Dredd. Dredd quickly apprehended the muggers, but noticed Maybe lurking nearby. Dredd spotted the remote control for the simulacrum, and Maybe suddenly found he had a lot of explaining to do. P. J. was sentenced to indefinite observation in a psycho cube for his 14 murders, with little hope of release.

However, his incarceration was to last less than a year. During the chaos of the Necropolis crisis, all order collapsed and Maybe was able to simply walk out of his maximum-security confinement. Returning home, he discovered his

parents had committed suicide rather than risk waiting for a visit by the Dark Judges. Even a psychopath like Maybe felt a moment of sadness at the death of his mother and father, but his despair did not last for long – he was able to hoodwink the neighbouring Urchison family into giving him access to their luxury fallout shelter for the duration of the emergency.

Maybe wasted no time murdering Junior Urchison and arranging a fatal accident for Mrs. Urchison, leaving only Diego Urchison. Driven beyond breaking point, Diego was no match for Maybe's manipulative nature and found it easy to believe P. J.'s assertions that he was really Junior Urchison, especially after the psychopath had made use of Mrs. Urchison's face change machine. Maybe had fallen on his feet again – the Urchison's were a thousand times richer than the Maybes.

However, P. J. soon became bored. Despite controlling a fortune in excess of 60 billion credits, he began to kill anyone who annoyed him. Deciding on a whim that he wanted to control a Mock-Choc factory, he bought a famous factory, but only after murdering its popular owner. Once installed, he killed several of his employees and fed them into the processing vats. He soon realised that he was acting far too conspicuously and the judges were on to him, so decided to flee to somewhere his talents would be appreciated – Cuidad Barranquilla. However, his Strat Bat was intercepted and he found himself returned to a cube, this time in Iso Block 666 - the most secure prison in the City.

In 2122, Maybe became the first inmate in history to engineer his own escape from the notorious facility. Judge Dredd was summoned by Maybe's psychiatrist, who wanted him to authorise an early release as P. J. seemed to have become a completely different, totally harmless character. Dredd quickly spotted the reason for this abrupt change – the prisoner was not Maybe at all! Maybe had used his trademark SLD 88 to brainwash his shrink into assisting him make his getaway, and had simply walked away disguised as a minor offender. Five months had passed since he had fled to Cuidad Barranquilla.

Eventually, Judge Dredd tracked Maybe to his new lair, but too late. Judge Lobos had apparently shot and killed P. J. – and

had his heart to prove it. DNA testing proved the heart was Maybe's, but Dredd was still not entirely convinced. His fears were justified – fitted with his new bionic heart, P. J. Maybe lives in luxury in a beautiful hacienda in the rich quarter of Cuidad Barranquilla.



SLD 88

Long banned in Mega-City One, SLD 88 is a powerful hypnogenetic drug that leaves the consumer totally open to suggestion for a period of about five minutes. Usually taken orally, SLD 88 has a slightly saccharin taste and produces a mild narcotic effect, with feelings of euphoria and uncontrollable drooling as side effects. The primary effect is to induce a trance-like stupor similar to a deep hypnotic state. In this condition, the victim becomes pliant and co-operative, regarding everyone in the vicinity as his closest friend, willing to do anything that is asked of him to the best of his ability. A Fortitude save (DC20) will resist the effect of the drug, but those who fail will become very amenable to suggestion, automatically attempting to do anything asked of them by anyone within earshot for the next five minutes if they fail a Will save (DC 25). The victim will not do anything that is obviously self destructive (such as shoot himself), although he will become extremely gullible and will believe statements that he would normally find incredulous (he would shoot himself if convinced that he had been temporarily rendered invulnerable to bullets, for example). However, the victim will revert to normal after the drug wears off, and will remember all that happened during the hypnotic state. SLD 88 vanishes from the victim's system 20 minutes after ingestion. P.J. Maybe later synthesised a new variant, SLD 89. This new version blanked the memory of the hypnotic state and allowed Maybe to implant a powerful post-hypnotic suggestion into his victim's mind, which remained even after the drug had worn off. The victim will believe this statement implicitly (for example, 'you can no longer tell lies', or 'from now on, you are the notorious psychopath P.J. Maybe', for example), unless they make a successful Will save (DC20). Manufacturing SLD 88 requires 24 uninterrupted hours and 1,250 credits worth of chemical processing equipment, and a further 500 credits worth of chemicals. A Technical check (DC 20) will produce five doses. SLD 89 is considerably harder to produce, requiring 48 hours work, a chemical lab with at least 50,000 credits worth of equipment, 1,000 credits worth of chemicals and a Technical check (DC25) to produce a single dose.

Gaming Symposium

·W·I·T·H· ·S·H·A·N·N·O·N· ·K·A·L·V·A·R·

THE STRUCTURE OF EVIL



Enough daydreaming. Although the story above sounds interesting, there is no way to tell it in a standard d20 fantasy context. Good is good, evil is evil, and only evil societies support evil temples openly. In fact, evil in our fantasy worlds lives on the fringes of 'civilised' society. It could hardly be self-sustaining; without the constant influx of power from demons, devils and similar creatures mortal evil would collapse entirely.

But why is that? Why is it that, even though many published settings have 'public evil temples', we still marginalise evil? In the real world,

behaviour that falls into the category of evil takes place in public, and people of good conscience simply have to turn their heads. Whole organisations engage in selfish acts intended to promote their own power and we just nod and smile.

'After the flesh golem things stopped moving, we found the inner door bared. Aljious, our magician, blasted it apart with a spell. We charged in with swords drawn! Although the devils outnumbered us two to one we cut them down like wheat on harvest day. We made it just in time, too. There was a priest right at the altar, about to sacrifice some cute young thing...' the burly warrior's voice rose steadily as the excitement of the story caught him.

'That is when Aljious struck down High Priest Santos?' The priest's neutral voice carried to the far corners of the court.

'Aye. Blew him into cinders. Nothing left but his boots, last I checked.'

'I see.' The tall, thin priest turned to the lord's box. 'Sire, as you can see he does not deny the crimes he and his companions stand accused of. In fact, he is quite...taken with his own activities.'

'You are quite correct, High Priest Lajous.' The lord heaved his corpulent bulk out of his seat. 'If the defendants cannot provide a more pertinent explanation of their behaviour...' The adventurers looked down at their chained hands. 'I thought not. I find in favour of the Temple of Langro. The defendants are guilty as charged. For assault, trespassing, interfering with a lawful sacrifice, vandalism, theft and destruction of public property I assess a penalty of one hundred and forty thousand gold crowns. If the defendants cannot pay this sum, they will each remain in prison for one day for every crown they fail to deliver.'

Laying aside the moral questions raised above, how do we bring evil in out of the cold? How do we make it so that our characters occasionally come face to face with evil they simply have to ignore? Or worse yet, have to make a deal with in order to accomplish some other goal?

What is evil?

The first question we have to answer revolves around the nature of evil. What do we mean when we speak about evil? What is its place in the cosmology, society and epistemology of our game worlds? Once we understand what evil is, we can much more rationally discuss its role.

Core Rulebook I describes ethical evil. Characters behave in an evil fashion when they 'debase or destroy innocent life' or hurt/oppress others. Their behaviour is what makes them evil; their violation of the code of good. In this case, evil is seen as opposing good, as going against the code. The source of this 'code of good' is a topic for later discussions.

The same book goes on to describe psychological evil. The character may 'feel no compassion for others.' They may kill for fun or sport. In this case, evil is a lack of empathy with other living beings. Evil characters have some kind of psychological failing that prevents them from understanding the harm they do. This fits in with the idea of evil as an expression of mental disease.

However, the structure of the d20 rules implies a third kind of evil. This evil exists neither as a violation of a specific set of rules nor as a psychological disease. Rather it has minions, personifications, powers and rules of its own. Being 'evil' means to positively affirm something, rather than just negate. Deliberately aligning oneself with 'evil' grants bonuses and penalties, requires specific actions and enforces particular obligations.

It is this third kind of fantasy evil which we as players need to understand. By treating evil as a fundamental aspect of the universe, rather than an aberration, we can get a much clearer picture of its role in our fantasy societies and characters. In order to clarify our discussion we will call this kind of fantasy evil as 'fundamental evil'.

Fundamental evil

What is this fundamental evil? How does it work, why does it exist, and what does aligning with it mean for a character? Beyond that, what does allying with this fundamental evil mean in terms of an organisation or even an institution's practices?

Unfortunately our core references do not directly address fundamental evil. Instead they imply various aspects of it in descriptions that are intermingled with those of the other forces (i.e. chaos and law). Therefore we must deduce the characteristics of the 'fundamental evil' from the various known aspects. The examination of the available literature (*Core Rulebooks I, II, and III*, v3.5) implies the following about fundamental evil: it demands action from those who accept it, it has the power to sustain, it has substance in the form of negative energy and it has strength in and of itself.

Like good, evil seems to demand specific activities from those who pursue it. These activities include the destruction of property, committing murder, acquiring personal wealth and achieving dominance over the immediate area. The individual or institutional psychology behind this activity varies from creature to creature, from race to race. We could hypothesise from this that evil requires these activities for some purpose. That purpose may or may not be clear to the individuals aligned with evil.

Evil, in and of itself, has the power to sustain life. Undead creatures are just one example of this phenomenon. Devils, demons and other evil supernatural creatures share a similar longevity. However, evil does not seem to be able to create life. An undead is dead, but still moving around. Evil creatures generally cannot easily heal, but can inflict damage in a wide variety of ways. Organised or not, they also lack spells that create, although they may borrow power though evocation abilities.

Negative energy is a curious substance. Described variously as needy, greedy and sucking it draws the life out of things. Its presence in a living creature suppresses it like a disease. Objects exposed to it corrupt and crumble into dust. In many ways, it seems to resemble cold, which is not energy but rather the lack of energy. But it can be 'channelled' by evil clerics, it 'infuses' undead creatures, and can be directly opposed by holy energy.

Interestingly, although 'negative energy' is used interchangeably with 'unholy' there also appears to be a second, unholy energy tapped into by some spells and creatures. This unholy power (also called profane power) seems to have some creative or at least substantial effects. Unlike negative energy, unholy power can create barriers (i.e. *protection from good* and *unholy aura*) or infuse an area directly (i.e. *desecrate*, although the spell uses the term 'negative energy'). This power can fuel magical items as well as spells, or even be used to open planar portals.

Reviewing these four points (required actions, sustaining life, the use of negative energy and the unholy power type) gives us a possible taxonomy for fundamental evil. Fundamental evil has no generative power, but is nevertheless capable of wielding extreme amounts of energy. This implies that it gathered this power from other places as it cannot create it itself. In fact, we could interpret the activities required by evil as being ways of 'gathering' the energy and resources of other persons, places and things for evil's use. Similarly, if negative energy sucks out other forms of energy (specifically life) then that energy has to go somewhere.

Fundamental evil, then, is about gathering and focusing power from a wide variety of sources. An agent of fundamental evil gathers and expresses power for itself. As this power grows the evil agent uses it to gather further power. Agents may be conscious of the effect of their

efforts (i.e. a grasping conqueror) or unconscious of their role in the grand scheme of things (i.e. a brutal orc who thinks of nothing but the next murder).

Gathering and focusing power hardly seems that bad. However, if we assume that fundamental evil is out to gather all energy and all life to it we begin to have an inkling of what it might be. Fundamental evil is not just a lens or a basket, but an overwhelming hunger to take power regardless of the consequences. In the pursuit of that aim it will do anything, destroy anyone, and exploit any possible method. It expends this gathered power only so that it can gather more power, either by oppressing others or by interfering with those who would spread power.

Fundamental evil is, in the d20 game, greed. Greed not for life, or wealth, or fame but for everything. It wants to control every aspect of creation, and will happily destroy anything that gets in its way.

The Strategy of Evil

If we assume that the definition of fundamental evil is destructive greed, we can then turn to an examination of the behaviour it engenders in its followers. In particular, we can answer questions about why evil looks so terribly attractive and why its followers engage in what seem to be ultimately self-defeating acts.

The Attraction of Evil

One of the most difficult questions to answer, especially in a fantasy world where the forces of good can literally throw rocks through a person's windows, is why would people find evil attractive? What about it convinces people to engage in acts that put one against the beautiful, wondrous forces arrayed in the heavens?

The answer lies in where evil places the burden of power. Fundamental

evil allows its followers to 'harvest' power, wealth and resources from others. It allows the individual to short circuit the long, tedious process of creation. The evil individual can gather (by force, wealth, or coercion) as many resources as the people around him can create. For the individual this allows him to rapidly progress, as he concentrates the efforts of a large number of folks.

Take the example of a professional thief. His job, whether he enjoys it or not, involves taking resources from others and using them for his own ends. The more that he concentrates resources, the less he has to produce himself. The thief's actions are no different from those of an undead (who steals life to strengthen its own unlife) or a murderer (who kills others to get access to their possessions or lives).

What the thief thinks of his actions is, in the case of fundamental evil, irrelevant. Knowingly or unknowingly he serves the principle of evil. Beyond his personal psychology, this evil seeps into the very fibre of his being. Even if he tries to walk the straight and narrow path, it will always be there, tempting him.

Similarly, take the famous ethical quandary of a man who steals medicine for his dying wife from a greedy apothecary. Ethicists attempt to justify the man's actions for and against the standards of morality. However, when we assume fundamental evil we see that both actors serve the greater darkness. The greedy apothecary propagates evil by forcing others to abase themselves before him, giving up everything they have for his services. The thief in turn serves evil as well, by taking from another the true fruit of that person's efforts. Unless clemency and mercy step in, evil wins no matter what happens to the two actors.

In both of the above cases, the attraction that evil holds lies in the ability of the individual (the two

thieves and the apothecary) to get a great deal for very little personal effort. The danger of this attraction lies in its addictive nature, since the individual has to do very little, his ability to produce himself quickly withers. It becomes easier and easier to take from others rather than create. Eventually the individual who gives in to fundamental evil finds that they cannot create any longer; now they must take from others to survive.

Self Sabotage, Other Sabotage and Destruction

One of the traditional arguments against evil is that it is, in a grand sense, ultimately self-destructive. In our real world and in the philosophical world of ethicists evil behaviour self-corrects after enough time and damage. The inherently destructive nature of siphoning off resources without creating anything eventually leads to a downward spiral into ineffectiveness. This process may take ten years or a hundred, but unethical behaviour eventually leads to ruin.

In fantasy worlds we see the same behaviour, the same grasping greed, but it somehow seems more potent. Real devils make bargains for people's souls. Evil pits its minions against one another in contests of blood and greed, but just grows stronger when all of the parties fail. Evil grows daily, and the destruction of one aspect of it just seems to strengthen all of the others.

On a personal level, fundamental evil does not provide that much more advantage than ethical or psychological evil. The assorted supernatural minions of evil dispense magic and power like candy, but only if doing so will net them greater power in the long run. Practically, petty evil plays out much like it does in our own world. Great personal evils (murder, grand larceny, great frauds) may attract the attention of

beings that wish to help the actor into bigger and better things.

Some of those bigger and better things have to do with the betrayal and destruction of other forces of evil. On the surface, this kind of self-promotion at the expense of others evil actors seems foolhardy. However, when we remember that, cosmically, all of the gathered energy flows towards the same goal things become clearer. It does not matter if one agent of evil stabs another in the back, or if they slaughter one another by the thousand. Every act gathers power into the 'well' of fundamental evil.

Fundamental evil also supports the destruction of the individual actor's ability to produce. At first, this seems contradictory – why should evil support the destruction of the very things it needs to survive? In the grand scheme of things though, evil 'knows' that it cannot overwhelm the forces of creation. What it can do is weaken individuals, forcing them to adopt its methods, thereby strengthening it.

Take the example of a nation ravaged by famine. The individuals within the nation have very limited means to produce the basic needs of life (food) for their own families. They struggle among themselves to harvest and concentrate that limited production. In such an environment evil behaviour (like stealing, murder for food, etc.) become not only accepted but commonplace. It is possible that people will work together,

pooling resources and supporting one another...but how easy is it to resist the temptation to just take what your family needs when life is on the line?

Using the elements of evil in a game

So, now that we have a conception of fundamental evil what do we do with it in our games? How do we make evil more than just an aberration in the psyche?

Personal Evil

Personal evil comes from those story elements that directly challenge either the players or the various Non-Player Characters. When fundamental evil enters into a character's personal story, it typically takes on one of two forms:

Seduction: This kind of evil encounter is based on the character's wants.

Seduction encounters focus on getting the character to take, rather than earn, something that he desires for personal pleasure. Tokens, magic items, lovers and wealth all make good objects of seduction. The agent of evil doing the seducing may be as simple as one of the character's friends urging them to do the 'expedient' thing to as direct as someone offering to 'intercede' on the character's behalf.

Temptation: This kind of evil encounter is based on the character's needs. In these cases the character may not be able to meet a basic need (food, shelter, affection) through his efforts. Adventurers may find themselves seriously down on their luck, or saddled with excessive expenses (see the above story for an example). Evil steps in, showing the character a simple way to solve his problem.

The primary distinction between the two examples lies in the words *want* and *need*. Seduction aims at getting the character to perform selfish acts to meet his own desires. Temptation may well seem just and

noble, as it focuses on providing the basic requirements for life for the individual and his family/friends. The classic example of the apothecary and the thief given above shows these two aspects of evil very clearly: the apothecary is seduced into charging impossible prices by his desires, while the thief is tempted into evil by the needs of his family.

We can use this distinction to more carefully tailor encounters with evil to our game's level of fantasy. Temptation plots rarely work in high fantasy games; the characters meet their basic needs in some fashion unless it becomes stylistically necessary to discuss them. Seduction is similarly difficult in low fantasy games; the characters are struggling to meet their basic needs and rarely have time to consider what they might want.

Institutional Evil

Given the constructed definition of fundamental evil, how is it different from the various institutions, governments and social institutions that exist in the world? All governments exist to concentrate the efforts of a group of citizens, hopefully to the benefit of all.

Unfortunately, fundamental evil finds easy purchase in social institutions. Since all institutions exist to (to one degree or another) concentrate and distribute effort, individuals are easily tempted or seduced to skim off the top for personal gain. A poor civil servant struggling to make ends meet while handling the wealth of nations every day presents an easy target for corruption. Even a 'good' institution can support elements of corruption, or even turn against its stated goals.

Even more insidious are the so-called 'evil institutions' (i.e. temples to evil gods or evil governments). These institutions exist not only to venerate dark gods, but also to focus the wealth and power of the many into the pockets of a chosen few. These institutions may provide



services and distribute wealth like other public entities. However, by their very structure they siphon power away from the public and towards a powerful elite. Individuals within the institution who understand its nature struggle constantly to direct the flow of power towards themselves and away from their rivals. Similarly, individuals who participate in the institution without being part of it (like a layman in a town dominated by an evil temple) find themselves perforce performing evil actions just to stay alive. Food becomes scarce, basic needs are just barely met, and the temptation and seduction of evil reaches from the heights to the depths of society.

Again, all of this sounds good in theory. But how do we use this idea in practice?

The first thing to realise is that fundamental evil provides a powerful and valuable way to concentrate resources. Societies need ways to concentrate power beyond the individual level to deal with widespread threats. In fantasy societies especially, magical threats constantly arise that threaten the stability of the world. Evil institutions, by their nature, are extremely effective at concentrating power and wielding it rapidly. After all, only a handful of people have any real power. This ability to effectively respond makes evil institutions terribly interesting to any stable government.

The second thing we need to consider is how an evil institution governs its area of control. It will most typically institute controls at two levels: individual and small group. On an individual level the institution encourages greedy, grasping behaviour by positively rewarding people who undermine one another. On a group level, it rewards rapid action, quick decision-making and activities that promote the common benefit. This dual structure allows the institution to slowly gather power for

itself while still maintaining a level of social order.

