

MONGOOSE PUBLISHING PRESENTS



Signs & Portents

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NEW FANTASY SCENARIO WITH A MONASTIC BENT

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SOMETIMES IT'S BEST NOT TO ASK...

Palmyrion Knight of the Shield

AN HONOURABLE CHARACTER FOR LONE WOLF

Plus. . . Gaming Symposium, Nested Amalgamations
Tales From Mongoose Hall, and lots, lots more!

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Bonjour, readers!

Firstly, a bit of an apology. Last month, S&P RPG began a three part article for the Babylon 5 RPG detailing the Legend of the Rangers TV movie. Unfortunately, between part one and part two, there's been another edition of the game! The article will continue next month, including all-upgraderated stats and whatnot to make the your LoTR (no relation) games fully B52E compatible. Unfortunately, as I haven't read the B52E rules yet, there won't be a B5 article this month. However, the recent Mongoose Open Day featured a special Babylon 5 scenario, so this month's Tales from Mongoose Hall features both a Babylon 5 game and a very special guest!

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The Mongoose crew's adventures a long time ago in a galaxy far far away returns next month, but this month we have a Special Report! At the last Mongoose Publishing Open Day, there was a unique session of the Babylon 5 Roleplaying Game - starring Claudia Christian herself! Now, you can hear the story of the episode that was never on TV - 'The Attack of the Grey Wallet Things with Strings Attached'!

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Not strictly a Knight, but nevertheless a highly trained and honourable soldier, the Palmyrion Knight of the Shield forms part of one of the most respected and powerful armies in the realm of Magnamund. YOU have the chance to join their elite ranks in this article for the Lone Wolf Roleplaying Game!

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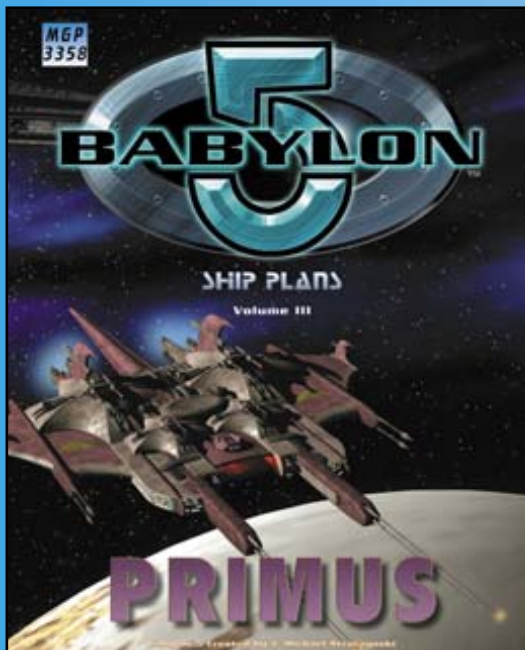
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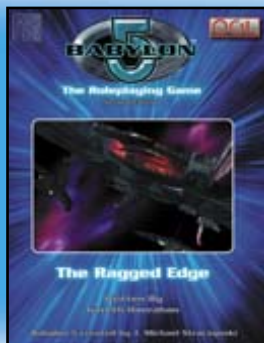
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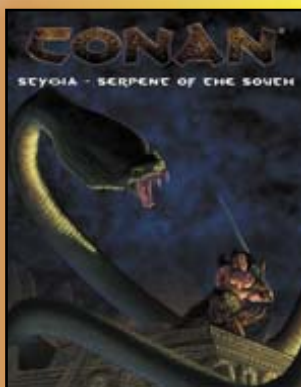


Second only to the Octurion-class battleship, the Primus is a testament to the might and power the Centauri once wielded in the galaxy. One of the strongest front line vessels found among the younger races, Primus battlecruisers mount a variety of weapons, permitting them to engage almost any enemy with a good chance of victory. The Primus was the hull of choice when it came to construct the Emperor's personal cruiser and it has since become one of the most common ships in the Republic's fleet with several variants ensuring it will remain in service for decades more to come. It is said to lack the powerful secondary armament usually found in ships of this size which often leads enemy Captains to close range when engaging but the powerful battle lasers mounted on the Primus are more than capable of crippling an enemy as he manoeuvres to attack.

This pack contains never before revealed information on the Primus' construction and history, as well as a huge, double-sided poster deck plan.



Set in the universe of Babylon 5, *The Ragged Edge* follows on directly from *The Cold Equations* (though it can be played without that introductory scenario), taking beginning level characters through a rollercoaster of events that will see them becoming leading lights of the galaxy in their own right, battling against the machinations of the Psi Corps and other power hungry organisations as they try to unravel the mysteries before them.



Stygia, Serpent of the South. . .

The long-awaited sourcebook to the most evil of Hyborian Kingdoms is now here. With great pyramids and lurking reptiles, lost tombs and endless deserts, Stygia is an ominous backdrop for any Conan campaign. Rife with intrigue, murder and horror, this land is ripe for any any engaging scenario and every adventuring band should visit this place at least once.

Covering the culture, society, military and magic of Stygia, this book contains everything you need to open the doors to a land that is both wondrous and terrible.



'Welcome to Tito's Trading Post. Here you will find all that is both mundane and wondrous to satisfy your equipment needs, collected from around the globe – although I warn you, I will have no truck with sorcery; go to the Stygians or Zamorians if that be what you are after, but I may be able to find some Lotus around here somewhere...'

Tito's Trading Post is a 96 page hardback book designed to bring you the very best of equipment, weapons and luxuries from across the Hyborian Kingdoms. With rules for crafting, merchant guilds and hiring retainers, if it is not in this book, your character won't want it!

Tales From Mongoose Open Day

+++BEWARE...HILARITY AND CELEBRITY
TOMFOOLERY AHEAD!!! +++

As Told by Bryan Steele

I was there at the dawn of the Open Day.

It began in the Earth year 2006, with the founding of the Mongoose Open Day dedicated to the Babylon 5 game license, located deep in the neutral offices of Mongoose Towers. It was a port of call for fanboys, gamers, dice-rollers, autograph hounds... and travellers from at least four different countries from across the globe. Could be a dangerous event – but we accepted the risk, because Open Day was our last, best hope for gaming.

Well, until the next time anyway.