By applying these two principles we can create social institutions that have either fallen into evil or directly and openly serve it. The greater the pressure placed on the local government, the more likely it is to turn a blind eye to any 'questionable practices' the institution may engage in, as the utility of the institution's methods becomes more and more important.

In most fantasy universes we have the concept of an 'evil race'. This race is somehow aligned with fundamental evil on a biological or spiritual level. However, this alignment is always described in psychological or institutional terms.

If we assume that there is, in fact, fundamental evil then we need to re-examine this idea of racial evil. These creatures do not just act evil; they are evil. Their every action and thought is bent on gathering more and more power. If fundamental evil has a personification then they will, in time, pass that power to it. If not, then they simply gather and hold as much power as they possibly can, thereby increasing the weight of their own fundamental principle.

This has implications on a variety of issues. If the race itself is truly evil, then is it justified to commit genocide? Can a good character commit the murder of a racially evil creature with impunity? Is it permissible to steal from or otherwise disinherit evil creatures, as such behaviour fits in with their fundamental purpose in the universe?

Conclusion

In the above discussion we have laid out one approach to fundamental evil. Not only are there more approaches, but also these approaches exist along a variety of paths, including:

- 1 *Psychological Principle* – what if the fundamental principle of evil was fear rather than greed? What about hate, despair or envy?
- 2 *RPG Axis* – the description above startles the line between simulationist and narrativist games. How would it differ if we were to take a purely gamist approach? Would it be different if we constructed our arguments to discuss each axis in turn?
- 3 *Degree of Opposition* – here we have assumed a balanced pair (good vs. evil). What if evil was the only principle? What if good was the only principle, and evil just an ethical aberration (as we assume in the real world)?

This discussion simply brushes the surface of the discussion of the forces of good and evil, chaos and law. It suggests that, at least in fantasy games, we should consider the implications of evil not just as a psychological entity but also as a fundamental force in the universe. It goes on to propose one model for this, drawn from the rather chaotic d20 rules presented in the *Core Rulebooks*.

An interesting exercise might be to simplify the model presented in the d20 books. What if negative energy was unholy power, rather than an independent power source? What if the reverse was true? Could evil then be more appropriately aligned with the concept of hunger?

Such considerations would allow us to alter the basic metaphysic of our game worlds in a realistic way, creating greater diversity without having the 'sameness' so prevalent in d20 supplements today. It would also give us a new line upon which to vary our worlds, allowing us to get away from the sliding power scale that typifies art gaming of all sorts.



MONGOOSE SUPPORTS THE TROOPS



Headquarters and Headquarters Troop 'Headhunters'

Getting letters at Mongoose Hall is hardly a novelty, but when we were contacted by Jason Rottinghaus of the Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, the 'Headhunters', from the 4/3rd ACR, we realised that this was no ordinary mail. Jason told us that many of the guys in his outfit are avid gamers and that they were having problems getting hold of any gaming books out in Iraq. Well, what could we do? We sent them out some dice and books, that's what! Good luck and best wishes to all our forces out in the Gulf, and here's hoping that whatever their nationality, they get home safe for Christmas.

Ultimate Gameplay

Elven Magic Items

Johnathan M. Richards

Living for centuries, it is perhaps not surprising many elves find the time to explore avenues of magic item creation not often investigated by other, more short-lived races. An elven wizard thinks nothing of researching for years or even decades before creating a new item. This month's *Ultimate Gameplay* presents a selection of interesting new items to play with. Easy on the beard gel though. . .

Elven magic items are always of exquisite craftsmanship, often containing elaborate ornamentation having no bearing upon the item's use but intrinsically pleasing to the viewer. Anyone examining a magic item of elven manufacture has no doubt the item is the result of many hours of painstaking craftsmanship.

The eight elven magic items described below can easily be used in any campaign featuring elves. At the Games Master's discretion, the knowledge of how to make any or all of these items could be strictly held by elven craftsmen or they might also be made by members of other races.

Beard Gel

As a rule, elves have no facial or body hair. This suits them fine, as they generally find beards the sign of a 'lesser' species. (This attitude has no doubt had a negative effect upon the elven relationship with dwarves.)

However, there are instances where having a beard or body hair can be advantageous; when such instances arise, elves often turn toward the *beard gel* their wizards have concocted.

Beard gel is a sticky unguent normally kept in a small jar some 3 inches in diameter and 1 inch deep, holding five applications. When rubbed onto the skin, it causes immediate hair growth. On the face, it forms a beard and moustache; on the body, it grows normal body hair as would be found on a human or dwarf. Note that it takes one application of *beard gel* for the face and another four for the rest of the body. Note also it is best if the *beard gel* is applied while wearing gloves, lest the user's fingertips and palms start sprouting hair!

An elf might wish to become 'hairy' for several reasons. Being hairy oneself might give the elf a +2 or higher circumstance bonus to his Charisma checks when attempting to influence the attitudes of more hirsute races like dwarves or satyrs (see Table 5-4: Influencing Non-Player Character Attitude on page 149 of *Core Rulebook II*). *Beard gel* grants a +2 circumstance bonus to Disguise checks, balancing out the standard -2 penalty for attempting a disguise



as a member of another race. Some elves might use *beard gel* to make a statement of their individuality

or in an attempt to stand out from the crowd. It is not uncommon for some elven women to find hairiness appealing (generally, these are the same elven women often attracted to humans). Finally, while male baldness is a rarity among elves, it has been known to strike occasionally. Vanity being a common elven trait, *beard gel* was likely first created for this reason alone!

The hair formed by *beard gel* is permanent but does not continue to grow after its initial application. It can be shaved off without incident and once removed does not grow back.

CL 3rd; Craft Wondrous Item, *alter self*; Price 600 gp; Cost 300 gp plus 24 XP; Weight ½ lb.

Centaur Belt

A broad leather belt with intricately tooled designs upon its outer surface, a *centaur belt* is worn freely around the waist. Upon activation by command word, the wearer polymorphs into centaur form. Doing so alters his body from the waist down, transforming it into an equine configuration. The wearer's clothes, boots, and any equipment worn below the waist melds into the equine form and becomes non-functional. The wearer's body from the waist up does not change and all clothing and equipment worn above the waist remains as it is. Thus, an elf activating a *centaur belt* becomes a centaur with elven features, while a dwarf doing so retains his characteristic dwarven look even in centaur form. Armour worn while activating a *centaur belt* loses one point of its armour bonus due to it no longer being a complete set

and not covering any of the centaur's equine body areas. Magical armour abilities (such as *ghost touch* or *silent*

a *centaur belt*. Finally, some elves just like to experiment with other forms; after all, a life-span measured in centuries gives one quite a bit of time to try new things!



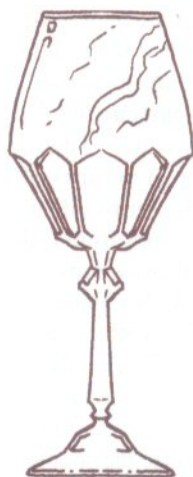
moves) and bonuses are retained even when the lower half of the armour melds into the centaur's lower body. Weapons sheathed above the waist also remain intact regardless of how low they subsequently hang. Due to the partial nature of the transformation, it is handled differently than the *polymorph self* spell. The wearer of the *centaur belt* retains his own Strength, Dexterity and Constitution (in effect, the equine part of his body conforms to match his current physical attributes). He does, however, gain the centaur's Large size (which affects his base attack bonus and Armour Class) and speed of 50 feet. (Note that Small characters such as halflings and gnomes using a *centaur belt* become Medium-sized centaurs.) The wearer can attack with his front hooves if desired but does so at his own base attack bonus rather than as the standard centaur listed in *Core Rulebook III*.

The ability to take on the form of a centaur comes in handy quite frequently in an elf's life. An elf might require the centaur's faster land speed to escape a pursuing enemy or he may just desire the extra carrying capacity a quadruped form provides, especially in the case where he must lug an unconscious human or dwarf companion to the nearest druid or healer. Naturally, the centaur form is an excellent one to assume when making contact with a band of centaurs. The Games Master should consider providing as much as a +10 circumstance modifier to an elf's Charisma check to influence the attitudes of a centaur Non-Player Character when under the effects of

CL 7th; Craft Wondrous Item, *polymorph self*; Price 10,080 gp; Cost 5,040 gp plus 403 XP; Weight 1 lb.

Chalice of Marvellous Colours

The *chalice of marvellous colours* is a long-stemmed goblet of clear glass, often with gold trim along the top of the rim and the bottom of the stem. If a liquid with magical properties (such



as a potion) is poured into it, it glows gently and languidly changes colours, alternating between green, blue, violet, red, orange and yellow before repeating the cycle. While this can be useful in determining whether a given liquid is magical, most elves use it

merely for ornamentation; they enjoy the soothing, gentle flow of colours the chalice provides. Many wealthy elven homes have several such chalices on display.

Liquid poured from a *chalice of marvellous colours* reverts to its normal hue. Drinking a potion from a *chalice of marvellous colours* does not change the potion's effect.

CL 3rd; Craft Wondrous Item, *detect magic*; Price 1,000 gp; Cost 500 gp plus 40 XP; Weight 2 lb.

Cup of the Angry Bee

Crafted by those who fear being poisoned, a *cup of the angry bee* not only detects poisonous substances but also turns them back upon those who would employ such villainous methods.



A *cup of the angry bee* is a golden drinking vessel of exquisite design, often covered with a hexagonal pattern reminiscent of honeycomb. Once per day, the cup extracts all poison from any liquid poured into it. This extracted poison takes the form of a bee, which flies out of the cup and straight for the individual who intended to poison the cup's user. The *angry bee* stings the target upon reaching him, forcing him to make the Fortitude saving throw against the poison's effects. Upon stinging its target, the *angry bee* dissipates into nothingness. The *angry bee* also dissipates should the poisoner escape to another plane of existence. However, so long as the poisoner remains on the same plane the *angry bee* makes straight for him.

The *angry bee* is a magical effect, not an actual bee and thus is immune to spell effects like *repel vermin* targeted against insects.

Note that the poisoning attempt must be intentional; if a person pours an unlabelled potion of poison into the *cup of the angry bee* merely to find out if the substance was poisonous, the bee would form (draining the cup dry in the process, as the entire contents were poisonous) but would then

dissipate harmlessly, as there would be no actual poisoning attempt.

Any liquid left remaining in a *cup of the angry bee* after the *angry bee* forms is by default non-poisonous and safe to drink. Once a *cup of the angry bee* has been used its powers lie dormant for 24 hours, after which time it functions normally again.

CL 5th; Craft Wondrous Item, *detect poison, poison*; Price 6,150 gp; Cost 3,075 gp plus 246 XP
Weight 2 lb.

Magic Arrows

Given the standard elven proficiency with bows, it should come as no surprise that magic arrows abound in elven lands. Elven magic arrows are different in that they are not always used as weapons in and of themselves; often, they are merely tools adding to an elven archer's repertoire. Like most magic arrows, they are commonly created in sets of 50, although an individual archer seldom carries more than one or two of any given type at a time. Four such arrows are detailed below; the statistics given after each arrow's description are for a single arrow of that type.

Arrow of Etherealness

An *arrow of etherealness* has several uses. If it strikes an enemy (striking as a masterwork arrow), the victim must make a Fortitude save (DC 19) or become invisible and ethereal for 11 rounds. Unless he has a way of his own of returning to the Material Plane, he remains ethereal for the whole time. Note that this could prove disastrous if he is at negative hit points and his companions cannot aid him as he slips into death. This use of an *arrow of etherealness* can also be used upon allies; as such, it is a somewhat painful way of becoming ethereal.

However, *arrows of etherealness* are seldom shot at living targets, as they are much more useful at providing an illicit means of entry. An *arrow of etherealness* shot into an object (like a door) turns the object both invisible and ethereal for 11 rounds. During

this time, anyone can pass through the object as if it was not there, as it has no physical presence upon the Material Plane. The range of this effect is a 5-foot radius emanating from the arrow's point of entry, so if an *arrow of etherealness* is shot at the wooden wall of a fort, it creates a circular opening in the wall. At the end of the 11 rounds, the object returns to the Material Plane and all is as it was before.

Arrows of etherealness have no effect upon force effects, such as a *wall of force*. Once used, the arrow loses its magical properties.

CL 11th; Craft Wondrous Item, *etherealness*; Price 139 gp; Cost 73 gp plus 5 XP; Weight –

Giant Eagle Arrow

Elves and giant eagles often work together. A *giant eagle arrow* takes advantage of the harmony between these two races. Fledged with eagle feathers, a *giant eagle arrow* is used not to attack enemies directly but rather to summon assistance. Shot straight up into the air, at the apex of its flight the arrow transforms into a giant eagle (using statistics from *Core Rulebook III*) which then swoops down to assist the arrow's shooter. Aid can be in the form of attacking the shooter's enemies, carrying the shooter upon its back or in its talons to put distance between him and his enemies, or anything else the shooter can communicate to the great bird, which speaks Common and Auran.

7 rounds after the transformation from arrow to giant eagle, the bird vanishes into mist. If carrying the shooter or an ally airborne, it lands before dissipating to keep its passenger from harm. If used in an area where giant eagles nest, the *giant eagle arrow* could call for aid from others of its kind before its duration in bird form expires, summoning a more permanent ally for the elf.

CL 7th; Craft Wondrous Item, *summon nature's ally IV*; Price 63 gp; Cost 35 gp plus 2 XP; Weight –

Messenger Arrow

A *messenger arrow* looks like any other elven-crafted arrow, with a straight, wooden shaft and fletchings of white pigeon feathers. It is not primarily a weapon, however, but rather a communications device.

To use a *messenger arrow*, the owner carves or writes a message onto the shaft of the arrow. Due to the size of the arrow's shaft, this message is limited to 25 words or less. To deliver the message, the user concentrates on the intended message recipient's image and location ('Triatilyn Moonhair, at the cottage of her father,') and then shoots the *messenger arrow* straight up into the air. At the apex of the arrow's flight, the *messenger arrow* transforms into a carrier pigeon that unerringly flies to the desired destination and searches out the message recipient. In the example above, the pigeon would fly to the cottage and seek out anyone matching the mental image of Triatilyn Moonhair. If there was no one there matching the mental image of her, the pigeon would remain in the area for the duration of its 'life', seeking her out.

After transformation into a carrier pigeon, a *messenger arrow* lasts for 11 days. If the pigeon cannot reach the intended destination in that time, or if there is no one there matching the mental image of the intended recipient, the pigeon dissipates into nothingness.

When a *messenger arrow* in pigeon form finds its intended message recipient, it alights on their shoulder and verbally gives the message with which it was entrusted, after which time it flies away. Shortly after flying away, it dissipates into nothingness, its mission accomplished. Note that the pigeon can be easily fooled into giving its message to the wrong recipient, should there be someone at the message delivery location who looks like the intended recipient (through the use of an *alter self* spell, a doppelganger assuming the form of the recipient, or even due to the recipient having an identical twin).

A *messenger arrow* can of course be used as a normal arrow in times of desperation but it loses all of its magical properties upon striking its target. A *messenger arrow* used in this fashion is merely a masterwork arrow.

CL 11th; Craft Wondrous Item, *animal messenger*; Price 148 gp; Cost 77 gp plus 6 XP; Weight –

Treant Arrow

A *treant arrow* is used as a weapon but not in the normal fashion. Rather than shooting a *treant arrow* at an enemy, the user shoots it into the ground near an enemy. On the round after its implantation, the *treant arrow* grows into a Huge oak tree; the following round, it animates and attacks enemies as directed by the arrow's wielder. The animated tree fights as a treant (use the treant entry in *Core Rulebook III*) but has no ability to further animate other trees. It fights for up to 11 rounds, after which time it crumbles to dust. The animated tree must remain within 180 feet of the arrow's wielder at all times or it loses its mobility.

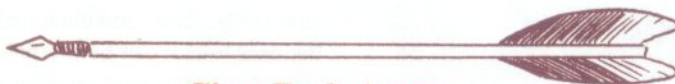
A *treant arrow* does not animate if it is shot anywhere but into the ground where a tree might actually take root. A *treant arrow* can be used as a normal arrow but it loses all of its magical properties after having been used so. *Treant arrows* shot at

opponents are treated as masterwork arrows.

CL 13th; Craft Wondrous Item, *summon nature's ally VII*; Price 189 gp; Cost 98 gp plus 7 XP; Weight –



Arrow of Etherealness



Giant Eagle Arrow



Messenger Arrow

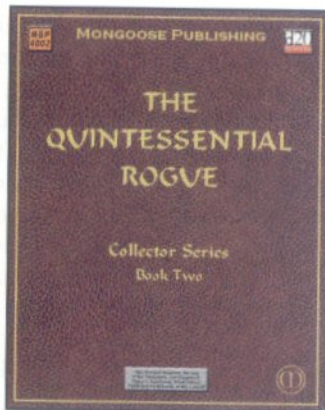


Treant Arrow



JANUARY 2004 . . .

CONAN



John Thompson

Introduction

No character class in the d20 universe is as customisable and flexible as the rogue. While the brawling melee fighters and high-browed arcanists hog much of the glory, it is the rogue who quietly — but in deadly fashion — keeps the enemy off their backs and, through a combination of guile, resourcefulness and, at times, ruthless greed, makes them all richer once the sounds of battle recede.

Love playing the rogue? The bounty of skill points available to this quick-learning class makes them, at the start, easily shaped by the player into

The halfling lay hidden among a deadfall of old branches and tree limbs, watching the guards move along their allotted courses, which he had long since plotted out. This hiding space was chosen expressly for the fact that in seconds, one of the guards would round the corner, leaving his comrade alone as he walked in front of the woodpile. Alone meant no witnesses. No help. The solitary guard, unknowing, marched on, his armour clanking dully as his torch cast a feeble light into the surrounding shadows.

The halfling raised a blowgun to his lips as his prey approached. 'This is too easy,' he thought, as he filled his lungs with air.

A Whole New Rogue

Using *The Quintessential Rogue* to fine-tune and supercharge your thief

a unique force. Imagine, however, starting a new rogue character from scratch that is even more focused, even more specialised; armed with new skills, feats, and class and racial bonuses which can help you hone your new creation to an even greater degree, this character would be leaps ahead of its fellow first-level adventurers.

To illustrate the sourcebook's many uses, we'll take an 'ordinary' first level halfling thief named Manny and using material from *The Quintessential Rogue*, fine-tune and supercharge him over the course of his early career. The difference between a 'Quintessentialised' rogue and a simple core rulebook rogue will astound you.



Character Concepts

As we begin to lay the groundwork for Manny, our new rogue, we arrive at the first set of statistics and variables able to be 'tweaked' using *The Quintessential Rogue*: Character Concepts.

A character concept is not a new class or prestige class; rather, it is an underlying groundwork that enables the process of specialisation to begin before Manny has so much as put his short sword in

its scabbard. Concepts swap one skill for another or modify the list of rogue class skills, sometimes trading the basic rogue's sneak attack for a new ability which better reflects the concept's focus.

The Quintessential Rogue shines new light on ways to turn your 'vanilla' rogue into a focused, multi-skilled character capable of new levels of mayhem. From the moment you put pencil to paper to create your new character, using *The Quintessential Rogue* allows a level of customisation never seen before, incorporating the sourcebook's new feats, skills, prestige classes, equipment and even advice on how to start your own guild.

The Quintessential Rogue features more than 15 Character Concepts, from the deadly Assassin to the wary, knowledgeable Explorer, the slick-talking Beggar and the classic rogue of the high seas, the Pirate. Each of these concepts bestows new bonuses

on the character, as well as inflicting some balancing penalties.

We begin to focus Manny by choosing for him the Character Concept of the Treasure Hunter. As its title plainly implies, treasure hunters seek to amass a personal fortune through the 'acquisition' of lost treasures. Treasure hunters gain a +4 competency bonus to all Appraise checks — after all, they need to know if what they are looking at is worth toting all the way back to the city to sell, right? Not only does a treasure hunter have an eye for riches, he has the contacts to make the sale of these items even more profitable — Manny can now, because he has chosen this concept, sell gems, jewellery and other valuable items at 5% over their listed full price.