Under the leadership of its commanders, Open Day was a dream given form: a dream of an office filled with gamers enjoying our products from many different lines, when roleplayers and miniature gamers can play side by side in mutual adoration of Babylon 5. A dream that was never in danger at all, by the arrival of one woman on a mission of fandom-bending enjoyment.

Mongoose Open Day was the last (chronologically...because we haven't had another one yet) celebrity gaming event in Swindon. This is its story...

Okay, so maybe not the story of the whole thing. I'll leave that to others who got to see much more of the day (ahem, Matthew, ahem), but I am thankfully able to tell you a little tale of our special event we put together – the 'Roleplay with Claudia Christian' game session. It was a big highlight for the Open Day, and Matthew said that there were a whole lot of people who wanted to be in it.

So, yeah, when Matthew said that I was going to be running it I was both nervous and excited all wrapped up in one. When he said it would be Claudia's first foray into tabletop roleplaying – I was terrified. I mean, I have written and ran countless scenarios, tournaments and the like at years' worth of conventions for dozens of avid gamers out there. But this was to be my first celebrity...and it was *Claudia Christian!* (Yeah, no pressure!)

So I knew it had to be good.

I had some outlines drawn up, and with a little help from Matthew and a strange dream involving a badminton racket (don't ask), I got the idea set to paper and went to Swindon ready to do the genre, the players and Claudia proud...or die trying.

The day moved rather quickly, and although surrounded with friends and co-workers that I haven't seen in months or years in some cases I barely noticed when Matthew came up behind me (he's very stealthy, that one!) and said 'Go get ready, we are almost ready to draw the names for the Claudia session.' The time was nigh, and I had to get my head on straight.

Soon I was sitting on the world's deepest office couch across from the wonderful, funny and stunning Claudia Christian sitting in her 'red plush throne,' listening to Old Bear bellow out the names of the winners of the lucky draw. Slowly, the chairs around the table filled up with our lucky players.

The select few (and the characters they ended up playing in *italics*) ended up being: Mark Norfolk, who played *Ranger Rhorzak*, the heavy hitting Drazi bodyguard. Zoe Parsons, who snagged up *Captain Andre Puillon*, a human trader pilot who got suckered in to the deal. Derek Bleach, who grabbed *Ranger Ravreel*, a Minbari denn'bok artist. Duncan Webster was saddled with the human Ranger team leader, *Geoff Pacer* (you asked for it Duncan!). To top it all off we even had an act of utter generosity and camaraderie at the name drawing when Lee Upton (Low Roller 1-1 from the Mongoose Forums) was drawn, but gave up his spot for an eternity of gratitude and pints galore



The Babylon 5 cast react to the news that Pete Perry has arrived

to Pete Perry (who most of you might know as our own Mongoose Forum 'celebrity' tagged only as LBH), who got to play *Ranger Taronn*, the seemingly most overworked techie the Minbari could breed. Of course...Claudia got to play her best role ever, Captain Susan Ivanova.

With this motley crew of miscreants ready to enter the session, I handed out their character sheets and intro information, and we descended on Uncle Orso's Neutral Repair Flotilla above Zafran VIII. The opening game speech explained that Captain Ivanova and her ship (as of the year 2262, when we had set this little jaunt) the EAS *Titans* were docked up for unexpected repairs at the Flotilla and being harassed by 'Uncle Orso' when their was that fateful knock – erm, I mean beedle-beep – of the door.

After some crafty negotiations (read – Drazi snarling), the office was soon filled with nothing but Rangers and Ivanova. After handing her a letter from Ranger One, they convinced Susan (and Claudia) to come with them to a nearby area of space where she was needed. It seemed that an EA spaceship loaded with new technologies garnered from the deals of the ISA was waylaid and John Sheridan himself was concerned.

So the group moved quickly to the Independent Tradeship *Vagabond* (after a few minutes of side-splitting laughter spawned by Claudia's ability to question everything, knowing that she must be right...as Ivanova is God), which was an old beat up Belt Alliance cruiser that looked as though it was held together with luck and duct tape. Captain Andre was not upset at everyone's comments about his ship – he was getting paid for his services either way.

While in route, after a round of grilling questions angled from Susan to Ranger Leader Pacer about where he got his information and whether or not she could trust them...and wondering if Rhorzak was 'Green or Purple? That was the episode, right?' They soon heard the gentle *ping* of incoming contacts on the far-outdated sensors of the *Vagabond*. With the ever-vigilant Taronn at the scanners, the ship's bridge was soon filled with sparks and the stench of ozone smoke as he overloaded the sensors trying to see what was headed their way.

While Taronn (and Pete!) tried to regain his composure, the communications lights went on and soon the Rangers were collectively chatting with a pair of obvious raider Delta-Vs scanning them and buzzing around outside. After asking about 'another ship' Taronn blurted out something about 'what other ship?' The enigmatic response of 'the strange looking one' brought many puzzled looks.

Then the perfectly timed response from Taronn – 'We have lots of strange looking ships!' erupted laughter all around. As the raiders prepared to deal with the near-derelect ship in short order, Claudia took charge momentarily and demanded to be heard. A quick weapons threat later and her tell-tale voice to any raider who had been in Babylon 5 space over the four previous years, caused them to let the *Vagabond* pass unobstructed on to its objective: the EAS *Starkweather*.

The *Starkweather* was held in perfect stationary orbit in the centre of a creepy asteroid belt that looked like it was somehow protecting the ship, and was quite obviously set upon by raiders recently. A miraculous MacGyver-esque Technical check from Taronn (who only needed a toothpick and some pocket lint from Susan to make it work, obviously!) the newly improved scanners picked up several life signs on board but hadn't the ability to know what they were. No matter, they had to get on board. A few quick comments from Claudia about the state of the ship they were currently in compared to the seemingly pristine landing shuttle they were about to take to the *Starkweather*, and they were inside the hangar.

After Ravreel's quick thinking to simply try and close the doors – which oddly and surprisingly worked – the party (I always *hate* using that term in sci-fi games) walked out into the deserted hangar. While Rhorzak and Ravreel were struggling with the stubborn internal airlock doors...which were thoroughly stubborn due to the randomly poor luck (and skill rolls!) of their tech-*not-so*-specialist...Susan, Andre, Geoff and a particularly defeated Taronn checked out some overturned crates and some suspicious grey goo.