This is the good news. The bad news is treasure hunters have a poor eye for just about everything else, so Manny

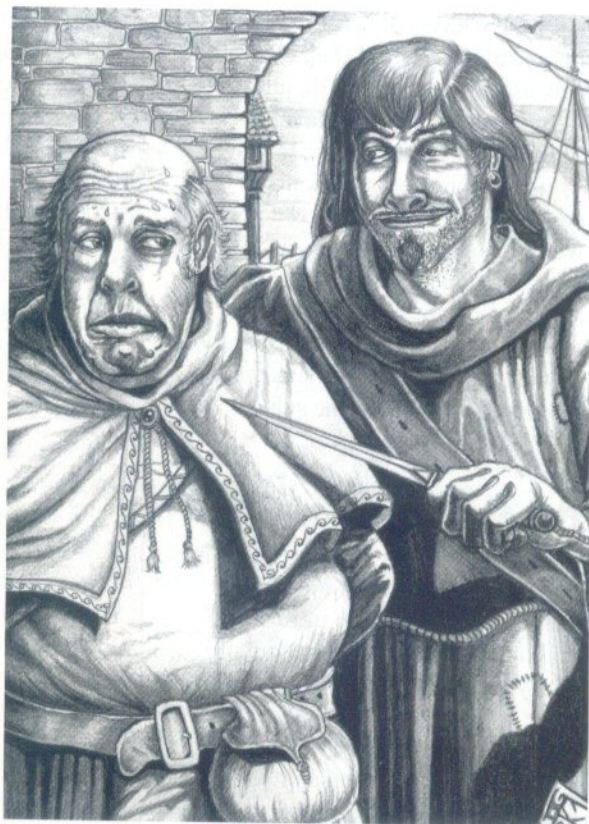
will spend 10% more than the listed value for all items he buys.

Also available in The Quintessential Rogue is a second sub-list of racially-based concepts strictly for non-human characters, from the Dwarf Outcast and Elf Avenger to the Gnome Tinker and Half-Orc Brawler. As with the other concepts, these shift certain skills one way or another to suit the concept. We can leave Manny out of this section for now and move on to skills.

Skills

Skills are the building blocks upon which all successful characters are built — this is doubly true for rogues, who need a myriad set of skills to offset their lack of brawn or innate spell-casting abilities. *The Quintessential Rogue* introduces many new skills for rogues to choose from by refining and refocusing many of their current class and general skills.

For example, *The Quintessential Rogue* gives the core skill of Appraise new life by giving it sub-uses available only to rogues, such as *Assess Magic Item*, which allows rogues to determine if an item was ever of high enough quality to be enchanted; *Item History*, which allows a rogue to analyse the methods of manufacture used to produce an item, as well as possibly the race which created it, and *Detect Forgery*, a self-explanatory and very useful skill. Being a treasure hunter, we'll max Manny out in Appraise, giving him, even at first level, a formidable skill set in this area. Now, not only can he quickly determine the value of his loot, he has a good chance to know if it was able to be enchanted,



when and by whom it was made and if it is a fake. Not bad for a wet-behind-the-ears treasure hunter who has yet to lay hands on his first gold piece.

While we like Manny's intrinsic treasure hunter bonuses, we're not wild about the 10% he has to 'give back' every time he opens his wallet. Thankfully, there is now a way around this roadblock by purchasing Diplomacy skill points. Using *The Quintessential Rogue's* new Diplomacy sub-use, *Negotiations*, Manny can now make a Diplomacy check to negotiate a better deal when he shops. If successful, he cuts 10% off the price, offsetting his inherent qualities as a free spender. We'll max Manny out in Diplomacy, too. Provided he can stay alive, Manny will have the skills he needs to maximise his haul.

While rogues are certainly capable of bold action, most choose instead to rely on stealth, secrecy, silence and shadows. To use these abilities to the utmost, a rogue's senses have to be highly tuned. *The Quintessential Rogue's* skill sets crafted for rogues

The box's small but intricate lock opened with an audible click, though even this was too much noise for Manny. He paused, forcing himself to regulate his breathing, listening above the din of the party raging downstairs for the sound of an alerted guard; he heard none. After examining the lid for traps, opened the box. The opal sat in a round, velvet-covered depression; it was almost the size of his fist. He grinned as he liberated the magnificent stone from its padded cell, turning it over and over in his hands, feeling its weight. As the music coming from downstairs reached a crescendo, the smiled disappeared from the halfling's face.

The gem was a fake, he was sure of it, meant to trick thieves from the real prize. If this is a fake, he thought, the real opal was nearby. All he had to do was find it.

The sound of approaching footsteps made this task temporarily impossible.

allow new levels of sensory expertise. For example, *Ear for Detail*, a new use of the Listen skill, allows far more detail to be revealed by a successful Listen check; Manny would not just hear the monster coming from around the corner, he would know it was a bugbear in chain mail, dragging a body. *Hawk-Eyed*, a new use of the Spot skill, allows characters to pick out minute details from far away as if the character was standing 10 feet from the subject. Very handy!

Feats

Now that we have fine-tuned some of Manny's more basic intrinsic abilities, it is time to move to more heavyweight material: Feats. These more focused, refined 'super skills' are often the difference makers in a tight combat situation and The Quintessential Rogue has more than 25 new feats, from Agonising Strike to Wall Fighter, to choose from.

These feats, as well as those already in *Core Rulebook I*, allow any character to further delve into their speciality. Is your rogue a street thief, stripping valuables from rich merchants who have wandered into 'the wrong side of town?' If so, then perhaps the Lightning Grab feat, which allows you to snatch items from pouches and belts within five feet if a successful Sleight of Hand check is made, is made for you.

Does your Assassin need a little something special to daub on the end of her dagger? She would find the Poison Craftsman and Poison Reaper feats very useful. Need a little extra help defeating those troublesome golems always left to guard the tastiest swag? Choose the Splintering Strike feat and become a virtual golem-shredding machine!

Manny, on the other hand, is concerned more with loot. We'll choose the Contacts (Fence) feat for him. This allows Manny to sell virtually any item, even well-known

baubles or holy items which most merchants would not dare touch, at list price. He also gains an additional 10% off any purchase, of any item, from any seller. By now, we've reversed the initial loss nicely. If you listen carefully, you can almost hear him rubbing his greedy little hands together at the thought of all the money he's going to make.

'Come, come, Skorl, now is not the time to get skittish. There are a dozen other fences in town ready to leap at this purchase — and you and I both know you can get half again what I'm asking,' said the halfling brazenly.

A fire opal the size of an orange lay on the counter between the small thief and the shopkeeper, a massive half-orc flanked by a pair of ogre guards. Despite his brutish appearance, Skorl had not gotten where he was by being stupid and he was not prone to rash decisions. That said, the halfling had a point.

'I know where you got this rock. Every fence in the city knows where you got this rock,' said Skorl.

'What's your point?'

The shopkeeper merely grunted, then lifted a strongbox from under the counter and began counting gold.

'Oh, and I need another 50 of those enchanted bolts — at my usual discount, of course.'

Prestige Classes

Provided Manny is able to stay alive long enough to contemplate such an action, he may very well want to expand into a prestige class when the time is right. Prestige classes are one of those subjects d20 players love to ruminate about into the wee hours

of the morning, trying to figure out which one is best for their character or even working to invent their own class.

While the strength of the rogue class lies in its flexibility, rogue prestige classes cast aside much of this flexibility in exchange for a focused, enhanced set of skills. As always, players should be wary of choosing a prestige class for their character on a whim. That said, The Quintessential Rogue's seven new prestige classes allow rogues to explore aspects of their character that would otherwise be unavailable.

Enjoy the dark intrigue of the assassin's world but prefer something a little less cloak-and-dagger? Then perhaps the Executioner prestige class is for you. This cold-blooded enforcer is a master of critical blows and intimidation, using brute strength instead of shadows and poison. While the assassin skulks about unseen, the executioner works in the light of day, knowing the tales of his horrible only add to his ability to instil terror.

Far different from the gore-spattered executioner, the Commando is the sniper of the d20 world, capable of using his Point Blank Shot feat at ranges of up to 60 feet and can sneak attack from twice as far away as normal rogues. He also has an innate +2 to ranged attacks and if given an hour, can prepare an almost invisible ambush location, adding +5 to his Hide check. We've focused Manny on more aesthetic pursuits thus far but, when the time comes, we'll choose this prestige class for him.

Also described in The Quintessential Rogue are the Agent of the Crown, the James Bond of rogues; the Crusading Footpad, a Robin Hood type who revels in stealing from the forces of evil; the Deep Tracker, an expert scout of the realms under the earth; the Shadowy Avenger, an urban vigilante and the Tomb Raider, a learned adventurer who specialises in the search for lost artefacts.

All this over one gem, thought the halfling as he lay in his tiny redoubt, watching the road in the shallow valley beneath him.

When the gold Skorl had given him for the fire opal had turned to butter, two things went through Manny's mind: The first was that the butter was going to leave a horrible and embarrassing stain on his breeches; the second was that Skorl had to die. Letting the perfidious merchant escape town with his gem was not in the realm of possibility.

The halfling adjusted the sight on his sniper's crossbow, a special weapon outfitted with a scope that allowed deadly, long-range attacks. The fact that it was Skorl who had sold it to him added yet one more irony to this tale.

Right on schedule, the half orc and his guards came down the road into the valley, the guards in front, Skorl to the rear, leading a packhorse loaded with goods. Manny's first shot from the perfectly prepared ambush took the left-hand ogre through his left eye. He dropped like a stone. His next shot, before the remaining guard could even raise his club, smashed through the ogre's forehead and into his tiny brainpan, snuffing out life before the dim-witted giant even had a chance to know his vanquisher.

Skorl turned and began to run. The third bolt of piercing exploded through his throat, nearly severing his head. Manny walked over to the corpse, his crossbow loaded and ready. A pouch at Skorl's belt held the opal and another couple of hundred gold pieces besides.

The packhorse whinnied, clearly nervous at the smell of so much blood.

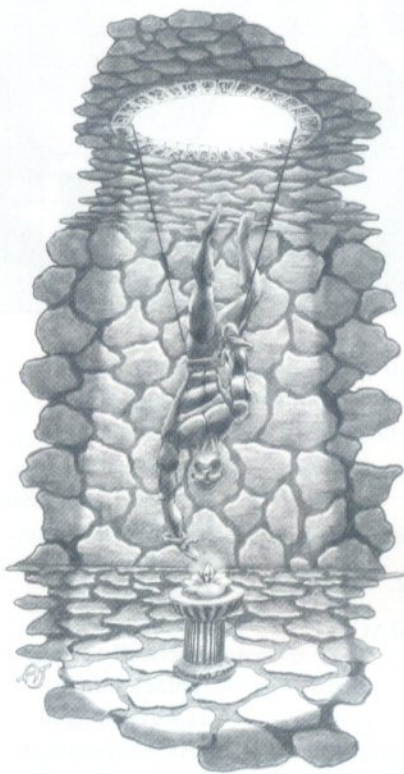
'What are you carrying, old girl?' Manny asked the horse, as he eyed the bundles draped over the animal's back. Skorl's storefront was now his as well. Perhaps it was time to go into business. He led the horse back to town, leaving the bodies for the crows, a warning to anyone else who might think of double-crossing him.

Again, what The Quintessential Rogue assists you in doing is adding to the uniqueness of your character. Between the character concepts, racial concepts, new skills, new feats and new prestige classes, it is easily possible to create a rogue the likes of which nobody else in your campaign has ever even dreamt of.

What have we got?

Using The Quintessential Rogue, we have turned Manny from 'just' a rogue into a more focused character. His skills and feats more accurately reflect the path that you have prepared for him to take. The sourcebook's new prestige classes allow him room for further growth once the time is right.

After all that, however, we have still only touched on about half of what The Quintessential Rogue has to



offer. Extensive sections remain on special equipment such as the sniper's crossbow, crafting and researching poisons, generating and using your reputation as an up-and-coming rogue, law and order, aliases, traps and their construction, the rules of the night and even how to create, run and maintain your own guild.

Go on, supercharge your rogue now!



Find yourself suitably inspired? John's article is a good example of how you can focus character development without the foul stench of powergaming creeping in. More Quintessential guides in future issues.

Confessions of a Session Amnesiac

Jonny Nexus

I'm guessing that most of you guys will have seen the film *Memento*, directed and written by Christopher Nolan and starring Guy Pierce. If you haven't, then stop reading this, right now, and go out and watch it!

Anyway...

Those of you still reading will no doubt recall the brilliant scene where the hero Leonard Shelby (an amnesiac who at any given time can remember only the previous thirty seconds) is running through a trailer park, experiencing a line of thought that goes something like this:

Okay, what am I doing?
[SPOTS A MAN RUNNING ON A PARALLEL COURSE TO HIM]

I'm chasing this guy.
[WATCHES, AS THE MAN POINTS A GUN AT HIM AND FIRES]

Nope. He's chasing me.
Remember that scene? Well that's me at the start of every single roleplaying session. 'Ladies and Gentlemen, my name's Jonny, and I'm a session amnesiac!'. This condition afflicted me again last night, during our ongoing d20 game.

I'd started the session by forgetting that Mark's character was a woman (something that I'd forget a further

Quat something of a 'Crying Game' moment. Guess it was the long hair and the girlie profession that confused him.



Anyhow, it was at that point - in an alleyway, in a port town, at an undefined time of day that turned out to be sometime after latish - that we (except for Quat, who was still vomiting in the gutter) were asked to make Spot rolls. Those of us who succeeded noticed two 'children' (they turned out to be halflings - and by the time I'd finished with them they were damned lucky that they weren't quarterlings - running off down an alleyway, one of them holding a goblet with a distinctive² design. The GM (Mark³) noticed I was looking a bit blank, so he pointed out: 'It's just like the one that [insert name of bad guy⁴] gave you last week.'

As it happens, my character, 'Noorl', has a wisdom of 6, so it was

two times during the evening). Further confusion was caused all around when, in the process of

clearing up that misunderstanding, it was revealed that Bog Boy's bard character - unlike practically every character that he's ever played

- was in fact a man. As it happens, it was Bubba who was surprised by this revelation, giving his monk character

only after several seconds of thinking, 'So they've got a goblet just like the one we have... how could that be?' that he managed to get to, 'the little gits have just stolen ours!'. This was very easy to roleplay, because it took me the same period of several seconds to work it out myself. So we set off after them in hot pursuit and ran headlong into a bunch of muggers led by some woman.

'Give us the torcs⁵!' she shouted. 'Take them, please!' joked Bog Boy. 'Torcs?' I asked.

**'LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,
MY NAME'S JONNY, AND I'M
A SESSION AMNESIAC.'**

'You're all wearing torcs around your necks...' Mark pointed out.

'And that's because...?'

'[Insert name of bad guy] put them on you last week. They can't be removed and, if you don't do the job he told you to do, he'll set them off and you'll die.'

At that point I did begin to have a vague recollection of some geezer doing something pretty nasty to us the previous session, somewhere in-between us arriving at a ruined castle, and us deciding to take a boat halfway round the world to do something for some reason⁶.

'Oh, right, yeah.'

So that's my problem. Session amnesia. Most things I can remember:

- † The plot of a book I've just read – pretty damned good recall.
- † What happened in a film I've just watched – pretty good recall.
- † A session I've GM'ed – perfect recall.
- † A session I played in last week – goldfish.

This sometimes causes me quite a bit of embarrassment, like at Ubercon last month. In the morning, I'd played a really good session of a not-yet released game called a/state, GM'ed

by Malcolm, one of the game's authors. We played through a really tense, gripping storyline that began

I REPLIED WITH MY STANDARD CONFUSED, BLANK EXPRESSION.

with our leader (an NPC) being stabbed through the brain with a pair of scissors by a gangland boss and culminated in us breaking into a woman's house and torturing her in an attempt to establish the location of the money she owed us. (And I honestly think we'd have been successful if it wasn't for the fact that we'd broken into the wrong house.) It was a great game, I absolutely loved it, and by that afternoon I'd totally forgotten everything about it⁷. Every single detail had been archived away – unindexed – in the dusty basement of my long-term memory. So when one of my Irish friends made a joke about people getting stabbed with scissors, I replied with my standard confused, blank expression, producing a response from him along the lines of: 'Scissors? Stabbed? Head? Hell, I wasn't in the game, and I remember what happened!'

It was at this point, as I was desperately trying to work out what the hell he was going on about, that Malcolm (the GM) happened to walk by. There was obviously no way my friend was going to miss the opportunity to humiliate me.

'Hey Malcolm! Your game was so great he can't remember a single thing about it!'

I had to grovel quite a bit. I'm not sure Malcolm believed me, although he was very nice about it. (To be fair, a statement along the lines of: 'I can't remember a single detail about your game, but I seem to recall it was great!' does lack a certain credibility.)

What can I say? I'm a session amnesiac. Always have been. Always will be.

So I guess I'll continue to experience session starts like:

GM: 'Okay, the ship is gently rocking in the morning breeze as it sails eastward toward the rising sun.'

Me: [Thinking] 'I seem to be on ship. Why am I on a ship?'

¹Except, bizarrely, when something happens that makes me think, 'I could write an article about that!' – because then I seem to be able to remember every detail. Go figure.

²The GM did describe it, but I can't remember now what he said.

³Yes, he does also have a character, and yes it is a bit weird, but that's how him and Bog Boy like it (they take it in turns to GM, so their character is an 'NPC' when they're GMing).

⁴Again, I can't remember it. What part of 'session amnesia' do you not understand?

⁵A Celtic ornamental band worn around the neck.

⁶I can't remember exactly what it is, but it's got something to do with a sword and a ruined kingdom. I think we've got to do something with the sword. The goblet might have something to do with it too.

⁷As is always the case, I can remember it **now**, now that I'm writing about it. I just couldn't remember it **then**.

Many people have asked me just who Jonny Nexus is. Some people even think it's just me incognito. Well, I can assure you that he's a real person. If you don't believe me try popping in to the Signs & Portents forum at www.mongoosepublishing.com where you can discuss important topics, like the exact meaning of the term 'numpty'. . . we know how to live.

Armageddon 2089

ICQA Field Test

#5504

It is the phrase every Mek pilot both loves and hates to hear: 'You're going to test this new piece of hardware.'

That one sentence can be a call to glory or a one-way ticket to the scrapheap – sometimes, both at the same time. If a test goes well, the pilot and team responsible are the first to have access to a powerful new piece of technology. When one goes poorly, and they usually do, a mercenary company can be out millions in ruined gear and medical expenses.

In this field test, the player group is asked to test a new type of rocket, the Brimstone Smartshell. Manufactured by Tak Industries and made to compliment that corporation's line of combat Meks, the Brimstone purports to be the world's first cost-effective guided rocket. Cheap enough to be used en masse and adaptable to any current rocket launcher, the Brimstone sounds too good to be true and is quickly gaining an avid following amongst military technologists and armed forces the world over. Of course, this brings a lot of attention, little of it pleasant, to the group selected to give the Brimstone its first field test. One way or another, this field test promises to be 'explosive'.

THE SET-UP

The first step toward any group getting the highly-covered Brimstone test project is a good reputation with Tak Industries. The corporation will be looking for a team that has either done testing for them before, has taken assignments for the United States and its affiliates, or has a spotless service record. Given the high level of interest in this test and the nature of the equipment itself, any abandoned missions or broken contracts on the part of a prospective team will immediately disqualify them from participating. This is an alteration to

the system for determining mission acceptance for field tests given in the first Field Test article (see Signs and Portents 3).

One element in the player group's favour is that Tak Industries needs to know that the Brimstone can function for teams of varying degrees of skill and size. As such, they are giving the tests to a number of groups and are not discriminating on the basis of experience. Even green teams with no true battlefield experience have a chance of making the grade and getting a shipment of Brimstones to fire off. This being the case, the DC for Field Test acceptance for the Brimstone

project is only 25. Keep in mind that *any* broken contracts in the past or *any* military action against Tak Industries' holdings anywhere in the world immediately disqualifies a group from participating.

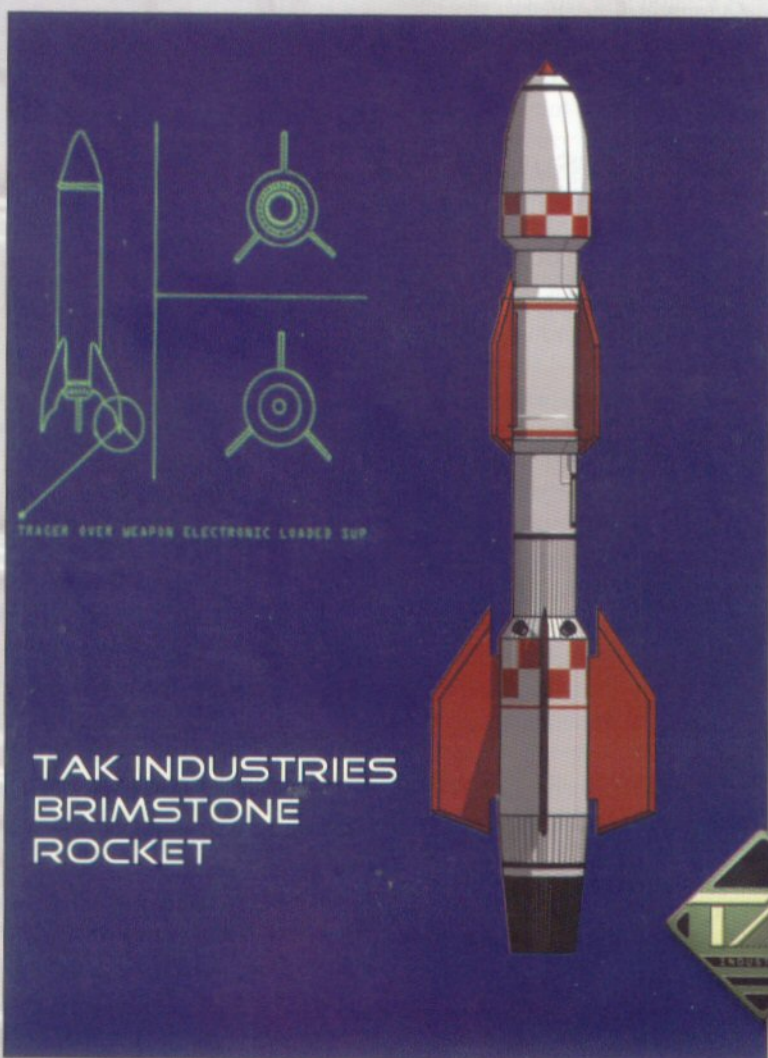
Once the DC check is made by the player characters, they will receive a crate of 100 Brimstone rocket rounds and a small tracking device that affixes to the side of a WarMek's cockpit. This device is the key to the Brimstone's 'smart' function and must be keyed into the Mek's sensor array. This requires a Technical skill check (DC 20) and an hour of work. Only one tracking unit is needed regardless

TAK INDUSTRIES

BRIMSTONE ROCKET



August Hahn



of the number of rocket launchers a given Mek carries. While the tracker does not require a hardpoint, it must be listed on the carrying Mek's equipment list. The tracker can be destroyed in the same way as any piece of equipment and cannot be given any form of additional shielding, as this will interfere with its function.

If the tracker is destroyed during combat, a new one will be provided by Tak Industries as long as the team is continuing to fulfil their end of the testing contract in good faith.

The Brimstone rounds will be of whatever size the group requests unless no preference is given, in which case

they will be 110mm. If the group does not have a rocket-capable Mek or vehicle, a single Aizahishi 110mm 30-pack launcher will be provided as part of the test. Mounting it will be the responsibility of the testing team and if they have no Meks or vehicles capable of bearing the weapon, they automatically default on the test and

Brimstone Rockets – Tak Industries

A new form of rocket technology, the Brimstone is essentially a miniature missile with the same basic cost and mode of use as a rocket. This allows for guided rocket fire, including the potential for a devastatingly accurate spread of ripple-fired munitions. While Brimstone rockets are slightly more expensive than normal rockets of the same weight and size class, their guided capabilities more than make up for the cost. The Brimstone is not a perfected piece of military technology, but its quirks are not always enough of a deterrent for pilots in pursuit of a deadly new weapon.

Note: These statistics reflect the unperfected Brimstone rocket and require a roll on the Brimstone Guidance chart every time they are fired with the Brimstone Tracker engaged. If the technology is refined,

the Brimstone's cost should be multiplied by 1 plus the final guidance bonus provided to hit. Brimstone guidance technology cannot achieve better than a +4 attack roll guidance bonus.

The Brimstone guidance module is a tracking unit and a scanner-slaved to a computer link mounted inside a WarMek or vehicle's communication and sensor suite. This device provides the telemetry for guiding Brimstone rockets toward their intended targets. Turning this system off or on is a free action that can be performed during the firer's turn only. While the system is on, all Brimstone missiles fired are treated as guided and either receive their standard guidance bonus or, if the technology has not been perfected, require a roll on the Brimstone Guidance chart. If the module is turned off, Brimstone rockets are unguided and follow all normal rocket rules.

Brimstone Rockets

Weapon	Cost	Mass	Hard points	Power Points	IR Sig	Dmg.	Critical	Ammo/ton	Ammo Cost/ton	Range Inc.	Type	Projectile Structure Points	Infl.?
Brimstone, 80mm 36 Pack	\$11,000	1	2	0	15**	1d8	X2	72*	\$10,000	20m	Projectile	1	Yes
Brimstone, 110mm 30 Pack	\$19,000	2	3	0	14**	1d10	X2	30*	\$8,000	50m	Projectile	2	Yes
Brimstone, 140mm 24 Pack	\$30,000	4	4	0	13**	2d6	X2	12*	\$7,000	100m	Projectile	3	Yes
Brimstone, 180mm Antimek	\$9,000	1	2	0	12**	2d10	X2	6*	\$8,000	50m	Projectile	4	Yes
Brimstone, 180mm 18 Pack	\$52,000	6	6	0	12**	2d10	X2	6*	\$11,000	150m	Projectile	4	Yes
Brimstone, 230mm 12 Pack	\$90,000	9	8	0	11**	4d6	X2	3*	\$17,500	200m	Projectile	5	Yes
Brimstone, 300mm 6 Pack	\$140,000	12	10	0	10**	6d6	X2	1*	\$18,000	400m	Projectile	6	Yes

* See weapon description for special rules.

** For ripple-fired rockets, IR signature is -1 per additional rocket fired.

Brimstone Guidance Module

Electronic System	Range Increment	Power Points	Hardpoints	Mass	Cost	ECM Signature
Brimstone Tracker	3 km	2	0	.25	\$80,000	20*
Improved Brimstone Tracker	4 km	1	0	0	\$150,000	25*

* This only applies during a combat round in which Brimstone rockets are fired with the system active.

must return the Brimstone rounds immediately.

Assuming the player group has the right equipment and can mount the Brimstone tracker successfully, the testing is ready to commence. This test has a two-month duration and Tak Industries insists on at least three separate engagements during that time, one of which must be a live fire test during actual combat. How the team fulfils these requirements is up to them, but failure to do so results in forfeiture of the exercise and equipment.

Upon successful completion of the two-month test, the group gets 50 Brimstone rockets in any size they desire (even mixing sizes if they wish) and a single tracker unit of their own to keep. The one used in the test must be returned for analysis to qualify for a successful testing run.

THE CATCH

Once the team has the tracker installed and the new Brimstone rockets loaded, they are free to engage any target they wish as part of any other contract or military action they find themselves in. While Tak Industries would certainly prefer that the new rockets not be fired at their own interests, it is not specifically prohibited in the testing contract. How the rockets are used is entirely under the control of the player characters. What they do once they get launched, however, may very well not be.

The Brimstone is a powerful new rocket type with a small, inexpensive homing sensor and guidance fins arrayed around its thrust cone. By using these in concert with guidance information provided by the firing

Mek or vehicle, the Brimstone is theoretically able to seek a designated target and attack it with much greater accuracy than any other kind of rocket. Effectively a rocket/missile hybrid, the Brimstone has the potential to change the way the military views rockets forever.

This also means that there will be a number of other mercenary groups and military units eager to see how the Brimstone functions in the field. While the exact details of this may vary from campaign to campaign, it should be fair to say that any testing team that does not actively try to hide its presence on the battlefield should have no trouble finding 'volunteers' to fire



The Brimstone Guidance Chart

D20 roll	Result	Guidance Bonus
1	Utter failure. The targeting module burns out, the attack fails regardless of the combat roll, and one of the munitions detonates in the launcher, destroying it completely. Tak Industries will not hold you responsible for this disaster, but there is only a 50% chance the target module will be replaced. A Diplomacy skill roll (DC 20) can overcome this chance and continue the test.	Auto-miss
2-3	Disaster. The module mistakes a friendly for a hostile and launches its rockets at one of your allies. Make the attack roll as normal with a +2 guidance bonus, but the result is applied to one of your own team-mates. If you have no team-mates, treat this result as 1 above.	Attack on an ally, +2
4-5	Scattershot. The Brimstone tracking module gets confused by the chaos of battle and directs one rocket against every possible target, friend or foe. Roll a separate attack, using a +2 guidance bonus, on every WarMek or vehicle within a single range increment starting with the closest and working outward until every target is accounted for or you run out of missiles. Extra missiles are ignored.	+2, but only one missile for every valid target in range
6-7	System Glitch. The target module fails to track properly and the attack is resolved as normal for a rocket barrage. No bonus is gained and the lack of guidance imposes a severe penalty on accuracy.	-2
8-9	Confusion. The module works, but it does not track accurately and the rockets are impeded by the faulty data transmitted to them.	-1
10	Neutral Effect. The data stream is unimpeded, but it is also utterly useless. At least the system does not neutralise the rocket's normal effectiveness.	+0
11-12	Basic Guidance. The system works, though not very well. Some effect can be seen, though the rockets certainly do not gain a significant bonus and the Brimstone system does not live up to its potential.	+1
13-15	Standard Effect. The Brimstone system works as advertised, but no better. Rockets track their target better, but the system has room to improve on its performance.	+2
16-17	Good Tracking. Brimstone missiles follow their target far better than unguided munitions and the system itself is operating better than its design specifications dictate.	+3
18-19	Excellent Performance. The tracking module is fully functional and its connection to the target is uninterrupted and allows for a lethally accurate attack spread of missiles.	+4
20	Flawless operation. The guidance system works perfectly, providing a full +5 guidance bonus to the Brimstone system. Tak Industries will be well pleased with this result.	+5
21	Masterful. Your skill and the Brimstone's guidance computers put every rocket where it can do the most harm. In addition to the +6 this result offers, the rocket attack's critical multiplier becomes x3 for this attack only. This attack must already be a critical hit for the multiplier to take effect.	+6
22	Perfection. In your hands, the hands of a true master of the rocket launcher, the Brimstone has shown itself to be a deadly weapon indeed. The first time this result is rolled, every rocket fired hits its target regardless of the attack roll. After that, this result offers a +7 guidance bonus to the rocket attack.	+7 or auto-hit

its rockets at. Games Masters may also wish to have rival groups try to steal the prototype rockets and/or targeting link.

Agents from other corporations might do the same, but they may also try something more subtle like sabotaging the targeter to ignore certain targets. If this goes undetected by the player characters, it might lead to a design flaw in the finished model that other corporations or militaries can use to their advantage when facing Brimstone launchers in the field. The level of adversity the player characters will face during their attempts to field test the Brimstone can be as varied as a Games Master wishes it to be, but this new rocket technology can be a very powerful addition to the team's arsenal and nothing good should ever come without some sort of price...

THE COMPLICATIONS

Notice the word 'theoretically'. In reality, the Brimstone is far from a finished – or even reliable – product. While the Brimstone performs perfectly well when used without the tracker (treat Brimstones fired in this way as regular dumbfire rockets adhering to all the normal rules for rocket attacks), once the tracker is engaged and the Brimstone is fired with its guidance systems functional, things may get considerably more unpredictable. While the tracking unit is a state-of-the-art target acquisition computer slaved to the Brimstone guidance system, the components of that guidance system are 'cost effective after-market products used to control per-unit expense'. Read that as cheap-grade equipment built by Tak Industries' cheapest contract bidder.

Each time a Brimstone rocket or set of rockets is fired with guidance systems engaged, the pilot must make a roll on the Brimstone Guidance chart below. Characters with the Rocket Finesse feat may add +1 to this roll to reflect their consummate skill with rocket attacks. Characters with the Salvo feat also get a +1 to the roll, but only when firing a ripple attack with the Brimstone rockets.

Once a character has experience with the Brimstone system, it becomes more reliable. For every two attacks with the module engaged after the first, the operator gains a cumulative +1 to the chart check up to a maximum bonus of +5, making it far more likely for the system to provide a bonus. This bonus cannot modify the result above a 20 and a natural 1 rolled is still treated as a 1 for the purposes of the chart and what occurs accordingly.



Caption Competition #4



smith

This time around Ted Chang, S&P's Can-Do guy, has managed to get hold of a picture from the forthcoming CyberNet RPG. He says it's the best selection of artwork he has seen since he joined the company, and we think he's right. In fact, the whole thing is so good we're giving away a copy to the winner!

Mail your answers and details to:

ibarstow@mongoosepublishing.com

or post them to:

Caption Competition #3
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UK

Closing date: November
30th 2003

CONAN

ROLEPLAYING IN THE HYBORIAN AGE

Ian Sturrock

Alignment in roleplaying games has always been a contentious issue. I remember taking an online test once and only just made true neutral. Everybody has an opinion on how characters should behave, so how the subject is approached is crucial to a new game, especially one as definitive as Conan. This month's preview explains where Ian Sturrock stands and how the Conan RPG will deal with it.

One of the questions that must always be asked when designing a new roleplaying game is 'What about morals, or ethics, or good and evil?' With a d20 game, there is always the option of using an alignment. Could this have worked for the *Conan RPG*?

The easiest way to test it out would be to try to work out what alignment Conan would be. If he can comfortably be fitted – I won't say pigeon-holed – into one of the standard alignments, it might be possible to use an alignment system for the game. Of course, even that is not necessarily to say such a course of action would be advisable – there could be any number of other reasons not to use alignments, even if Conan himself is very clearly one alignment or the other.

Taking a look through the standard alignments, Conan could not be a lawful alignment. Though he has a personal code of honour, he is more likely to kill police and judges than co-operate with them, and regularly flouts the law in civilised countries. He's not neutral good, because that would mean at least some respect for magistrates and kings – he kills at least one of each. Chaotic good is out because though Conan does not take orders very readily, he will quite happily intimidate others and lead armies himself – and he certainly could not be described as kind or benevolent either.

This leaves us with neutral, chaotic neutral, neutral evil and chaotic evil. He's not neutral, because that would imply either a lack of commitment – and he has his own strict code of honour – or a commitment to neutrality and balance. He's no Taoist, always striving for the middle way – if there were an anti-neutral alignment, a commitment to extremes, that might be more Conan's style.

Chaotic neutral is actually pretty close to the way Conan seems to behave, but then, as written, it's the classic catch-all alignment for players who want their characters to do whatever they feel like at the time without being restricted in any way. (At least, that's why I pick it if I'm made to play in a game with alignment – does that make me a bad roleplayer, or just one who doesn't

like alignment very much?) Even chaotic neutral still doesn't quite fit, because of the aforementioned code of honour. Conan does act with reasonable consistency – it's just that he doesn't quite fit any of the nine clichés that pass for d20's system of morality. This is turning into more of an anti-alignment rant than I'd intended it to – let's just say that alignment has its place in some style of game, and I enjoy playing those games sometimes too so long as I'm allowed to be chaotic neutral. Actually, having read Matt's version of ~~chaotic neutral~~ lawful good in S&P #2, I'm quite intrigued by the idea of playing a paladin sometime – so long as I have a Games Master who is willing to accept that lawful can mean a personal code, rather than one imposed by the laws and customs of the country.

That brings us back to Conan. The law/chaos aspect of alignment could almost work for the game, so long as law could be personal law – but even that is misleading. Most gamers – myself included – would find difficulty with the concept of a lawful good character who chops legitimately appointed magistrates of a non-evil country in two for disagreeing with his code of honour.

The good/evil aspect is more problematic. I have not really touched on evil as a possibility for Conan's character, though he has certainly done his share of violence, piracy, theft, alliance-breaking and merciless slaughter. I have not

touched on it because it is clear that he is intended to be the good guy. A complex good guy maybe, but he does a fair bit of damsel-rescuing, dragon-slaying and battling evil wizards, just like any other sword and sorcery good guy. He fights evil, sometimes just because it's between him and the treasure, sometimes because it's attempting to hurt him, sometimes because he's been well paid, but sometimes just because it's there. There is evil in the Hyborian Age, in a direct and personal way – demons, necromancers and things-that-should-not-be about, usually to die gruesomely on Conan's broadsword.

There is no real good, though. One might assume the priests of Mitra – a gentle, kind god clearly modelled on Christ more than on the historical Mithras – to be of good 'alignment'. However, it is quite clear that the majority of priests in the Conan setting are actually power-politicking con artists, rich through their nepotistic sinecures and their willingness to take bribes. Even the supposedly moral priests of Mitra are willing to support an irrational persecution of the cult of Asura, just because it is a different religion from their own. The priest of Asura themselves assist Conan against Xaltotun, his greatest enemy – but this is in return for his earlier support of them against the monotheistic Mitraists, not because that is the 'good' thing to do.

All in all, the stage is set for throwing out alignment altogether in Conan.

However, that doesn't quite model our favourite Cimmerian warrior either. I know I keep harping on about his code of honour. This is because it's one of the most interesting aspects



of his character. Conan's code of honour is set up in the stories to be a clear demonstration of the superiority of barbarism against the amorality of civilisation. It regularly gets him into enormous trouble, or causes him to lose out on vast treasures. Yet it's also clearly a source of some strength in him, a boost to his already powerful will in an uncertain world – the one thing that stands between him and the corruption that seems to have affected almost everyone else he meets.

That corruption stems from the evil of the Conan stories, the sorcerers so powerful as to barely be human any longer, the demons of the Outer Dark, the dread pre-human Things. One of the most fascinating aspects of the stories is that evil is a real and supernatural power – whereas good comes *only* from mankind. On several occasions we have supernatural entities intervening on behalf of Conan, but these are either

human sorcerers or the ghosts of dead humans. The gods? Who knows whether they even exist?

It was clear, then, that the game would need some mechanism for codes of honour, but that this could be an option for each character. Honour is its own reward in the *Conan RPG*. You are not forced to pick a code of honour, but if you do – and stick to it – you will gain powerful bonuses when fighting evil sorcerers and other creatures. In game terms this translates to a Will save bonus. Particularly, you will be far more resistant to Corruption, an ever-present danger of the Hyborian Age. These bonuses also work well from a game balance perspective, because most of the character classes have low Will saves, being combat-oriented.

I've included the current rules for Honour and Corruption in the Conan game. As ever, these are subject to change between now and the finished book. We have a fair bit of playtesting and development to go through before the release of the game early next year, so bear that in mind as you read on.