Where Taronn lacked in technical skills at the moment, he soared in bravery, reaching in and picking up what would quickly become known as *'the grey mushy wallet with strings attached.'* Seeing that the organic *thing* was dead, the team began to try and figure out what the little beastie was. Ten minutes passing filled with mushy wallet jokes and even a perfect Susan-voiced Claudia giving us a quick two-minute ISN style update about 'John Sheridan versus the Mushy Grey Wallets with Strings Attached: more at eleven', the team squeezed into the broken-open airlock doors. It was time for 'Drazi, you go first.'

As they moved through the disturbingly empty and malfunctioning *Starkweather*, finding welded doors and mysterious systems still functioning, the group eventually finds the mess hall – and several dead bodies lined eerily on the floor, EarthForce personnel shot by PPGs and two scruffy-looking raiders that looked like they had been suffocated. It was while they were figuring out what exactly had happened to these unfortunate souls that Rhorzak heard voices in a nearby room. Yet again, it was time for 'Drazi, you go first.'

In the room were several EarthForce security crewman and raider types milling about talking, in what I called 'mumblespeak', but Claudia did a great impression of it in real life. The accompanying face she made was priceless (Thanks to Rob Glass, our miniatures production facility manager, who had my camera and caught that moment for all eternity!), and we all laughed a bit before Rhorzak returned and reported. Susan decided to simply order these dullards to surrender, as she was an EA captain and all.

And so the fighting began. With a swift battle cry and a joke that only Claudia and I laughed hysterically at ('We secretly replaced Rhorzak's denn'bok with Folgers instant crystals, let's see if he notices the difference!... Okay, so it's an American joke...sue me!), we rolled Initiative and the battle ensued.

The highly trained Rangers rather easily overwhelmed the marines and raiders, even though we did find out four things about the party (there is that word again... grrr...) One; Drazi hit *very* hard with a denn'bok two-handed. Two; Minbari Worker Caste strangely do not. Three; food processor pudding on a Drazi's boots make for very difficult running tackles. And four;

when Susan Ivanova says she wants to disarm somebody of their PPG – IT WILL HAPPEN. The dice will indeed obey the stern mental commands of Claudia, as it seems.

During the fight, Captain Puillon (who Zoe did a great job keeping out of the fight...as any good freelance pilot should!) saw the Medbay doors open a bit and quickly gathered everyone else to investigate. By the time they got back to the doors though, they were shut tight and electronically locked. With a little nod from Geoff, Taronn had those doors open in a second. On

the other side was a strange barricade that Andre swore was *not* there a minute before. A few Drazi pushes with a little Minbari elbow grease from Ravreel and the barricade started to give way – but was fighting them like magnets pushing against each other. The barricade bent and twisted, but eventually fell apart like a spooky metal jigsaw puzzle.

Behind it was a dark and silent room. Nope, no one hiding in there. Not at all. No way. Not in a million years.

At least, that's what the group apparently thought as they strode right through and into the bridge – because obviously *that* was where the lights were still on. Oh well, it was where I needed them to

go anyway, so...who am I to complain?

The bridge was wired up in a manner that made Taronn cry, but when Geoff said something a little loudly (perhaps about the suspiciously dark room they just walked through?) the computer system chimed in suspiciously that his voice was not authorised. When Claudia returned from a quick baby-hugging session in the office hallway, Geoff informed Susan of the situation and she gave us all a good treat of 'Captain Susan Ivanova, Earth Alliance' in her best Susan voice. Believe me, it gave me a few chills to have brought it about. (Yeah, so I'm a fanboy. Can you blame me?)

The computer system recognised her as authorised and began playing video clips slapped together from the last few weeks showing the players the whole story – that a Drakh ambassador came aboard, bringing the 'grey wallets with strings attached' with him. Raiders attacked, freeing the 'wallets' and battling the crew, but also angering the Drakh enough to execute the captain of the ship. It showed the Drakh ship leaving (the aforementioned 'strange looking



ship' the raider Deltas mentioned) the hangar and the raiders opening the crates of 'grey wallets.'

It didn't take long for Geoff to figure out that the Drakh might still be on the ship, and it took even less for Claudia (and therefore Susan) to throw everyone...especially me...into a red-faced, side-splitting laugh riot as she berated her Ranger team for utterly forgetting the **OBVIOUSLY DARK ROOM THAT WAS HIDING THE BAD GUY!!!** So, after the laughter had passed and the Rangers were on target, they entered Medbay.

Which, of course, had emptied into the hall to head toward the communication room. My head filled with imagery of the Drakh stowaway lurking in waiting, ready to use massive telekinetic powers and micro-PPG blasters on the group as the 'boss fight' – watching as the Scooby Doo Ranger team filing through the dark room without so much as looking for him, shrugging, then moving on to finish his dastardly plans.

The Rangers ran with renewed urgency down the corridor, seeing the previously unconscious and disarmed marines *snuffed out* attributed to the Drakh's removal of the mushy grey wallets, they found the Drakh sitting comfortably and smugly next to a recently used comm.-console. After some short and terse questioning that their relaxed (and elegantly portrayed, I might add) Drakh did not battle – he let them know that his people would be coming for him soon and would destroy everything.

He wasn't afraid to die, claiming that he would go to 'The Entire', and they chose to take him with them anyway as a captive. This, of course, brought on the high point of the session – when Claudia started talking about a specific species she 'dealt with in that episode, the ones who believed souls could be kept or recycled...' Before she could go on, she got wide-eyed and leapt from the red cushy throne of power, clasping her face in her hands in mad laughter, screaming, 'Oh my god! He's turned me into one of them! Ahh!' Another round of laughter from around the room in light of her becoming *one of us*, and she flopped down into the chair red-faced and ready to move on.

Back in the game, things were reaching their climax. Quickly realising in the escape flight that the bucket of bolts that was the *Vagabond* would never outrace a Drakh battle fleet, Geoff remembered a cunning ploy that he *'may or may not have seen* on a different Babylon 5 show but did not steal, not at all' to put the Drakh in a space suit packed with hidden explosives and just give him back to the Drakh. (Just giving you hell, Duncan, I liked that ploy...both times!)



Miss Claudia Christian - one of us!

The space-walking Drakh went willingly to his peers, somehow deactivated the explosives, and was picked up by his friends...turning all of the warships around to obliterate the *Starkweather* and any physical traces of the meeting of EarthForce personnel and the mysterious Drakh while the *Vagabond* escaped with everyone completely unharmed (except for a small PPG burn on Taronn...but who's counting?)!

Captain Ivanova returned to Orso's Repair Flotilla to her repaired ship and the rest of her adventures, while the Rangers returned to Babylon 5 with the only hard evidence of the *Starkweather's* willing dealings with the Drakh and the nature of its mysterious demise.

Perhaps, at another Open Day, that information will bring some disturbing scenes (and no doubt jokes, laughter and ill-fated movie references) to the table yet again. If we're lucky perhaps a new Babylon 5 celebrity will join us for chapter two, but I'm sure they will be hard pressed to do a better job than Claudia Christian and her lucky compatriots. It was a great day, and a roleplaying session I will never forget. I'm pretty sure my players won't either...even the lovely and amazing Miss Christian. Thanks everybody for putting the entire event together.



Palmyrion Knight of the Shield

A New Hero for The Lone Wolf Roleplaying Game

David Thompson

While not strictly speaking knights in the traditional sense, this is the name given to the highly respected standing army of the Palmyrion Republic. They have the honourable distinction of being one of the few nations of Magnamund never to have been defeated in battle while defending their realm. Their skill and courage in combat rivals that of the Sommlending Knights of the Realm and they are justifiably proud of their reputation for excellence.

It is traditional for the second born son of all Palmyrion families to train with the Knights of the Shield from their fourteenth birthday and spend two years with them. At any time the instructors at the military academy can send home anyone they deem to be not of the highest standard required by the captain of the Knights of the Shield, however it is no disgrace as the standard required is very high and only a small percentage of those sent to train are accepted. Those returned to their families do so after receiving basic training and return to their lives as farmers, craftsmen or whatever roles they are best suited for.

Those accepted train in earnest for those two years learning to march and fight in perfect formation as that is the foundation on which the reputation of the Knights of the Shield is built. For seemingly endless days and weeks the recruits can be seen marching back and forth across parade grounds

around the plains of Palmyrion perfecting their timing and synchronising their actions so that each soldier in formation acts as if he were an extension of the soldiers around him. This discipline has won the Knights many battles against foes that may have defeated lesser armies.

The Palmyrion leaders have always given as much resources as possible to their standing army as their location has placed them close to several uncertain borders and nations with acquisitive natures. Their troops are well equipped and trained and are well respected by the population they defend. They are well looked after by their superiors and because of this many soldiers sign up for many more years of service after the compulsory two. While mainly composed of infantry the Knights have several companies of cavalry and archers that often accompany the foot soldiers into battle when the situation requires their presence. Veteran Knights of the Shield have served in numerous campaigns in different locations and as such are well travelled and often knowledgeable about the customs and cultures of the nations whose borders they patrol.

New recruits are usually stationed in central or more secure garrisons. They are sent to border towns when they have gained enough experience to be able to defend the reputation of excellence



the veteran troops that serve on the frontiers Palmyrion's territory have gained. Occasionally those recruits showing the most promise are sent out to the more dangerous garrisons early to see if they fulfil their potential, with some being sent to their embattled ally Talestria to aid them in their constant skirmishes with their neighbours.



Some say there are too many soldiers stationed outside Palmyrion and that the army is stretched too thin and an attack by Palmyrion's enemies now would break their record of perfect defence. At the moment the government seems to be ignoring this but the voices of discontent among even the Knights themselves are growing in number and something is bound to give.

Adventures: While the majority of the Knights of the Shield are based in their home nation an increasing number are sent to protect Palmyrion's allies. Currently a large number of soldiers are stationed in Talestria defending their lands and people. Many Knights are sent to fight in foreign lands and can gain much knowledge and

experience from these duties. Veteran Knights of the Shield will have served in different locations in their own nation as well as those considered allies of Palmyrion. As a result they will have had the opportunity to test their skills against many different foes.

Characteristics: Like all warriors, a Knight of the Shield relies first and foremost on his training and discipline. Over the first year of their training the young warriors are instructed on how to maintain their composure under battlefield conditions. An emphasis is placed on discipline and focus and the ability to carry out their orders. After the initial training period the soldiers are trained to a high standard with all one handed weapons. Only after their initial two years service can they be considered for any kind of specialist training.

Religion: As with most martial professions the majority of the Knights of the Shield are not particularly religious. However, with the diverse range of backgrounds come a similar range of beliefs. As a result, a large variety of local and worldwide deities are worshipped by the ranks of the soldiery of Palmyrion. While sometimes this can cause conflict it is always resolved swiftly and fairly by the ranking officers within the army. In many cases however, this diversity helps the standing army, as there is usually someone in their ranks with a common religion which helps to smooth over any problems with the locals.

Background: A soldier in Palmyrion's standing army can come from almost any walk of life. As all families are required to send their second born son to train for two years it creates a unique mix of class and culture. From high born aristocrat's sons from Vanamor to the son of a farmer from the plains near Vellino, there is a mix of skills and talents that make the Knights of the Shield one of the most adaptable and resourceful armies in all of Magnamund.

Other Classes: Over the centuries the Knights of the Shield have had cause to work with a wide variety of classes from around Northern Magnamund. They have no problems in serving along with other warrior classes and relish the opportunity to compare their abilities with those of the Sommlending Knights of the Realm – with whom they are often compared. They also have a great deal of respect for the Kai Lords, as their prowess in battle is also legendary. Many Knights of the Shield have served with their neighbours, the Dwarven Gunners of Bor. They are slightly wary of magic users as there are few in their lands, but they are respectful of their abilities. They have no time however for the Shadaki Buccaneers as they have a reputation for impulsiveness and recklessness as well as one for piracy and ill discipline.

Game Rule Information

Endurance Die: d10

Speed: 30 feet

Abilities: As warriors the Knights of the Shield favour characters with high Strength and Constitution in particular. Also useful would be a good Dexterity and Charisma as they are often sent to escort ambassadors and other diplomats from Palmyrion to their allies where the soldiers will be in the public eye. Palmyrion is keen for its troops to be well presented and courteous at all times.

Weapon and Armour Proficiency: Knights of the Shield are trained in the use of all one handed melee weapons. They are able to wear all armour types and use shields.