CODES OF HONOUR

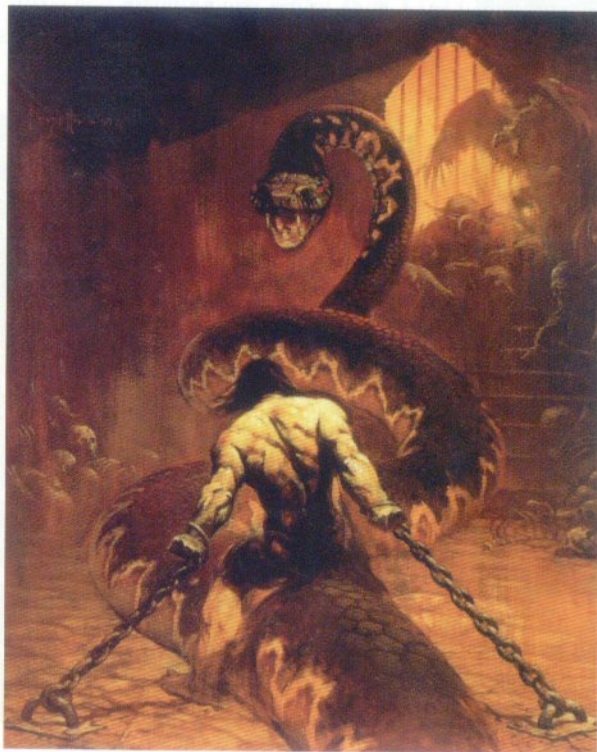
There is no alignment in Conan. Its place is taken by two concepts, codes of honour and allegiance.

Generally speaking, deciding what is moral and what immoral is up to the individual. However, certain dark, corrupting forces can turn humans into cowed slaves or gibbering madmen, and holding to a code of honour, however primitive, is one way in which heroes can avoid such a fate.

The two most common codes of honour are given below. At the Games Master's discretion, variant codes of honour may be permitted, but it is strongly recommended that they should be based on those given here. For example, the Games Master

may agree a variant barbaric code of honour better suited to the Vanir with a player who wishes to play such a character, given that the standard barbaric code of honour is based more on Cimmerian morality.

However, there should be no 'thief's code of honour' or 'pirate's code of honour.' As portrayed in the Conan stories, most such characters are



inherently without honour, though they may occasionally feign honour for their own purposes. Any who do have a code of honour have retained a civilised or barbaric code from their earlier lives, but they are in the minority, and most lose even that honour sooner or later. Conan is a rarity, a barbarian so strong-willed he has upheld his honour even when among the most treacherous and amoral company of rogues or corsairs.

Benefits of a Code of Honour

Any character can begin the game with a code of honour at no cost. Any character with a code of honour gains a +3 morale bonus

'This Cimmerian is the most honest man of the three of us, because he steals and murders openly.'

R. E. Howard, *Rogues in the House*

on all Will saving throws, rising to +6 if the Will save is against Corruption (see below). Furthermore, he gains a +2 bonus to Reputation.

However, living by any code of honour will require certain restrictions on what the character can and cannot do, and breaking a code of honour usually means the loss of its benefits forever.

Conan stamped out the fire, handed the cloak back to Belesa and stretched like a great lazy cat. Belesa watched him with wonder. His unperturbed manner was not assumed; the night of fire and blood and slaughter, and the flight through the black woods afterward, had left his nerves untouched. He was as calm as if he had spent the night in feast and revel. Belesa did not fear him; she felt safer than she had felt since she landed on that wild coast. He was not like the freebooters, civilized men who had repudiated all standards of honor, and lived without any. Conan, on the other hand, lived according to the code of his people, which was barbaric and bloody, but at least upheld its own peculiar standards of honor.

R. E. Howard, *The Black Stranger*

Barbaric Code of Honour

This is Conan's style of morality, such as it is.

The barbaric code of honour is common only in lands with harsh climates, such as Cimmeria, Vanaheim and Asgard in the north, Ghulistan in the east, and among some of the Zuagirs and Kozaks who live in the great deserts that stretch over many of the southern and eastern lands. Here, even strangers are given hospitality, and fallen foes mercy if they ask for it, since it is recognised that humanity must to some extent work together against the bitter cold or suffocating heat. Barbarian tribes who have a relatively easy time of it, such as the Picts in their lush forests, do not usually have a need for a code of honour, for their environment is not sufficiently deadly as to be their most dangerous enemy. It could be argued that the presence of a code of honour is what separates a barbarian from a mere savage.

Restrictions of the Barbaric Code of Honour

A character with a barbaric code of honour will:

- Respect alliances with other honourable characters.
- Ignore an alliance with a dishonourable character, even pre-emptively, if it suits him.
- Abide loyally by a contract of employment, even with a dishonourable employer, so long as he is well-treated and shown loyalty in return.
- Slay a dishonourable foe, even if that foe is helpless.
- Slay an honourable foe who is not helpless.
- Protect those weaker than himself, at least from physical dangers, if such protection is requested.
- This includes ordinary folk such as peasants captured

for interrogation (who will be set free once it is safe to do so, and rewarded if they were of assistance), as well as children and most women. A woman who has demonstrated herself to be more capable in war than the average man need not be protected, though the typical male with a barbaric code of honour will probably attempt to protect her anyway.

Offer his allegiance only to an honourable leader who is clearly stronger and better suited for power than himself, or to a greater cause of some kind, but once granted be utterly loyal, so long as his leader remains honourable and loyal to him in return. Note that a character with a barbaric code of honour need not necessarily retain an allegiance that was always intended to be temporary (such as a mercenary contract) after the conditions are fulfilled.

Plunder and rob anyone other than honourable allies.

Lie, cheat and con anyone other than honourable allies.

Have no in-principle objection to slavery, being willing to keep or free slaves as it suits his purposes.

Grudgingly respect genuine piety, but despise venal priests and the typical trappings of civilised 'religion'.

Like or dislike others based on their honour and their actions, not on their religion or race.

Be hospitable and generous to those in need, even to strangers. It is said that no man starves in Cimmeria, unless there is a famine and all starve, because every family will give of their own food to anyone without.

Respect the hospitality shown him.

Avenge any seriously intended insult with immediate and lethal force, if at all possible. Note that barbarians new to civilisation are likely to avenge even a jesting insult in the same way, not having yet learnt the subtleties of civilised behaviour, which can allow a man to insult another without the imminent danger of having his skull split.

Avenge any physical harm done him, at the earliest opportunity, in a manner fitting his sense of balance and justice.

A character with a barbaric code of honour will not:

Slay a wild animal, or any other creature, for sport alone. He may slay in self-defence, or for revenge, or to get food or other resources, or slay a sworn enemy.

Slay an honourable foe who offers a ransom or throws himself on the character's mercy.

Slay or steal from one who has shown him hospitality in his own house, even if they turn out to be an enemy, unless the other breaks hospitality first.

Harm anyone currently under his protection or receiving his hospitality, even if they turn out to be an enemy, unless the other breaks faith first.

Assist the authorities with any information about his friends or allies, even if refusing to do so puts him at risk.

Desert his henchmen or retainers, even if they appear to desert him. If he ever achieves the position of chieftain or a similar authority, he feels he must set an example to

his followers. Even if they doubt him, he must prove himself to them, particularly if they need him.

'Why do the guardsmen pursue you?' asked Tito. 'Not that it's any of my business, but I thought perhaps—'

'I've nothing to conceal,' replied the Cimmerian. 'By Crom, though I've spent considerable time among you civilised peoples, your ways are still beyond my comprehension.'

'Well, last night in a tavern, a captain in the king's guard offered violence to the sweetheart of a young soldier, who naturally ran him through. But it seems there is some cursed law against killing guardsmen, and the boy and his girl fled away. It was bruited about that I was seen with them, and so today I was haled into court, and a judge asked me where the lad had gone. I replied that since he was a friend of mine, I could not betray him. Then the court waxed wrath, and the judge talked a great deal about my duty to the state, and society, and other things I did not understand, and bade me tell where my friend had flown. By this time I was becoming wrathful myself, for I had explained my position.'

'But I choked my ire and held my peace, and the judge squalled that I had shown contempt for the court, and that I should be hurled into a dungeon to rot until I betrayed my friend. So then, seeing they were all mad, I drew my sword and cleft the judge's skull; then I cut my way out of the court, and seeing the high constable's stallion tied nearby, I rode for the wharfs, where I thought to find a ship bound for foreign parts.'

R. E. Howard, *Queen of the Black Coast*

Civilised Code of Honour

This is the code of honour practised by most knights and nobles from the civilised lands. Some civilised warriors, soldiers and mercenaries also practice this code of honour.

A character with a civilised code of honour will:

- Respect alliances with other honourable civilised characters. May also respect alliances with honourable barbaric characters, but this is not required.
- Respect an alliance with a dishonourable civilised character up until that character breaks it.
- Offer his allegiance to any leader who might be regarded as a legitimate authority, or to a greater cause of some kind, but once granted be utterly loyal, so long as his leader or cause remains honourable and loyal to him in return. Note that a character with a civilised code of honour need not necessarily retain an allegiance that was always intended to be temporary (such as a mercenary contract) after the conditions are fulfilled.
- If seriously insulted, demand a formal duel at the next suitable opportunity. Honour may also be satisfied with sincere and profuse apologies, at the discretion of the insulted party.
- Obey the laws of his homeland, and co-operate with lawful authorities in other lands wherever possible, unless at war with those lands. This applies even if such behaviour would be to the detriment of his friends or allies.
- Protect those weaker than himself, if such protection is formally requested and if the person requesting protection is highborn.

Have no in-principle objection to slavery, being willing to keep or free slaves as it suits his purposes.

Respect religious authorities. If religious, make war upon the enemies of his religion without showing mercy or offering quarter.

A character with a civilised code of honour will not:

Break the law of the land, unless he has formally thrown in his lot with an organised and (in his opinion) legitimate force of rebels.

Slay an honourable foe who offers a ransom or throws himself on the character's mercy, unless ordered to do so by a legitimate authority. Even in the latter case, if the character believes that such an order indicates that the authority is no longer legitimate, he may, at the Games Master's discretion, be able to avoid killing the foe, so long as he immediately attempts to remove the illegitimate authority from power (this may involve something along the lines of the rebellion mentioned above).

Slay a dishonourable foe of noble birth who offers a ransom or throws himself on the character's mercy, unless ordered to do so by a legitimate authority.

Knowingly work for a dishonourable employer.

Attack peasants or ordinary civilians and tradesmen, unless those folk have openly rebelled against a lawful authority.

Losing a Code of Honour

Any character who voluntarily breaks his code of honour immediately loses its benefits.

He may regain it if he seeks out a priest who can provide atonement, so long as he worships the same gods as that priest and the priest has a code of honour of his own. The priest will set the character a task, which must be fulfilled before full atonement can take place.

An atheistic character or one who cannot find a suitable priest may attempt to somehow right the wrong himself. The Games Master will always be the judge of how much needs to be done in this case before the code of honour can be regained, but generally it should be at least as much of a challenge as a task set by a priest.

CORRUPTION

Almost all characters in the Hyborian Age are capable of being corrupted if they face sufficiently severe challenges to their integrity. Indeed, many begin with no integrity whatsoever, and seem to seek out self-corruption. Even those with stringent codes of honour may fall from their principled stance, usually without any hope of regaining it.

This is because the worldview portrayed in the Conan stories is essentially bleak. There are no cosmic forces for 'Good'. Even the supposedly good gods, such as Mitra, may be no more than creations of the priesthood. The only good is that which is to be found in a few human beings of high moral standing, though even they are far scarcer than the self-serving or actively evil humans who make up the majority of ordinary people and great heroes and villains alike.

On the other hand, 'Evil' exists in a very real and concrete manner. Dark forces are always afoot. The foul sorcerous knowledge of evil priests and the vile demons they conjure up are far more powerful than any magicks or defensive prayers their supposedly 'Good' counterparts might have access to. Many folk, who might otherwise be moral, take

the first steps on the road to damnation when they realise that even if they behave virtuously, there is no paradise in the next life, no guarantee of salvation; they might as well take what they can now.

Corruption is a more serious problem for magicians and other scholars than for most characters. Not only does their research typically cause them to make more saves against Corruption than most adventurers, but even those who successfully avoid being corrupted have a tendency to grow madder and madder as they gain more and more unnatural knowledge.

Corruption Saves

Any time a character comes into contact with a demon, evil god, or an unusually powerful and corrupt sorcerer (except in the context of actively attacking them, or fleeing from them in terror), he must make a Corruption save. This is a Will saving throw.

The man in ermine reeled as if in some let-down of extreme tension.

'Ishtar!' he gasped. 'It is Xaltotun! – and he lives! Valerius! Tarascus! Amalric! Do you see? You doubted me – but I have not failed! We have been close to the open gates of hell this night, and the shapes of darkness have gathered close about us – aye, they followed him to the very door – but we have brought the great magician back to life!'

'And damned our souls to purgatories everlasting, I doubt not,' muttered the small, dark man, Tarascus.

The yellow-haired man, Valerius, laughed harshly.

'What purgatory can be worse than life itself? So we are all damned together from birth. Besides, who would not sell his miserable soul for a throne?'

R. E. Howard, *The Hour of the Dragon*

Certain magical artefacts and sorcerous practices can also force Corruption saves.

All Corruption saves are made against a DC set by the entity, sorcerer or object's Magic Attack Roll.

A character's current Corruption is applied as a circumstance penalty to all Corruption saves. Once you start on the steady slope towards corruption, it is more and difficult to stop.

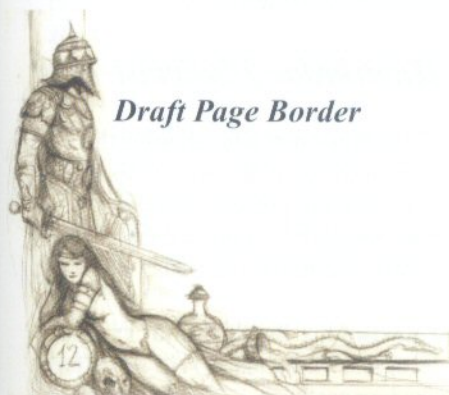
A character who successfully saves against Corruption need not usually make another save due to the presence of the same creature the same day. However, if he has close, peaceful contact with the creature, the Games Master may call for another Corruption save every hour.

Consequences of Failure

Each time he fails a Corruption save, a character gains 1 point of Corruption. There are further effects which will not be immediately obvious to the character: these are given in Chapter 12: Campaigns in the Hyborian Age, as part of the Games Master section.

Art In Progress

Some sample artwork has quite literally just crossed my desk and, as it intrigued me, I thought it might do the same for you. If you have an opinion, go to the S&P forum at www.mongoosepublishing.com and tell me what you think.



Draft Page Border



Barbarian Helm



Turanian Tulwar

Now You See It. . . Now You Don't

Follow-up: Illusionism

Joseph Miller has confessions to make and advice to proffer. Don your black caps and pass judgement.



The *Follow-up* series will see the authors of some of *Mongoose's* books reappraise their work, adding updates that and amendments that have come to light since the original publication.

So here I am again revisiting a supplement I wrote over a year ago, *Encyclopaedia Arcane: Illusionism*. I have matured as a designer and writer over this past year and received a good amount of feedback on this product from the reviewers I have talked to. From these discussions some alternative rules and new ideas sprung up and this article addresses them. Each section has three parts: an introduction, the rules and a designer's note to let you know how I came to the design decisions I did for these alternative and new rules.

Illusionist Paths (Alternative Rule)

The following paths are alternative variants of those presented in the *Illusionist Paths* chapter in *Encyclopaedia Arcane: Illusionism*. They are intended to address the concerns some readers had with the paths causing illusionists to be more vulnerable to illusions of the opposite path. After all, if you are using one of these paths you are supposed to be a specialist illusionist and should not suffer a penalty to Will Disbelief saves just because you did not study a particular portion of the illusionist school. How did I address this flaw in the design? Well, instead of a penalty to Will Disbelief saves I used a mechanic that was already in use with specialist wizards: school restriction.

Orthodox Illusionist Path

An illusionist who chooses the following path gains access to everything presented in the *Orthodox Illusionism* chapter as well as the following traits:

Orthodox Background: +1 caster level and +2 bonus to Will saves for one of the following types of illusion: figment, glamour, pattern, or phantasm.

School Restriction: Choose two of the following schools of magic to become prohibited schools: Abjuration, Conjunction, Evocation, or Transmutation. These restricted schools are in addition to any lost due to choosing the illusionist school specialisation.

Skills: Orthodox illusionists gain one extra skill point at each level (4 points at 1st level).

Spells: Illusionists that choose this path may only use their additional spell per spell level for illusions of their chosen type: figment, glamour, pattern, or phantasm.

Unorthodox Illusionist Path

An illusionist who chooses the following path gains access to everything presented in the *Unorthodox Illusionism* chapter as well as the following traits:

Unorthodox Background: +1 caster level and +2 bonus to Will saves for shadow spells.



School Restriction: Choose three of the following schools of magic (or portions thereof) to become prohibited schools: Abjuration, Divination, Enchantment, Illusion (Non-Shadow Illusion Spells), or Necromancy. These restricted schools are in addition to any lost due to choosing the illusionist school specialisation.

Feats: Unorthodox illusionists gain one extra unorthodox illusionism feat at first level. If this path is taken after 1st level there is no benefit.

Spells: Illusionists that choose this path may only use their additional spell per spell level for illusions of the shadow type.

Designer's Note: *Encyclopaedia Arcane: Illusionism* was one of my first solo projects for d20 and I had not yet got my designer's feet under me and, as a result, I was unfortunately ignorant of a key concept in design, which I will reveal to you here: K.I.S.S.! (Keep It Simple Stupid!). The alternative rule below follows this maxim much better than the original version, by using what is already there instead of creating a mechanic that in the end had ramifications beyond those intended. I highly recommend using this alternative rule instead of the previous version.

Lords of Illusion (Alternative Rule)

This section of the follow-up will address the concerns some readers had with the power level of the prestige classes presented in *Encyclopaedia Arcane: Illusionism*. In a number of reviews I noted that one of the complaints about the prestige classes was that many thought they were overpowered. In response I have gone over each prestige class and brought it to a more appropriate level of power and modified some of the class features on those prestige classes I was not satisfied with the first time around, in particular the shadow walker,

which had very little flavour. I also realized that the figmentist's Hasten ability was probably more useful to the glamourer and the glamourer's Glamour Sight ability was more useful to the figmentist, so I switched them. Only those portions of the prestige class that are changed from *Encyclopaedia Arcane: Illusionism* are included in this section.

Figmentist Class Features:

Spells per Day: No spells per day progression at 3rd, 6th, and 9th levels.

Bonus Feats: A figmentist gains bonus feats at 3rd, 6th, and 9th levels.

Figment Sight: At 4th level, a figmentist gains the ability to see through figments of spell levels that are equal to or less than his levels in figmentist minus three. In other words, a 6th-level figmentist can see through up to 3rd-level figments spells. At 7th level, the figmentist sees through figments of spell levels that are equal to or less than his levels in figmentist minus two. At 10th level, the figmentist sees through figments of spell levels that are equal to or less than his levels in figmentist minus one. This means the figmentist can see through all figment spells with the exception of those created by 9th-level spells.

Hasten Figment: Replaced by Figment Sight class feature.

Glamourer Class Features:

Spells per Day: No spells per day progression at 3rd, 6th, and 9th levels.

Glamour Detection: No longer a class feature – was redundant with the Glamour Sight ability.

Bonus Feats: A glamourer gains bonus feats at 3rd, 6th and 9th level.

Hasten Glamour: At 2nd level, the glamourer gains the ability to cast a glamour as a move-equivalent action once per day. The hastened glamour must have a normal casting time of 1 action. The glamourer gains the ability to hasten an additional glamour every two levels thereafter (4th, 6th, 8th, and 10th levels).

Hastened glammers suffer a -2 to the Difficulty Classes of their Will disbelief saves. At 10th level, the glamourer does not suffer the -2 DC penalty to hastened glammers.

Glamour Sight: Replaced by Hasten Glamour class feature.

A Thousand Visages: At 8th level, the glamourer gain the supernatural ability to change his appearance at will as per the *change self* spell.

Hypnotist Class Features:

Spells per Day: No spells per day progression at 1st, 5th, and 10th levels.