Class Skills

Knights of the Shield are a diverse lot as a result of Palmyrion's national service policy. This means the class skills can be quite varied. The Knight has the following class skills Athletics (Str), Climb (Str), Handle Animal (Cha), Heal (Wis), Knowledge (Warfare) (Int), Ride (Dex) and Survival (Wis) plus three others of the players' choice, typically Craft, Profession or Knowledge (any).

Skill Points at 1st level: 3 + (Int modifier) x 4

Skill Points at Each Additional level: 3 + (Int modifier)

Racial Note: All characters from Palmyrion gain an additional Skill Point each level after the first (As directed in the *Gazetteer* section in the *Lone Wolf Core Book*).

Class Features

Assault Formation (Ex): Knights of the Shield learn many combat formations; this one is a particularly devastating form of formation charge. The character forms the point and leads his troops into battle at the front of a wedge that drives into the heart of enemy lines. To use this ability the character must form a wedge shaped formation with at least two other allies, with the character at the point of the wedge. Each of the allies must simultaneously charge in the same round, with characters delaying or readying actions so the leader of the formation charges first, followed by the character immediately to the left then the one to the right and so on. In the first turn of combat each character in the formation receives

a +2 bonus to attack rolls and to their AC (this is in addition to any other bonuses they may have). In addition no character in the formation can be flanked while in this formation.

Clear a Path (Ex): When wielding his Weapon of Choice, a Knight of the Shield can be a truly dangerous force. Through continued training and combat experience he learns to make the most of his attacks. If a Knight deals an opponent enough damage in a single melee attack to take it below 0 Endurance he gets an immediate extra attack against another creature within 5 feet. The Knight of the Shield cannot take any movement before this extra attack. This extra attack must be with the same weapon and is at the same bonus as the attack that felled the previous creature. The Knight can use this ability once per round only.

Defensive Formation (Ex): When fighting in formation with other Knights of the Shield the character gains a +2 AC bonus and cannot be flanked. Characters are considered to be in formation anytime two or more Knights of the Shield are fighting adjacent to each other, typically within 5 feet of each other. They need not be facing the same direction when fighting in formation as their training includes guarding each other's flanks. It is possible for Knights of the Shield to be in formation with other character classes, so long as the other character(s) are allied to the Knight. However, when fighting with an ally of a different class the AC bonus is reduced to +1.

Forced March (Ex): Used to marching long distances carrying full pack and in full battle dress a Knight of the Shield character gains a +2 Str for the purposes of calculating encumbrance and its effects on movement. The second time a character gains this ability the Strength bonus increases to +4 for the purpose of determining encumbrance.

Heavy Gear (Ex): By the time a character reaches this level he is well accustomed to operating in heavy armour and as a result has partly adapted to moving and fighting in cumbersome armour. He reduces the armour check penalty for any armour by -1. The second time he gets this ability the armour check penalty is reduced by a further 1 point.

Hold the Line (Ex): Knights of the Shield are trained to stand fast against charging enemy formations and are often able to strike the first blow against onrushing opponents. When attacked by a charging foe, the Knight gains a +1 AC bonus and if they make a successful Ref save against a DC equal to the opponent's Initiative roll they actually attack first in combat against the charging foe and gain a +1 bonus to that attack roll. The Knight of the Shield can use this ability against one charging enemy per round.

Immovable Object (Ex): A Knight of the Shield of this level of experience has learned to enter a defensive stance on the field of battle, making himself virtually impossible to defeat. When entering a defensive stance the Knight effectively anchors himself to the spot and is unable to move position on the battlefield. So long as the character does not take a move action he gains the following benefits: +2 Strength, +2 Constitution, +2 to all Saves and a +2 AC bonus. The increased Constitution effectively gives the Knight +1 temporary Endurance per character level; however, these Endurance points only last until the end of the defensive stance. While in the defensive stance the character cannot use skills or abilities that require movement or any change of position. The defensive stance lasts for 2 rounds plus the character's Constitution modifier (after the +2 bonus has been applied). Entering a defensive stance is a Standard action.

Improved Charge (Ex): Knights of the Shield are trained to make the most of all attacks and to defend themselves effectively at all times. When charging, a Knight character makes his charge attack with a +3 bonus, but suffers only a -1 Armour Class penalty until the start of his next turn.

Never Falter (Ex): The endurance shown by a Knight of the Shield of this level is quite astounding to behold. Never Falter allows a Knight to remain standing even when reduced to 0 Endurance (but not below). A Knight of the Shield at 0 Endurance can keep fighting as normal, even if his injuries would be severe enough to floor others.

Offensive Formation (Ex): Similar to the *Defensive Formation* class ability, the Knight of the Shield gets a +2 Attack bonus when fighting in formation with other Knights. The rules for fighting in formation remain as described above. This Attack bonus also applies to thrown weapons. When fighting with allied characters or different classes the Attack bonus is reduced to +1.

Phalanx (Ex): When operating in tightly packed defensive formations the Knights of the Shield make a formidable opponent. The Knight of the Shield gains an additional +1 to AC and Attack rolls when fighting in formation. This bonus only applies when fighting in formation with other Knights of the Shield and does not apply to fighting with other allies of different classes.

Rallying Cry (Ex): Now highly experienced in combat the Knight of the Shield knows how to inspire his fellow soldiers and when it would be most telling in a battle to issue a rallying order. A number of times each day equal to his Charisma modifier (or once per day if this is negative) the Knight can issue a thunderous battle cry that inspires all comrades within 60 feet of him. Those

so inspired gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls and all Will saves against Fear effects for 1d6 rounds plus the character's Charisma modifier.

Toughness (Ex): Due to his continued rigorous training and battle experience the character gains a bonus to his Endurance equal to his class level. This bonus is applied upon reaching this level and once only.

Ultimate Soldier (Ex): The ultimate symbol of the majesty of the grandest army in all of Magnamund, a Knight of the Shield reaching this level of experience is so skilled in battle few other warriors can match him for strength and skill. The Knight gains +20 Endurance points and an additional +1 to attack and damage with his Weapon of Choice.

Weapon of Choice (Ex): The Knight's training includes honing his martial prowess with one weapon that the trainee shows particular promise with. The character may select any One-Handed melee weapon as his weapon of choice and adds a +1 bonus to all attack and damage rolls made with this type of weapon.

Specialist Training (Tiered Ability)

At 5th, 10th and 15th level a Knight of the Shield is given the opportunity to receive specialist training in Infantry, Cavalry or Archery fighting techniques. While the majority are encouraged to stick with the foot soldiers that make up the majority of the Knights numbers, some opt to train with Palmyrion's Cavalry or Archery companies.

Archery

1st Tier: The character gets a Short or Long Bow and a quiver of 20 regular arrows. The character also gets a +1 attack and damage bonus in the first range increment of his chosen bow.

2nd Tier: The archer is trained to rain down death on his enemy. For a penalty of -2 to attack the character can make an additional ranged attack if he takes no other actions during the round. This attack will be at the lowest attack bonus.

3rd Tier: The character is able to attack up to the second range increment with no range penalties and is now able to add his Strength modifier to damage rolls in the first and second range increments.



Cavalry

1st Tier: The Knight of the Shield entering the cavalry companies is granted a warhorse, saddle and associated equipment. The warhorse will be replaced if killed or lost up to twice a year. Due to the size of Palmyrion's army and the current stretched resources a rider would have to wait a week or so for a new mount. Also due to the specialist training received by a new cavalryman the character receives a +2 bonus to his Ride skill.

2nd Tier: A Knight of the Shield can substitute the result of his Ride skill check for his normal AC when in combat. The character must take result of this roll if he opts to do this and must choose to roll at the start of a combat round.

3rd Tier: Due to his training and experience with horsemanship the character does double damage (x3 with a Lance) when charging into combat on horseback.

Infantry

1st Tier: The character can choose to become proficient in either any two-handed, exotic or racial weapon of their choice. The Games Master can rule against certain racial weapons if he thinks the choice unreasonable.

2nd Tier: The character can make an intimidating battle cry against a single foe costing a standard action. The opponent must make a Will check against a DC of 15 + the characters Charisma modifier or be subject to Fear for 1d6 rounds.

3rd Tier: The character can willingly enter a state of battle fury. It takes a full round action to do so and while under the effects of battle fury the character temporarily gains a +2 bonus to Strength, Dexterity and Constitution as well as +10 temporary Endurance. The battle fury lasts

for the rest of the combat as long as the character is either attacked or attacks each round. The character may use this ability a number of times per day equal to the characters Wisdom modifier, but cannot initiate another battle fury within 10 minutes of the last one. For 1d10 rounds after the

Battle Fury ends the character suffers a penalty of -2 to Str, Dex and Con and cannot move faster than a walk. If the character would be reduced to negative Endurance after the battle Fury ends he will fall unconscious as the normal rules dictate.

Palmyrion Knight of the Shield

Level	Base Combat Skill	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1 st	+1	+1	+0	+1	Defensive Formation
2 nd	+2	+1	+0	+1	Forced March I
3 rd	+3	+2	+1	+1	Weapon of Choice
4 th	+4	+2	+1	+2	Offensive Formation
5 th	+5	+3	+1	+2	Specialist Training I
6 th	+6/+1	+3	+2	+2	Heavy Gear I
7 th	+7/+2	+4	+2	+3	Phalanx
8 th	+8/+3	+4	+2	+3	Forced March II
9 th	+9/+4	+5	+3	+3	Improved Charge
10 th	+10/+5	+5	+3	+4	Specialist Training II
11 th	+11/+6/+1	+6	+3	+4	Toughness
12 th	+12/+7/+2	+6	+4	+4	Rallying Cry
13 th	+13/+8/+3	+7	+4	+5	Hold the Line
14 th	+14/+9/+4	+7	+4	+5	Heavy Gear II
15 th	+15/+10/+5	+8	+5	+6	Specialist Training II
16 th	+16/+11/+6/+1	+8	+5	+6	Clear a Path
17 th	+17/+12/+7/+2	+9	+5	+7	Assault Formation
18 th	+18/+13/+8/+3	+9	+6	+7	Immovable Object
19 th	+19/+14/+9/+4	+10	+6	+8	Never Falter
20 th	+20/+15/+10/+5	+10	+6	+8	Ultimate Soldier



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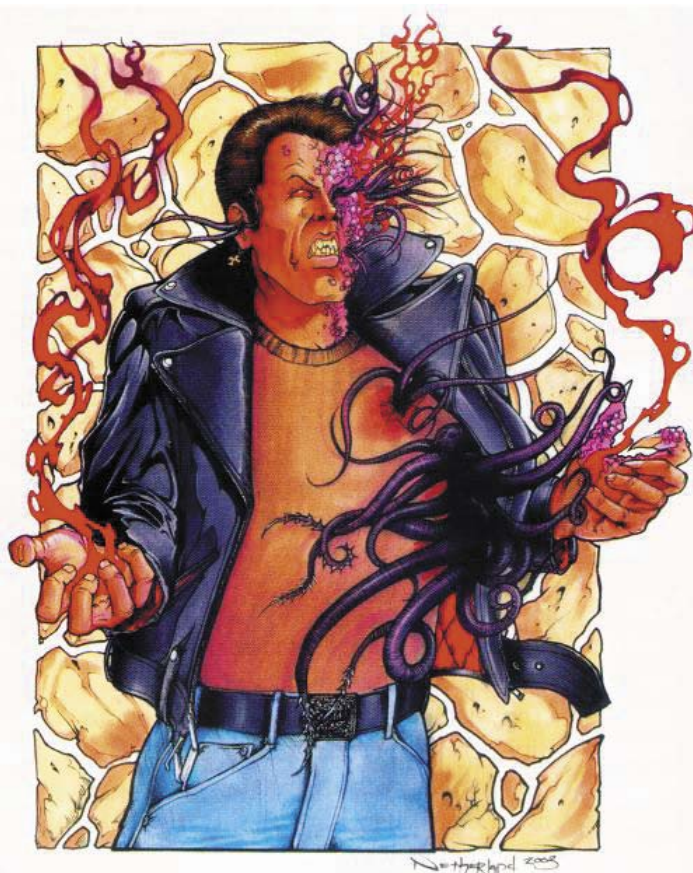
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The Fear Files

The Weirdinators

An organisation for OGL Horror

Morgan Davie



The Weirdinators are a very small club in a large university. The club was founded by a PhD student named Eric Oppser. It exists to provide reliable testimony about strange phenomena and, if possible, to uncover the truth about the unexplained. Oppser's goal is to provide a set of evidence that will impress the Sceptics society.