Bonus Feats: The hypnotist gains bonus feats at 4th and 8th levels.

Pattern Resistance: At 3rd level, the hypnotist becomes partially resistant to pattern spells. He gains an inherent bonus to his Will saves versus patterns equal to 1 + one-third his level rounded down (+2 at 3rd level, +3 at 6th level, and +4 at 9th level).

Hypnotic Presence: At 10th level, the hypnotist gains the ability to hypnotise one creature within 30 feet with his mere presence. This ability has all the effects and parameters of the Hypnotic Eyes ability, but with the following changes:

When attempting to hypnotise a *fascinated* creature it requires eye contact but does not require auditory contact; thus if a creature is deaf or otherwise unable to hear the hypnotist it is still affected by this ability.

Mind Weaver Class Features:

Spells per Day: No spells per day progression at 3rd, 6th, and 9th levels.

Bonus Feats: The mind reaver gains bonus feats at 3rd, 6th and 9th levels.

Augmented Force: At 1st level phantasm spells cast by the mind reaver deal an extra point of damage with each successful attack. At 5th level they do two extra points, and at 10th level they do an extra three points. This only applies to those phantasms that deal hit point or subdual damage, be it continuous or normal.

Shadow Walker Class

Features:

New Requirements:

Spells: Must have the ability to cast *umbral aura**.

Knowledge (Illusionism): 8 ranks.

Hide: 4 ranks.

Feats: Illusion Focus (Unorthodox).

Spells per Day: No spells per day progression at 1st, 5th, and 10th levels.

Shadow Strider: No longer a class feature – replaced by Shield of Shadows.

Shield of Shadows: At 1st level, a shadow walker gains the ability to surround himself with a shadowy aura that grants the shadow walker one-quarter cover (due to the quasi-real nature of the aura), one-quarter concealment and a +4 to Hide checks. The aura is a supernatural ability, does not interfere with the sight of the shadow walker and lasts a number of rounds per day equal to the shadow walker's level. This aura can be summoned as a free action outside of your own turn and on a number of different occasions, as long as the total number of rounds the aura is active does not exceed the shadow walker's level. At 5th level, the shadow walker's aura gains in strength and provides one-half cover, one-half concealment, and +8 to Hide checks. At 10th level, the aura further strengthens and grants the shadow walker three-quarters cover, three-quarters concealment, and +12 to Hide checks.

Bonus Feats: The shadow walker gains bonus feats at 3rd, 6th, and 9th levels.

Hide in Plain Sight: At 3rd level, shadow walkers can use the Hide skill even when being observed. As long as they are within 10 feet of a shadow of some sort (including shadow spells), shadow walkers can hide themselves from view in the open without anything to actually hide behind. They cannot hide behind their own natural shadows though they can hide in shadows created by their spells, including the Aura of

Shadows ability. Hide in Plain Sight is a supernatural ability.

Shadow Jump: At 6th level, shadow walkers gain the ability to travel between shadows as if by means of a *dimension door* spell. The limitation is that the magical transport must begin and end in an area with at least some shadow. The shadow walker can jump up to a total of 20 feet each day in this way, although this may be a single jump of 20 feet or two jumps of 10 feet each. Every two levels thereafter, the distance a shadow walker can jump each day doubles (40 feet at 8th level, and 80 feet at 10th level). This amount can be split among many jumps, but each one, no matter how small, counts as a 10-foot increment. (An 8th-level shadow walker who jumps 32 feet cannot jump again until the next day.)

Designer's Note: *Umbral aura* should be a 3rd-level spell, not 2nd. This was an erratum.

Unaligned Master Class Features:

Spells per Day: No spells per day progression at 1st, 5th and 10th levels.

Bonus Feats: The unaligned master gains bonus feats at 3rd, 6th and 9th levels.

Jack-of-All-Trades: At 1st level, the unaligned master gains +1 to his caster level when casting spells from the school of Illusionism. His non-illusion spells, however, suffer a -1 to their caster level. At 5th level, the bonus to caster level for illusion spells becomes +2 and the penalty for non-illusion spells becomes -2.

Master of Nothing: At 10th level, the unaligned master lowers the spell slot increase of metamagic feats by one when they are added onto illusion spells, but increases the spell slot increase of metamagic feats placed on spells not from the school of illusion. For example, if an unaligned master empowers a *greater phantasmal force* spell, the spell slot is only increased by one instead of the normal two slots, whereas if he casts

a quickened *magic missile* the spell slot is increased by five instead of the normal four slots!

Designer's Note: I wrote these prestige classes without a clear personal idea of what prestige classes should be, but have, over the course of the year of design since first doing this project, realised the delicate balance that is needed in making prestige classes and the importance of give and take in their design. I realised that I was only using requirements (most of which were not very costly) to 'balance' the prestige classes when in truth the best way to balance classes is to trade off core class features for prestigious and specialised class features. To reflect this new understanding you will note that the revised prestige classes do not have their full spells-per-day progression as they did in *Encyclopaedia Arcane: Illusionism*, which, in my estimation, is one of the central methods of balancing a spellcaster-based prestige class. I now also try to avoid granting spellcasters spell-like abilities as prestige class features and instead concentrate upon granting unique special abilities; thus the shadow walker has been heavily changed with this in mind. In short, I tried to make the prestige classes more flavourful and balanced in light of the constructive criticisms I received and hope these changes will entice more Games Masters to include these prestige classes in their games without fear of creating an uber-munchkin.

Spells (New and Revised)

Phantasmal Disease (New)

Illusion (Phantasm) (Fear, Mind Affecting)

Level: Sor/Wiz 3

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Target: Living creature touched

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: Will disbelief (if interacted with); then Fortitude (negates)

Spell Resistance: Yes

You cause the subject's subconscious mind to believe they have contracted a disease, which strikes immediately. You may infect the subject with blinding sickness, cackle fever, filth fever, mindfire, red ache, shakes, slimy doom, or any other non-supernatural disease. Only the subject sees the effects of the *phantasmal disease*. The subject first gets a Will save to recognise the *phantasmal disease* as unreal. If the subject fails, he must succeed a Fortitude save versus the spell's DC (not the disease's normal DC) or suffer the damage of the chosen disease. Once per day afterward the subject gains a new Will disbelief and Fortitude save. If the Will save or two Fortitude saves are successful the subject completely recovers from the *phantasmal disease* and all ability point damage is immediately restored, even 'permanent' loses from slimy doom and the like.

Shadow Disease (New)

Illusion (Shadow)

Level: Sor/Wiz 4

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Target: Living creature touched

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: Will disbelief (if interacted with); then Fortitude (negates)

Spell Resistance: Yes or No (harmless)

As *phantasmal disease*, except the disease is quasi-real and one-half of the ability damage (50%) is real. This means even if the subject makes his initial Will disbelief save and recognises the *shadow disease* as an illusion he still has to make a successful Fortitude save versus the spell's DC or suffer one-half of the normal damage from the disease (minimum 1 per day). If the subject

fails the initial Will and Fortitude saves whatever ability damage is dealt to them is half real and half unreal. The first and every odd point thereafter of ability damage are considered real. Once a Will save is made all the unreal damage is immediately restored, while the real ability damage remains. If two Fortitude saves are successful the subject recovers from the *shadow disease*. Any real damage taken from this spell must be recovered as normal, it is not immediately restored and permanent loses remain lost. When using spells that restore ability damage on a subject affected by *shadow disease* the spells heal the real ability damage, not the unreal.

Summon Shadow Beast I-IX (Revised)

Illusion (Shadow)

Level: Sor/Wiz Varies

Components: V, S, F

Casting Time: 1 full round

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Effect: One summoned shadow beast

Duration: 1 round/level (D)

Saving Throw: Will disbelief (if interacted with)

Spell Resistance: Yes or No (harmless)

You summon a quasi-real creature that is one-half real (50%). It appears where you designate and acts immediately on your turn. It attacks your opponents or performs tasks for you to the best of its ability. You have an empathic link to the *shadow beast*, which works exactly like that you would have with your familiar. This spell can be cast at a variety of levels, from 1st to 9th level. Each level of the spell can summon an animal or magical beast with the shadow beast template (see below) of a Challenge Rating equal to or less than the spell's level.

Shadow Beast Template

The 'Shadow Beast' template can be added to any animal or magical beast creature. Animals with this template become magical beasts, but otherwise

the creature type is unchanged. The shadow beast uses all the base creature's statistics and special abilities, except as noted here.

Hit Die: All shadow beasts use the d10 die type, but only have one-half the normal hit points.

Damage: Shadow beast creatures deal normal damage, until they are disbelieved. Thereafter they only deal one-half their normal damage.

Special Attacks: All special attacks only have a 50% chance of affecting an opponent who disbelieves the shadow beast. A shadow beast retains all the special attacks of the base creature and also gains the following:

Frightful Presence (Ex): When summoned by a 9th-level spell, a shadow beast gains the ability to unsettle its opponents with its mere presence. This ability takes effect automatically when the creature performs a hostile action (such as attacking, charging, or snarling). Opponents within 30 feet of the shadow beast must make a Will save (DC 10 + 1/2 shadow beast's HD + shadow beast's Charisma modifier) or become shaken for 5d6 rounds. This ability only affects opponents with fewer Hit Dice or levels than the shadow beast. An opponent who succeeds at the saving throw is immune to that shadow beast's frightful presence for the rest of its duration. An opponent who fails their initial saving throw versus the shadow beast and later disbelieves its reality has a 50% chance of immediately becoming unshaken instead of waiting for the condition to run its duration. If the base creature already has Frightful Presence increase the Will save Difficulty Class by two.

Special Qualities: A shadow beast retains all the special qualities of the base creature and also gains the following:

Empathic Link (Su): As per the familiar's empathic link ability.

Immunity to Illusions (Su): When summoned by a 5th-level spell or greater, the shadow beast is immune to all illusions and can see through them without making a Will disbelief save.

Challenge Rating: Same as base creature.

Alignment: Always neutral.

Arcane Focus: Obsidian worth at least 10 gp.

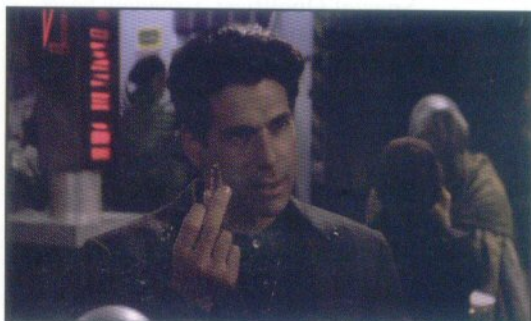
Designer's Note: The two illusionary disease spells come from a discussion with one of the reviewers of *Encyclopaedia Arcane: Illusionism* who mentioned that fooling another's body into being ill would be a great idea to delve into if I got a chance to write a follow-up work on Illusionism. The *summon shadow beast I-IX* revision also came from reviewer feedback and the comment he would have preferred a scaleable version of the shadow beast spell with a template, just in case you wanted to introduce a shadow beast into a campaign.

Conclusion

I would like to thank Mongoose for allowing me to write a follow-up to *Encyclopaedia Arcane: Illusionism* and I hope those who have the supplement get a little more out of it and those who do not take a second look at the product in light of the revisions here.



The S&P Caption Competition #1 Results

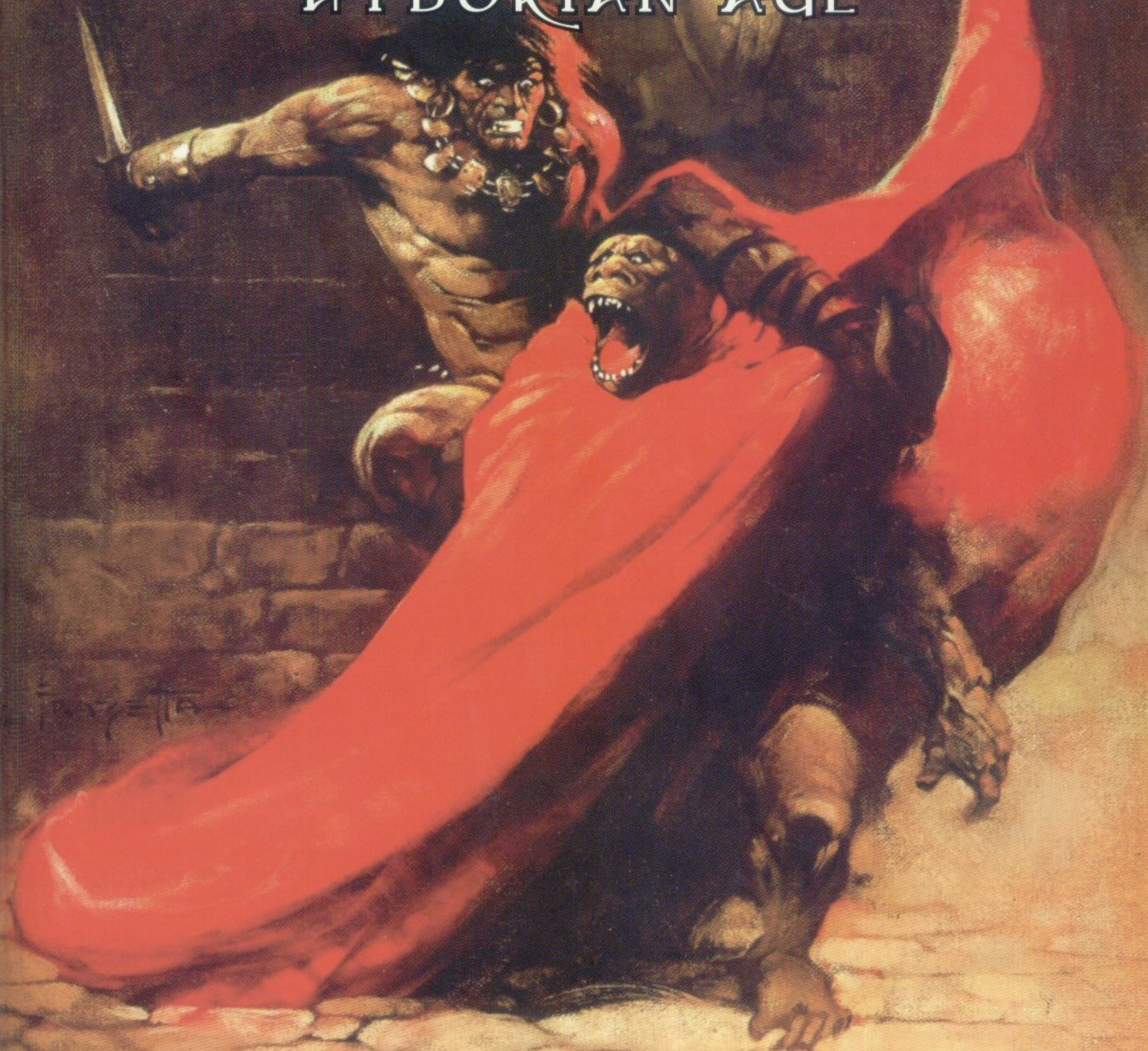


A surprisingly large number of you wrote in, no doubt eager to win a copy of Minbari Federation. Not much surprise that a suppository theme was prevalent in many suggestions. Here's the winner:

Mr. MORDEN: 'You know, I work for some of the most powerful associates in the galaxy and all I get paid is this lousy datacrystal with 100 shares of Spoo Ranches.'

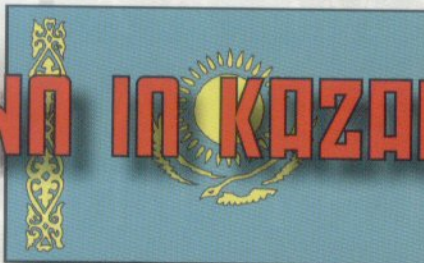
Congratulations to Shawn Quick of Minneapolis, a copy of Minbari Federation will be winging its way to you.

HIS NAME WAS CONAN,
AND HE WAS THE
GREATEST HERO OF THE
HYBORIAN AGE



AND IN 2004 HE'S BACK!

SHOWDOWN IN KAZAKHSTAN



August Hahn

An Armageddon: 2089 scenario for up to six 3rd-5th level characters.

It was going to happen eventually. You have managed to gain some money, some fame and a reputation for getting the job done in this country between the Powers. Sooner or later, someone was going to come along and try to oust you as Kazakhstan's rising stars, especially since you have been burning so very, very brightly. In astronomy, stars burn brightest just before they fade away. In the dangerous streets of Astana, one false step and the same will hold true for you.

Showdown in Kazakhstan is a scenario for any number of Armageddon 2089 players and can be run as part of any campaign with a little minor place editing. The opposition in this adventure can be scaled to fit any party size, though it is optimal to run Showdown in Kazakhstan at some point during the Behind Enemy Lines: Kazakhstan story line. This adventure assumes that the player characters have succeeded at most if not all of their missions during the story arc, and as such have garnered quite a reputation as 'mercs to watch'. If this is not the case, the adventure can still be run, though the motivations of the antagonists must be altered to better fit the player characters' reputation.

Though it is certainly not necessary, Showdown in Kazakhstan is recommended for a party of 2 to 6 characters with an average level of 3rd through 5th. The best time in the Behind Enemy Lines story arc for Showdown in Kazakhstan is during the Interlude – Living and Dying in

Astana – right after the characters have featured in their second (or possibly third) IWN news brief. The player characters will be the talk of the town and thus come to the attention of the scenario's opposition, the Surwaffe Seven.

NOTE: GAMES MASTERS WITH ESTABLISHED NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS MAY WISH TO SUBSTITUTE THEIR OWN ENEMIES INTO THE STORY LINE; THIS IS PERFECTLY ACCEPTABLE. ANY GROUP WITH AN EYE FOR THE PUBLIC SPOTLIGHT AND/OR A GRUDGE TO SETTLE WITH THE PLAYER CHARACTERS WILL DO NICELY IN THIS ADVENTURE.

THE SET-UP

Placing the Showdown in a continuing Kazakhstan plotline is a simple matter of building up animosity between the Surwaffe Seven and the player characters over a period of time. The heart of this adventure is the pair of battles detailed below, of course, but as a scenario it works best if given time to develop into a situation where tempers are flaring on both sides.

The first encounter the player characters should have with the Surwaffe Seven should be a social situation, preferably one that does not allow for any violence to erupt without serious consequences. The setting described in Shot One is an example of how this can play out, but any similar scenario would work just as well. The important thing to keep in mind while running Showdown in Kazakhstan is that by the time guns

get drawn and Meks power up, the player characters should want to finish things just as badly as Grissom and his men do.

SHOT ONE – ILL MET AT MARATA'S

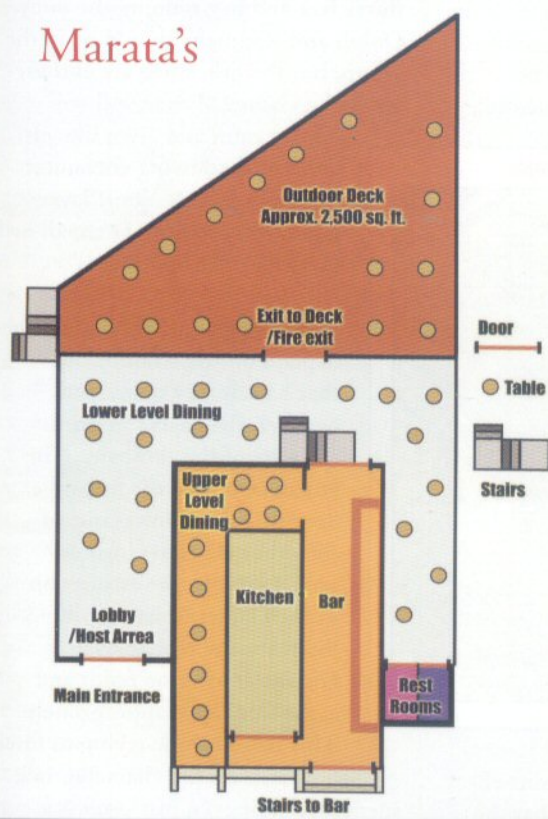
Marata's is a nice restaurant in the city of Astana and the meeting place for many of the Player Character's initial mission briefings during the Behind Enemy Lines: Kazakhstan story arc. This two-storey dining establishment has a full bar on the first floor and a number of small private rooms upstairs for business clientele. During the first part of the story arc's Interlude, the player characters meet with their primary mission contact there and are subsequently given a period of rest and recuperation before any further work is going to come their way. In the plot-line as it is laid out in the book, the group leaves Marata's with no further incident, but this scenario changes that.

Instead, on their way out of the restaurant, one of the player characters (preferably whoever can most easily make a DC 15 Listen check) overhears a comment between a pair of patrons at Marata's bar. The two people speaking are of German descent and are obviously more than a little inebriated, which might explain how a comment as rude as this was so easily overheard.

'Refugees and milk runs, not real work for men if you ask me. Maybe those trainee pilots should try delivering mail next and leave the hard things to people like us.'

The men in question are Dolph and Ranmehr Bonn, two Mek

Marata's



officers from a mercenary company called the Surwaffe Seven. They will be recognised by the player characters if any of them can make a Knowledge (mercenaries or a similar specialisation) skill check at a DC 18. German player characters should receive a +2 circumstance bonus to this roll, +3 if they have actually served in the German armed forces. Base the amount of information known by the player characters about these two and the Surwaffe Seven on the margin of success the check is made by. Even if none of them made the skill check, later research will turn up names and history on the group.

For now, knowing who these two German blowhards are and who they serve will not mean much and it certainly will not shut them up. Drunk and rambling, they will not immediately spot the player characters and while the group might assume the pair are trying to start a fight, they were only shooting their mouths off and had no idea the player characters were at Marata's. As the Games Master, feel free to improvise

a drunken ramble between Dolph and his brother Ranmehr insulting the player characters as deeply and as foully as the campaign will allow.

Of course, this ramble might not go on very long, especially if the player characters take exception (as they should) to this kind of talk. Any confrontation will have to wait for another day, because the staff at Marata's are very insistent about trouble being taken outside and have hired doormen to ensure that this policy is adhered to. Drunk as they are, Dolph and

Ranmehr will not want to try taking on the whole group by themselves and while they will talk a good game and throw around a lot of cutting, if stammeringly incoherent, insults, they will not stick around for things to come to blows.

Before they flee, driving away in a well maintained road car with a hologram vanity plate on the front in the shape of a Germanic  with a 7 superimposed on it, the Bonn brothers make it clear that the player characters have not seen the last of them. They advise the 'cowards' to leave town before someone gets hurt. While describing the getaway car sideswiping a light post and almost crashing because of the drunken idiot (Dolph) at the wheel can nicely punctuate this last insult, this encounter should not be played for laughs alone. The player characters might have a chuckle at these two fools by themselves, but wiser heads among them should have the feeling that this situation will only get worse from here.

BETWEEN SHOTS

The player characters may do some research on their new nemeses. Doing so will require Gather Information skill checks and/or Diplomacy depending on how the group wishes to handle their information run. The city's registry service will be an invaluable resource, as any mercenary company residing for longer than a day in Astana must provide detailed information about their company size, crew data and mission logs. Getting any of this information can be very difficult, as it is all considered classified, but the personnel at the Registrar's office have a weakness for Russian vodka and anyone providing them with their next drink can find out anything they wish within reason.

Other resources for player characters to try may include personal contacts, net reports, military documents (especially German files) and other information sources. The Games Master should make it difficult for player characters to find out a great deal about the Surwaffe Seven, but not impossible. Persistence and roleplaying should ultimately pay off and give the group whatever they need to know.

During this time, which should be a few days to a week, the player characters should occasionally see Dolph or Ranmehr in the street without actually encountering them. If the Bonns see any member of the group, they actively try to avoid them. During this time, things should be tense but not actually come to a head. For their part, the Bonns have been talking up their encounter with the player characters to the other members of their group, making themselves sound more daring and confrontational than they actually were. While the leader of the group, Hauptmann Darr Grissom, knows full well this talk is a load of horse schnitzel, he has his own reasons for hating the player characters.

His exact reasons for detesting them may vary from campaign to campaign based on the events of that

particular game but, in general, they should remain similar to this. The company the player characters have been working for, Arbeitskräfte, was in negotiations to use the Surwaffe Seven for the same missions the player characters have been getting famous for. With his company already on the rocks financially and with the Seven's shaky reputation, he sees the player characters as a scapegoat for his group's decline.

In any case, he has fanned the fervour of the Bonns' outrage among the rest of his men, causing them to hate the player characters as much as Dolph and Ranmehr do. What began as a drunken ramble has grown into something much darker and more sinister by the time the next part of the scenario begins.

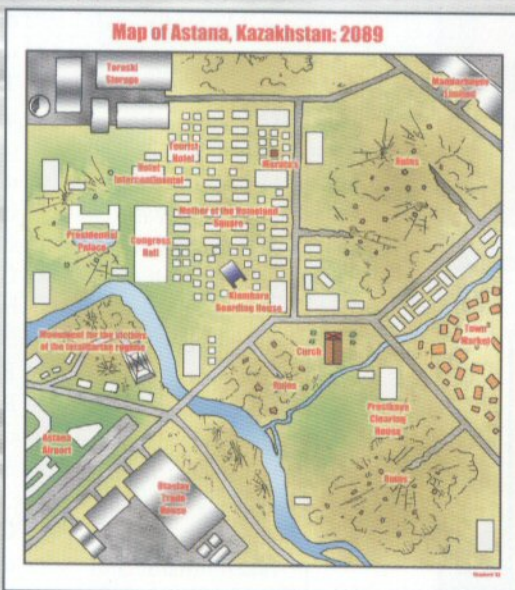
ΣΗΦΤ ΓΗΦ — RIVAL AFFECTIONS

By the end of the week, the player characters are now seeing members of the Seven almost everywhere they go. When they shop, one of the Bonn brothers and one or two other teammates (Games Master's choice) are somewhere nearby. When they dine out, a member of the Surwaffe Seven is at a nearby table. If anyone in the group tries to confront the Germans, they are steadfastly ignored and the mercenaries plead ignorance. It is not that big a town, after all, and it is just coincidence, or so they say. Regardless, the shadowing continues until it finally comes to a head.

This encounter occurs because of a breakdown in the Surwaffe Seven's discipline. Grissom has ordered his men to observe the player characters and not to initiate contact or get into any altercations until he gives them the command to do so. Hauptmann Grissom knows that another incident in Astana is likely to get him and his men thrown out of the city and he would rather avoid that, at least until he can score another mission and a

ticket out of Kazakhstan on someone else's bill.

Unfortunately, that is not to be. This scenario should take place at



a café or public gathering point of the Games Master's choice that the player characters frequent. If there is one Player Character in particular who goes somewhere alone, that is a perfect opportunity for this scene to take place. The Surwaffe Seven are not particularly interested in fair play and outnumbering one of the player characters is just the sort of thing they would prefer to do.

At this chosen location, the Games Master needs to have one of the hired help or one of the other patrons develop an interest in one of the player characters. For best effect, this interest should be built up over several gaming sessions so that the person becomes a known Non-Player Character and the players have a reason to recognise and empathise with them. When the Games Master is ready to run Rival Affections, the Non-Player Character will get drawn into the burgeoning conflict in a very unfortunate way; one of the Surwaffe Seven will single that person out for attentions of his own.

While the Player Character(s) enjoys whatever purpose the public meeting spot has to offer, four of the Surwaffe

Seven approach within twenty or thirty feet and begin doing the same. Dolph and Ranmehr should be in the group, but the other two are entirely up to the Games Master. All will remain calm and seem like just another shadowing encounter until the chosen Non-Player Character arrives. Then, all hell breaks loose.

How things start should entirely depend on the relationship that has already developed between the characters and the tone of the campaign. In any case, one of the Surwaffe Seven (Dolph, unless one of the other characters would serve better in the estimation of the Games Master) will intercept the Non-Player Character at some point and act incredibly inappropriately. This may include trying to force

attentions on the character, talk suggestively, or even just profess a romantic interest, which may be real or false as the Games Master chooses. Even if the interest is genuine, this is mostly being done to get a rise out of the Player Character.

Unfortunately for all concerned, things like this can quickly get out of hand. While the behaviour may have started as a ruse, it rapidly descends into something more serious. Again, what happens should mirror the mood and scope of the campaign, but it would not be out of line for something along the lines of Dolph grabbing the Non-Player Character by the wrist and try to leave the bar, saying something to his friends along the lines of 'having a quick date'.

At this point, there is likely to be a fight. It should be brief, since the members of the Seven know that they have crossed over the line and their commander is going to be furious with them. Even if the Player Character is alone, the four of them will not stay to pound on him and, no matter how the first few rounds of combat go, they will not draw any lethal weapons or call for help.

POSSIBLE PLOT TWIST — BROTHERS TO THE END

If the member of the Seven killed by Grissom is Dolph or Ranmehr, the surviving brother may, at the Games Master's option, decide to take revenge for his sibling's death. The quickest and most efficient way to accomplish that might be to go to the player characters and sell Grissom out to them. While this switching sides would be motivated strictly by a need for revenge, it could open up a possible redemption for the Bonn brother if the he is accepted and treated well by 'the enemy'. This plot deviation changes the scenario dramatically, though the same basic script still applies. The Games Master will have to take into account how much aid the brother's information might be to the player characters in later encounters, however, and adjust the game play accordingly.

Instead, they stay for three rounds and then beat a hasty retreat. In the eyes of the player characters and especially in the eyes of the person that was just 'rescued', it will look like they were driven off.

The encounter ends here, but only because the Surwaffe Seven were not supposed to fight. They return to Grissom and hesitantly let him know what happened. This incident will cause things to escalate out of control, but that will take a couple of days. For the player characters, things will get peaceful again and there will be no more shadowing. They may begin to think the whole matter with the Seven has been dropped once and for all.

BETWEEN SHOTS

They could not be more wrong. While Grissom is furious at his men for what happened, this just hastens the inevitable as far as he is concerned. If the Seven dramatically outnumber the player characters, this is the perfect opportunity for Grissom to take out his fury at the breach of

discipline by shooting the member of his team responsible for it. Emptying his H&K PDW-50 into the twitching body of his underling will not cool his temper where the player characters are concerned, but it certainly improves the obedience (if not morale) of the now Surwaffe Six.

Three days will pass between the last encounter and the next one, each one passing peacefully for the player characters. As Grissom feared, the repercussions of his team's actions cause the city government of Astana to remove their residency privileges and they are given a week to vacate their rented barracks and remove their hardware from the city limits. This, of course, he blames on the player characters entirely.

News of the Surwaffe Seven's eviction should reach the ears of the player characters, especially if any of them are continuing to keep track of the rival group. If Grissom has executed one of his men, the body will turn up in the bombed out part of the city and this too should come to the player characters' attention. While they will not necessarily know why the German mercenary was killed, it should heighten their concerns and leave them paranoid about what might happen next.

SHOT THREE — BLUFF IN THE STREET

Grissom has four days to leave Astana, but he is planning on moving early. All of their gear has been stowed in their vehicles and the Seven, or possibly the Six, are ready to go when he gives the order. There is just one last thing he would like to take care of first. When he is ready, Grissom sends one of his men to the player characters' quarters with a message. How it is delivered is up to the member of the Seven in question, but he will most likely shout it up at the

Player Characters' windows or deliver it as a note via a thrown rock through a plate glass window. The mercenary is under strict orders not to fight the player characters and as such will be taking no chances.

We should settle this like men. We will be in the Torvosk Industrial Park at 19:00 hours. Don't be late. We know where you sleep.

This situation can be handled in any number of ways that do not involve the player characters strapping on their guns and meeting the Surwaffe

ASTANA HIRED GUN

These men and women are mercenaries just like the player characters who came to Kazakhstan looking for action and cold, hard cash. Unlike the Player Character, they did not find the choice assignments or get selected by a patron corporation. Instead, they sell their services to whoever is buying and have no qualms about whatever work they get.

Hired Mercenary: Human Soldier 2; Init: +2; DV: 17 (Size + Dex + Infantry); DR: 5 (flak jacket); Spd 10 m; HP: 24; Attack +4 (+5 at point blank range) ranged (3d8 H&K G46); SQ Unit Morale +1, Infantry Specialisation; SV Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +1; Str 14, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 12, Chr 10.

Important Skills: Profession (mercenary) +4, Intimidate +5, Medical +5

Feats: Weapon (pistol, melee, rifle, and grenade), Point Blank Shot, Rapid Shot, Far Shot

Equipment: Military Communicator, H&K G46, one extra magazine for H&K G46, Street Clothes, Flak Jacket (+5 DR), First Aid Kit

Seven for a bloody brawl in the middle of Astana's demilitarised zone. They may inform the authorities and let Astana's Civil Defence deal with the Germans or they may ignore them complete and move locations. They may show up there early and set a trap for the Seven. The Games Master should adjudicate any situation the players decide to create, but the threat in the message is not an empty one. If the player characters just ignore the message, Grissom has no qualms about killing them in their beds.

Assuming some form of a battle takes place here, the Surwaffe Seven will be ready and waiting for the player characters if they arrive up to an hour before or after 19:00. If the player characters are early, they will have the chance to surprise the Seven assuming they use any stealth at all. After 19:00 but before they clear out at 19:30, the Surwaffe Seven are extremely wary and will not likely be taken by surprise at all. Assume Spot and Listen Checks of 20 covering every avenue of approach to the Torvosk Park.

The Park itself is a two-storey, sheet-steel and concrete meat packing plant with a large stock pen outside surrounded by a 15-foot mesh wire fence. The complex is in a bad state of disrepair following the bombing runs that levelled a third of the city in the rebellion that shook Kazakhstan two decades earlier. It is therefore quite abandoned and police patrols come nowhere near it. It has been a site of choice for violent 'business' for some time and any blood spilled here certainly will not be the first. During the encounter, the Games Master should describe signs of previous battles to set the proper mood for the scene.

The Seven will be tactically spaced around the perimeter of the Park. In addition to his own men, Grissom has hired other mercenaries, two for every one Player Character, to fill out the ambush. Hans and Gruber are the best shots in the team and have been placed on the second floor of the building on opposite sides next to windows to make good use of their talents. The hired guns will be spread out evenly to cover the Park and guard the main building itself. They have orders to shoot anyone they do not recognize and they are more than willing to do so.

Grissom has the others in constant radio contact and roaming the perimeter. He is not actually present for this battle, having chosen to remain at the storage facility across the city where his WarMek and

military assets are stored. If this shootout goes poorly, he is fully prepared to cut and run before the player characters can figure out that he is not among the bodies.

While their initial tactics are sound, the Seven will suffer for not having their leader directly with them. Their anger with the player characters will get the better of them and if the battle ever allows any of them to swarm on the group, guns blazing, they will do so. This battle should be fought savagely but not astutely. Grissom is the only real tactician in the Surwaffe Seven; without his guidance, they are mostly reduced to trying to overwhelm the player characters with firepower and superior numbers.

They are also willing to retreat and fall back if things go poorly. If the Seven lose any one of their own members, the rest will try to make a break for the storage facility. The group's jeeps are parked in one of the cattle sheds inside the wire fence and, assuming the player characters have not disabled them or pinned in the German mercenaries, they will likely be able to escape after taking their losses. The hired mercenaries will immediately break ranks and stop fighting if their employers flee.

The tone of this battle should be a desperate one for the player characters, especially when things first begin and the sheer number of guns being fired at them becomes clear. The Games Master should run this combat as straight as possible, with smart tactics saving the player characters as much as poor ones will get them killed. Even so, if the Games Master wishes to continue the scenario after this encounter, it would be best for the battle to end with the majority of the Surwaffe Seven escaping to rendezvous with Grissom and the player characters limping away from the Torvosk Industrial Park bloodied but victorious.

BETWEEN SHOTS

If the player characters did not witness the members of the Seven escape,

managed to kill them all, and/or did not realise that Grissom was missing from the body count, they may once again be under the illusion that the feud is over. While what is left of the Surwaffe Seven has been driven out of the city, they have certainly not forgotten who brought them to this ignoble fate. Now the survivors of the group have a direct reason to hate the player characters and when they get the chance to cross paths with them again, the German mercenaries will truly be out for blood.

Even if Grissom is the only member of the team left, his desire for revenge will in no way be sated. If he must, he will use the last of his team's saving to hire other mercenaries from the camps that exist outside Astana to aid him in this. Most soldiers have no problem taking someone's money, no matter what the reason behind the mission, but if any of the player characters have contacts or have a reason to talk with the mercenaries camped outside the city, they may learn of Grissom's survival and plans to do them in through those connections. Otherwise, they will be in for quite a surprise the next time they leave the confines of the city.

SHOT FOUR — TO THE DEATH

This is the last encounter in the scenario and as such, should have quite a build up before it. If things went poorly at Torvosk, one or more of the player characters may have died and, at the very least, most of them have been wounded. They should all have a reason to see this matter through to the end. If they are still not driven to face Grissom down, the Games Master can have Grissom cross the line by kidnapping the Non-Player Character attached to one of them or perform some other heinous act aimed specifically at hurting the player characters in whatever emotional or mental way possible.

If Grissom's actions have not ensured that the player characters will come hunting him down as soon as possible,

this encounter may have to wait until the group has a reason to leave Astana on another mission. If the story arc from Behind Enemy Lines is forming the basis of the campaign, this may be a month or two, depending on how the rest of the Interlude goes. The longer they wait before going out of the city limits again, the more time Grissom has to plan their untimely, and very painful, deaths.

This encounter is fairly straightforward, as the simplest plans are often the best ones. Grissom and his men, either the surviving members of the Surwaffe Seven or mercenaries hired for this attack, have received word through their contacts remaining in Astana of the player characters' departure and will move to intercept them once they are outside the city's patrol range.

The attack plan is also very simple; Grissom intends to bombard the player characters at long range as brutally and as long as possible. His desire to see the player characters, whom he now quite irrationally believes are responsible for every ill his company has suffered since its inception – even problems that occurred before they crossed paths – is not so blinding that he will abandon his sense of strategy. He will exploit every weakness he sees and command his men expertly while doing so.

The Games Master should run this battle as a swift and aggressive strike by a combined fire force under the command of a military genius. Grissom may be psychotic, but he also has a keen mind honed by years of military training. If a given WarMek has a vulnerability he can exploit, he will do so. If there are smaller Meks that could be destroyed in a concentrated volley, he will direct fire that way. He is interested in a body count first and foremost and if that means ignoring harder targets in preference for weaker ones, he will do so. The loss of personnel is enough of a victory for him, at least in the short term.

AFTER THE SMOKE CLEARS

What happens after the battle, which should be as bloody and ruthless as Grissom can manage, is over depends greatly on where the Games Master wishes to take this scenario from here. If Grissom has become a useful focal point for the player characters' aggression, the Games Master may wish to continue the character by having him survive the showdown. Even if his WarMek is destroyed, he may be able to eject and escape before he is hunted down. As furious as he is, only survival will ensure that the player characters pay for everything they have done to him.