The club has been in existence for a year. Oppser has a list of about 40 paid-up members, whose membership fees he underwrote himself. Its active membership has fluctuated: nine members at its height, with only three at the beginning of its second year. These three are Eric Oppser himself, Paula Turnbull and Sean McMillan.

In its first year, the club investigated a few hauntings, urban legends and other supposed occurrences, with little to show for it, certainly nothing that would impress the sceptics.

One of the founding members came up with the logo and the name, clearly inspired by Ghostbusters. Oppser has become inordinately fond of both.

The club seeks out new members through low-key advertising around the university, or through personal approaches by current members. Clubs day at the University's freshers' week is a very important day in the calendar.

Weirdinators Statistics

HP: 13
 Force: 3
 Response: 16
 Resources: 10
 Information: 17
 Occult: 5
 Influence: 5

Skills: Computer Use +10, Knowledge (earth & life sciences) +16, Knowledge (history) +16, Knowledge (physical sciences) +16, Repair +11, Research +17

Feats: Library (physical sciences), Library (technology)

If the Weirdinators grow in size, the organisation's hit points will increase by one for each member additional to Eric, Paula and Sean.

Eric Oppser Eternal Student

Oppser is 28 and from a wealthy family. He is strong-willed and often impatient. He is also a quadriplegic. He is compelling to talk to, but prone to anger. However, he forgives quickly and completely.

He is motivated, committed and highly intelligent, but he is not always on top of the practicalities of any situation. This is at least partly due to limited personal experience of many everyday situations. He is overconfident, particularly in assessing the capability of the field teams he sends out on Weirdinator missions.

Eric Oppser is interested in exploring strange phenomena. He is fascinated by the unexplained and the unusual, and he particularly hopes to win the approval of the sceptic society by providing evidence of strangeness that will meet their stringent standards. His goal is to open minds to realities beyond those that are immediately apparent, and so (he believes) contribute in some small way to a future social utopia. He recognises this is a huge goal, but he sees no reason not to go for it anyway.

The club is also his only social outlet. He counts the membership as his only real friends. He is bisexual, and secretly he also hopes to find love among his recruits, although he is realistic about his chances.

Oppser always wears a shirt and bow tie and he has a small moustache. He moves around in an electric wheelchair that he operates using his chin to manipulate a joystick. For longer trips he calls a taxi – there is one firm that knows him, and his eccentric hours, well.

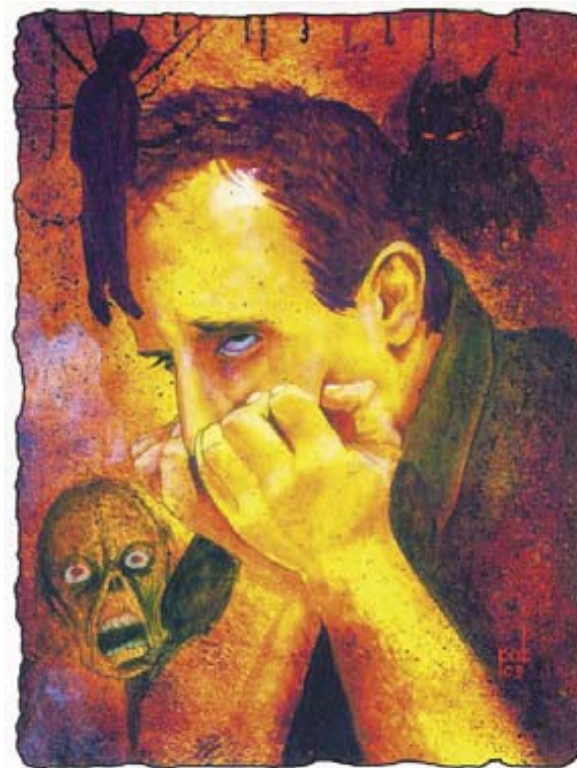
He usually cannot accompany his Weirdinators on their field trips, so he stays in constant contact via GPS and cell phone technology.

Using Oppser

Oppser is a general. If characters are potential recruits, he will speak of his mission with great passion. He is present in every Weirdinator's mission, although usually over a cell phone connection. Typically, he has not thought of at least a dozen crucial practicalities in any given mission, but he expects Weirdinators to overcome these hurdles as a matter of course. It is just a matter of time before he sends his Weirdinators into a situation they will not be able to deal with.

Oppser could also serve as a fascinating love interest for any character open to an atypical romance.

Medium Human; hp 10; Mas 10 ; Init -3 (-3 Dex); spd 20 ft.; Defence 8, touch 8, flat-footed 8; BAB +1; Grap N/A; Atk -3 melee (1d2, wheelchair charge); Full Atk -3 melee (1d2, wheelchair charge); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 0 ft.; SV Fort +0, Ref -2, Will +5; Rep +0; Wealth +6; Str 3, Dex 5, Con 8, Int 16, Wis 12, Cha 10.



Class: Scholar 3

Occupation: Student (Knowledge skills: Physical Science, Earth & Life Sciences, History)

Skills: Computer Use +6, Decipher Script +11, Knowledge (art) +11, Knowledge (physical sciences) +16, Knowledge (earth and life sciences) +16, Knowledge (history) +16, Knowledge (theology & philosophy) +12, Research +17

Feats: Alternate Approach, Educated (Art, Theology & Philosophy), Ludicrously Rich, Strong Will, Studious, Windfall

Possessions: electric wheelchair operated by chin-mounted joystick

Paula Turnbull

Journalism student

Paula Turnbull joined the Weirdinators after writing about them for the student magazine and being captivated by Eric's pitch. Paula has enough low-key strange events in her past that she has always believed in strange phenomena, and she finds Oppser's mindset fascinating and beautiful.

Paula, 23, is something of a social misfit. She does not think she is particularly good at anything, certainly not journalism although she is sticking to it because 'none of the working journos are any good either'. She has a slightly goth-alternative dress sense and 'the usual closet full of psycho ex-boyfriends'. She

is not quiet, and will launch insults at anyone who gets too much of her attention, but it is purely a defence mechanism to protect her privacy. She is self-aware enough to know she is doing this, but sees no point in changing.