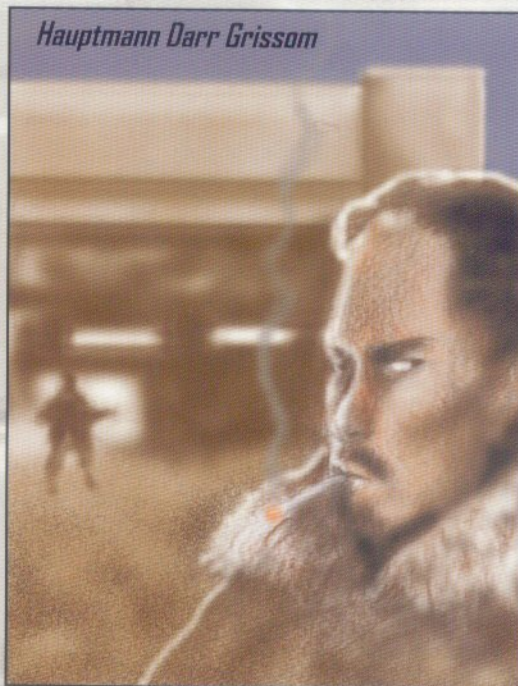
If this has merely been intended as a diversion, the scenario can end cleanly with the death of Grissom and the Surwaffe Seven at this battle. A cathartic fight to the death can be just the kind of excitement an Armageddon 2089 campaign needs once in a while, especially when the targets are entirely undeserving of any mercy or quarter.

THE SURWAFFE SEVEN

Founded by Hauptmann Darr Grissom, this group of German WarMek pilots has served on the battlefields of Eastern Europe and Asia in one sense or another for over five years. With a combined total of 58 years of military experience between them, the Surwaffe Seven are extremely effective and well trained. Their use of strong combat tactics and massed firepower has earned them a place among other mercenaries and those who hire them.

Unfortunately, that place is as loose cannons that get the job done but generally do so in the most destructive way possible. With their leader's attitude of 'fire first, fire last', the company's assignments have been coming fewer and farther between lately as more efficient and less collateral-damage-heavy teams have appeared on the scene. The Surwaffe Seven's recent performance in battle has not done anything to ease this stigma, and the team has found themselves blackballed among government circles because of their violent reputation.

Hauptmann Darr Grissom



This has done nothing to dissuade Hauptmann Grissom's determination to see his team attain the recognition and fortune he feels they, and he, deserve. His willingness to take any assignment to prove his people's skill in combat has led to them performing some very questionable tasks for military agencies and corporations in parts of the world where no respectable mercenary company would travel. Between settling civil disputes in Africa with machinegun fire and putting down Middle East uprisings through co-ordinated artillery, the Surwaffe Seven's reputation has become that of a brutal, heartless organisation that values

human life only as much as their paycheques dictate they should.

HAUPTMANN DARR GRISSOM: Human Field Officer 5; Init: +2; DV: 16 (Size + Dex); DR: 4 (flak jacket); Spd 10 m; HP: 33; Attack +8 ranged (2d6 FN P92); SQ Basic Training, Cross Training (Assault), Unshakeable; SV Fort +6, Ref +7, Will +4; Str 10, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 15, Wis 16, Chr 15.

Important Skills: WarMek Pilot +10 (+12), Computer Use +5, Concentration +6, Diplomacy +5, Knowledge (tactics) +8, Intimidate +8, Medical +5, Scan +6, Spot +6
Feats: Weapon (melee, grenade, WarMek, pistol), Skill Focus (WarMek Pilot), Vehicle Dodge, Defensive Reflexes, Point Blank Shot, Combat Reflexes, Evasive Action

Equipment: Communicator, Hand Computer, FN P92, one extra magazine for FN P92, Jumpsuit, First Aid Kit, Assigned Mek – Egide ‘Roland’ Champion WarMek

Grissom is an egocentric tyrant who runs his company with an iron hand and has no tolerance for failure or disobedience. Fortunately for him, he is also a very effective leader with enough tactical sense and personal magnetism to keep his men with him despite his frequent rages and unreasonable demands upon them. He accepts nothing but the best from his men and has been known to punish mistakes quite harshly. Even so, he rewards success and service in combat richly and until recently, none of his men have ever wanted for wealth or prestige. Now, with fortunes flagging and military confidence in his team slipping, his behaviour has only become more extreme.

DOLPH AND RANMEHR BONN: Human Field Officer 3; Init: +3; DV: 17 (Size + Dex); DR: 0; Spd 10 m; HP: 24; Attack +6 (+7 at point blank range) ranged (2d8 Glock 40); SQ Basic Training, Cross Training (Comms), Unshakeable; SV Fort +5, Ref +6, Will +1; Str 10, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Chr 10.

Important Skills: WarMek Pilot +8 (+10), Computer Use +4, Concentration +6, Knowledge (tactics) +5, Intimidate +5, Medical +5, Spot +6

Feats: Weapon (melee, grenade, WarMek, pistol), Skill Focus (WarMek Pilot), Vehicle Dodge, Point Blank Shot, Evasive Action

Equipment: Military Communicator, Glock 40, one extra magazines for Glock 40, Jumpsuit, Assigned Mek – Dolph: Volksmecha ‘Gunther’ Light Field WarMek, Ranmehr: Ipex-Tak Orb 8-L Multiple Missile WarMek

These German brothers are usually inseparable, mostly because so few other people would have anything to do with them. While apart, they can almost be likeable by someone who shared their penchant for heavy drinking and fighting; together they play off each other and become more rambunctious the longer they carouse. Grissom has had to discipline both of them quite strongly in the past, but it only seems to temporarily calm them down. Eventually, they both return to their rude, crass behaviour. If it were not for their skill on the field, it is not likely that the Hauptmann would have tolerated them this long. Dolph is the older of the two by four years, though he hardly acts the part.

HANS KHEMER: Human Field Officer 3; Init: +4; DV: 18 (Size + Dex); DR: 0; Spd 10 m; HP: 20; Attack +6 (+7 at point blank range) ranged (2d8 Glock 40); SQ Basic Training, Cross Training (Comms), Unshakeable; SV Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +1; Str 10, Dex 18, Con 12, Int 15, Wis 12, Chr 10.

Important Skills: WarMek Pilot +10 (+12), Computer Use +5, Concentration +6, Knowledge (tactics) +6, Medical +5, Scan +6 (+7 comms), Spot +6, Electronic Warfare +5 (+6 comms)

Feats: Weapon (melee, grenade, WarMek, pistol), Skill Focus (WarMek Pilot), Vehicle Dodge, Point Blank Shot, Evasive Action

Equipment: Military Communicator, Military Hand Computer, Glock 40, three extra magazines for Glock 40, Barrett M100 Heavy Sniper Rifle, Jumpsuit, First Aid Kit, Assigned Mek – Aizahishi ‘Tametomo’ Smart Support WarMek (shared with Gruber Kelsing)

Hans is the calmest of the Surwaffe Seven, which is to say that when he kills for the team, it is with detachment and in total silence. Barely emotional on the best of days, the rest of his team keep him at arm’s length most of the time. The only person in the Seven who can stand to be near him for very long at a time is his team-mate and fellow Tametomo pilot, Gruber. While they have never discussed it with the rest of their company, Gruber and Hans went through some rough times in the German military and remain quite close because of them. Even so, Hans does not show any real signs of affection towards anyone, even Gruber, and by all apparent signs is a textbook sociopath.

GRUBER KELSING: Human Scout Officer 4; Init: +3; DV: 17 (Size + Dex); DR: 4 (flak jacket); Spd 10 m; HP: 25; Attack +7 ranged (2d6 Glock 40); SQ Basic Training, Cross Training (Comms), Unshakeable; SV Fort +7, Ref +7, Will +2; Str 10, Dex 16, Con 16, Int 14, Wis 12, Chr 14.

Important Skills: WarMek Pilot +10 (+12), Computer Use +5, Concentration +6, Knowledge (geography) +6, Intimidate +5, Gather Information +8, Medical +5, Scan +8 (+9 comms), Spot +6 (+8), Technical +5, Electronic Warfare +5 (+6 comms), Survival +6 (+8)
Feats: Weapon (melee, grenade, WarMek, pistol), Skill Focus (WarMek Pilot), Scanner Focus, WarMek Handling, Tenacity, Endurance
Equipment: Communicator, Hand Computer, Glock 40, two extra magazines for Glock 40, Barrett M100 Heavy Sniper Rifle, Jumpsuit, First Aid Kit, Assigned Mek – Aizahishi ‘Tametomo’ Smart Support WarMek (shared with Hans Khemer)

Gruber is as out-going as his partner is cold, though his friendly demeanour is almost completely a façade. In truth, Gruber only really cares about himself, to some degree Hans, and his duty to the Surwaffe Seven. His motivation for anything he does is always based on the greatest benefit to himself and while he can act

quite charming and gregarious, he is fully capable of shooting someone he was drinking and sharing a joke with a minute beforehand. He places little value on human life, no matter how kindly he might seem, and if Grissom ordered him to blow up a building full of women and children, his only hesitation would be to make sure he was not in the blast radius.

LARS KAMSENN: Human Comms

Officer 4; Init: +3; DV: 17 (Size + Dex); **DR:** 0; **Spd** 10 m; **HP:** 28; **Attack** +7 ranged (2d6 FN P92); **SQ** Basic Training, Improved Electronic Warfare, Unshakeable; **SV** Fort +3, **Ref** +7, **Will** +5; **Str** 15, **Dex** 16, **Con** 14, **Int** 14, **Wis** 12, **Chr** 10.

Important Skills:

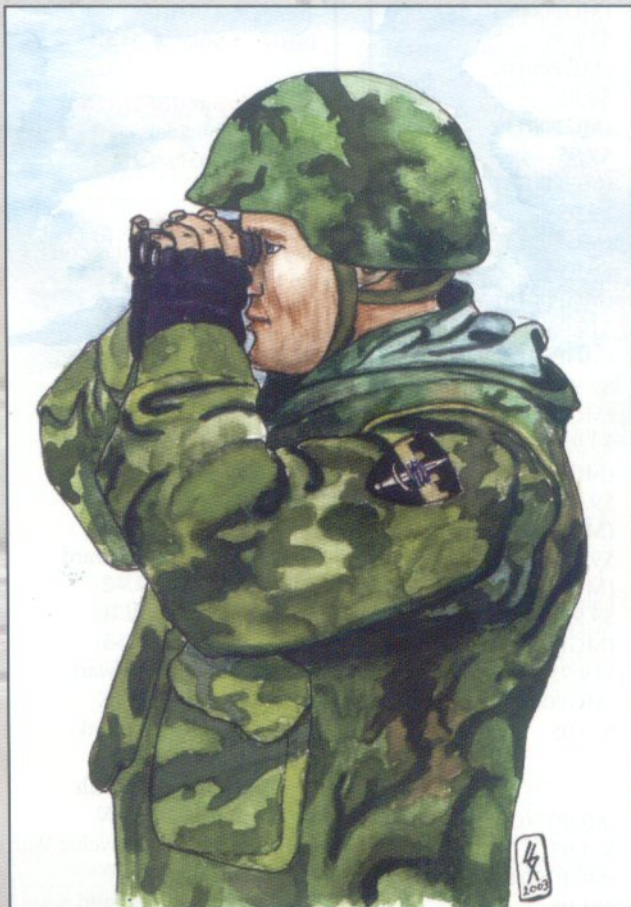
WarMek Pilot +10 (+12), Computer Use +5, Concentration +6, Electronic Warfare +7, Knowledge (tactics) +6, Intimidate +5, Medical +5, Scan +6, Spot +6
Feats: Weapon (melee, grenade, WarMek, pistol), Skill Focus (WarMek Pilot), Vehicle Dodge, Defensive Reflexes, Point Blank Shot, Combat Reflexes, Evasive Action

Equipment:

Communicator, Hand Computer, FN P92, one extra magazine for FN P92, Jumpsuit, First Aid Kit, Assigned Mek – Tak Industries ‘Commander’ Comms WarMek (modified to hold a gatling laser in place of the Hawkeye missiles on the left arm)

In a world where comms officers tend to hide in some unapproachable hole on the battlefield and stay out of combat, Lars is a dangerously unpredictable exception. His Mek matches his attitude, capable of taking the kind of abuse he likes to suffer both on and off the battlefield. Lars is a pain addict and enjoys both

giving and receiving in seemingly equal quantity. He is a soldier by heritage but a mercenary by choice, as it gives him the freedom to do unto others with really large guns. Lars is a discipline problem because of his penchant for shooting all of his energy-consuming lasers and leaving himself without the power needed to do his job as a comms officer, but he has never failed to deliver on the field when it really counts.



GREGOR TYRSSON: Human Assault Officer 3; Init: +3; DV: 17 (Size + Dex); **DR:** 0; **Spd** 10 m; **HP:** 30; **Attack** +6 (+7 at point blank range) ranged (2d8 Glock 40); **SQ** Basic Training, Unshakeable; **SV** Fort +6, **Ref** +6, **Will** +1; **Str** 10, **Dex** 16, **Con** 16, **Int** 15, **Wis** 12, **Chr** 10.

Important Skills:

WarMek Pilot +8 (+10), Computer Use +3, Concentration +7, Knowledge (tactics) +3, Intimidate +6, Medical +5, Scan +6 (+7 comms), Spot +6
Feats: Weapon (melee, grenade, WarMek, pistol), Skill Focus (WarMek

Pilot), Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Far Shot

Equipment: Military Communicator, Glock 40, two extra magazines for Glock 40, JCS Military Shotgun, Jumpsuit, First Aid Kit, Assigned Mek – Ipex ‘Assassin’ Assault WarMek

Gregor was thrown out of the German military for brutality unbecoming an officer, a crime that a soldier really has to try to accomplish in a world where even the most heinous acts of the previous century are often considered commonplace tactics. After savagely beating his subordinates during a training drill, he was discharged and came to the attention of Hauptmann Grissom, who admired his discipline and desire to enforce behaviour at any cost. Gregor is the Surwaffe Seven’s heavy gun, a role that makes him all the more deadly on the battlefield. When Gregor chooses a target, both in WarMek combat and in the civilian world, nothing deters him from that goal until it is dead, he is dead, or something bigger than both of them intervenes. Only the Hauptmann’s orders can make him leave a fight unfinished and then only barely.



August’s inspiration for this scenario is quite clear (no, I’m, not telling you if you don’t know) and it shows how easy it is to take stories and ideas from other eras and genres to use in creating scenarios.

If you have used any classic sources for your scenarios, why not drop into the Signs & Portents forum at www.mongoosepublishing.com and tell me about it. I’m all ears.



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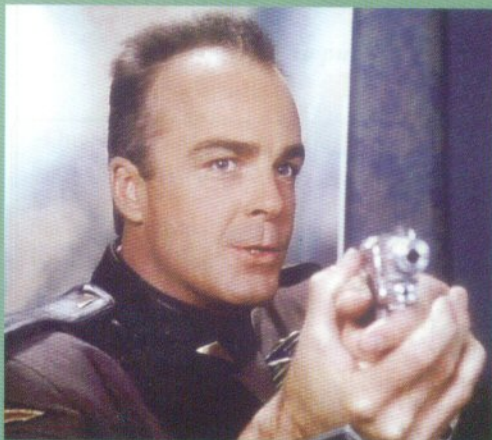
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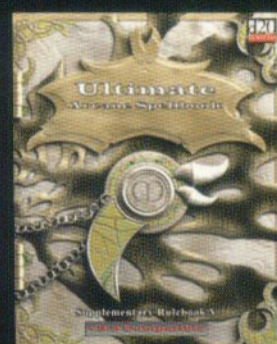
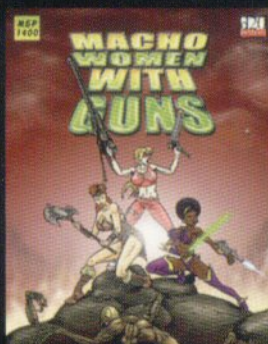
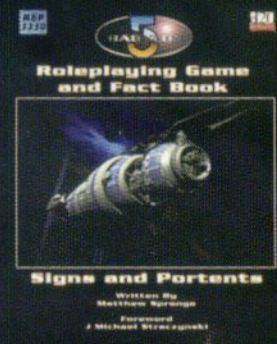
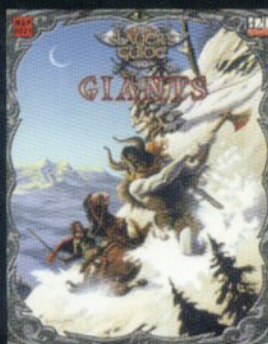
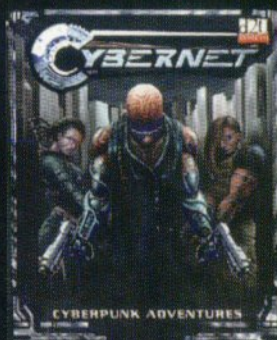
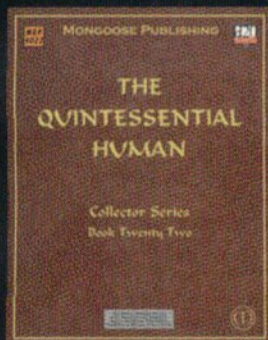
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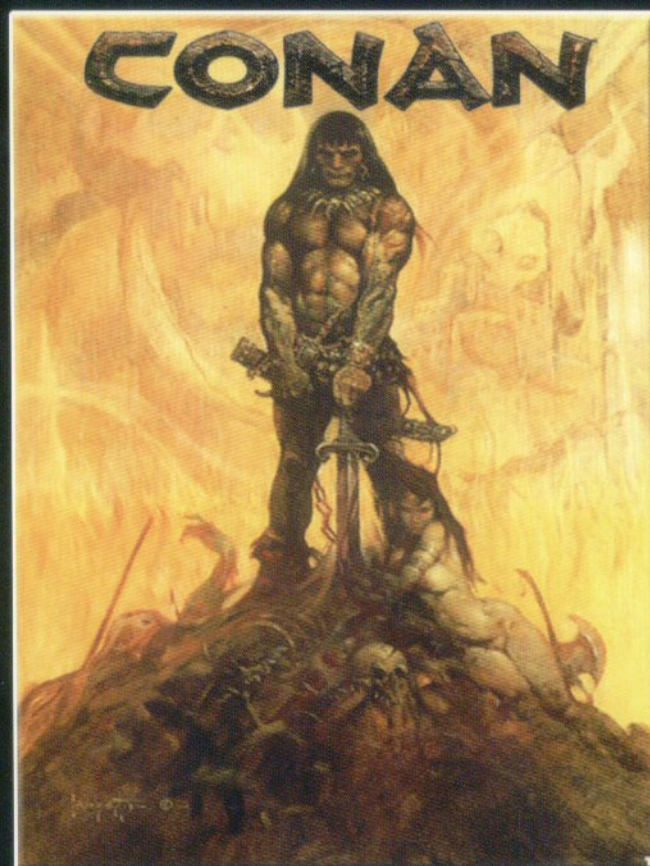
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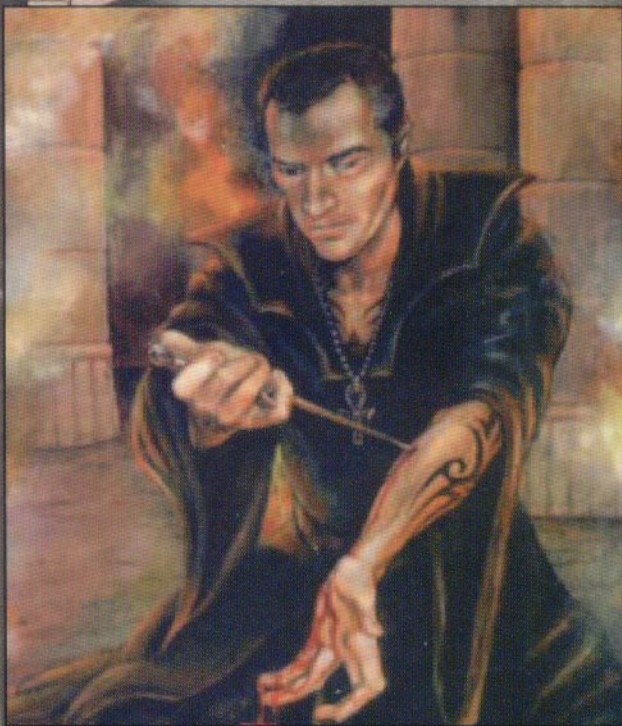
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