Paula is canny at figuring people out, except for their views on her, which she can wildly misjudge. She has no clue that Sean is in love with her, for example.

Using Paula

Paula is a good tool for getting things to happen. She is forthright and intuitive, and has something of a knack for knocking on the doors with interesting things on the other side. She is also filled with angst and rather naïve; that is to say, she is by and large

a typical student. She would be a very good romantic interest or best friend for a Player Character.

Medium Human; hp 12; Mas 7; Init -1; spd 30 ft.; Defence 11, touch 11, flat-footed 11, BAB +1; Grap -1; Atk -1 melee (1d3-2, punch); Full Atk -1 melee (1d3-2, punch); FS 5ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SV Fort -2, Ref -1, Will +4; Rep +0; Wealth +2; Str 7, Dex 8, Con 7, Int 10, Wis 13, Cha 15.

Class: Investigator (2), Ordinary Person (1)

Occupation: Investigative (Gather Information, Research)

Skills: Balance +1, Bluff +4, Concentration +0, Craft (Writing) +5, Disguise +4, Drive +1, Forgery +2, Gather Information +3, Investigate +7, Listen +7, Profession +3, Research +1, Search +7, Sense Motive +9, Spot +6

Feats: Alertness, Attentive, Contact, Deceptive, Focused, Meticulous, Run

Possessions: digital camcorder, cell phone

Sean McMillan

Engineering student

Sean McMillan could not care less about the supernatural, and he is not sure how he ended up in the Weirdinators. He has been there since day one, anyway. He is the gadget man, and he stays because he enjoys the challenges he is constantly being set. He also stays because he is in love with Paula. He has no plans to do anything about it, figuring that



would just drive her away from him – instead, he is content to just secretly worship her from up close.

Sean, 21, has a long black ponytail and wears glasses. He is pretty much a waste of space until something technical comes up. He does not take kindly to anyone else intruding on his turf, though. If anyone else tries to involve themselves in technical work, he will instantly become hypercompetitive and determined to see off the challenger.

He will also go into challenge mode to protect Paula from any perceived threat. He particularly watches out for the ‘guy who’ll break her heart’ threat, and any man who says more than a few words to Paula will receive a very deadly glare for their troubles.



Using Sean

Sean is good as comic relief, as a rival, and as the guy who repairs broken equipment, but he can also be a source of complication in long-term plots. If there is a weak link in the group it is he, because he is the least committed to the mission and to Oppser. Any rival force will naturally target him as their first line of assault or infiltration.

Medium Human; hp 16; Mas 13; Init +0; spd 30 ft.; Defence 11, 11 touch, 10 flat-footed, BAB +1; Grap +0; Atk +0 melee (1d3-1, punch); Full Atk +0 melee (1d3-1, punch); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +1; Rep -3; Wealth +3; Str 9, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 14, Wis 8, Cha 8.

Class: Ordinary Person 3

Occupation: Technician (Computer Use, Craft Electronic, Repair)

Skills: Computer Use +11, Concentration +6, Craft (electronic) +11, Craft (Mechanical) +8, Disable Device +6, Knowledge (Physical Sciences) +6, Knowledge (Technology) +7, Read/Write Language (Klingon), Repair +11, Speak Language (Klingon)

Feats: Alternate Approach, Archaic Weapons Proficiency, Builder (Electronic and Mechanical), Defensive Martial Arts, Dodge, Gearhead, Low Profile

Possessions: Small personal workshop, access card to University workshop

Using the Weirdinators

The Weirdinators are designed to be the backbone of a horror campaign set among University students. The characters are recruited into the club and proceed to investigate strange events. Eventually, Oppser will drop the characters into something serious, probably with awful consequences. At this point the whole group dynamic will change, with the characters perhaps leaving the group in the face of Oppser's determination to carry on, or perhaps Oppser will be convinced to end the club after the disaster and it will be up to the characters to continue things. Perhaps the survivors will be finished with the Weirdinators, but the weirdness has not finished with them...

The Weirdinators could also serve as a rival group or a foil. They would be very effective as a nuisance and extra layer of complication for a group of professional characters, for example an FBI team. They could hold some useful information, as Oppser is astonishingly well read in a number of areas. They could be used as a scenario hook: Paula and Sean stumble on something bad and Oppser asks for help.

Finally, they could be an interesting source of personal drama, with all three characters potentially taking on a role of friend, confidante or lover to a Player Character.



Nested Amalgamations

The mix and match approach taken one step further for D20 Fantasy Games

Johnathan M. Richards



Crossbreeding: *Flesh and Blood* provides several ways for a wizard to fuse two or more creatures into a single hybrid entity with characteristics of each of its progenitors. However, there is an offshoot of the crossbreeding art focusing on blending the minds of the progenitors together into a unified whole, while preserving the outward appearance of one of the progenitors involved. As an example, a wizard might wish to merge the mind of his goblin henchman into the form of a stray cat, allowing the hybrid thus formed to look like an ordinary cat but possess the goblin's intellect (such as it is). The rules set forth in *Crossbreeding* already allow for such a hybrid: it would involve 'bumping' the cat/goblin's hybrid Intelligence up to the level of the goblin progenitor at the cost of a higher Difficulty Class to perform the transmutation.

Taking the concept of 'blended intellects' to a higher level of complexity, it is also possible to take a group of progenitors, mingle their minds together into a fused whole and yet retain all of their physical forms ready for use. Doing so results in what crossbreeders refer to as a 'nested amalgamation,' for each of the progenitor's physical bodies is 'stored' in potential inside the body of the next larger progenitor. Actually, a more accurate analogy would be to say the other

bodies – the ‘nested’ ones – are in ethereal stasis, occupying the same space as the outermost body of the amalgamated whole. Nested amalgamations are difficult to create but many consider the benefits of a success to be worth the effort.

Creating a Nested Amalgamation

Creating a nested amalgamation requires many of the same skills needed for normal crossbreeding attempts. However, while there are many different rituals capable of creating a normal hybrid, the nested amalgamation ritual is rather specific (although the Games Master can design additional rituals arriving at the same end). The standard nesting ritual is provided below.

Nested Amalgamation Transmutation Ritual

The wizard carves a number of circles onto the stone floor of his laboratory in such a way as they overlap each other with another circle inscribed in the centre of the area where the outer circles overlap. (Diagram 1 has an example showing the layout for a nested amalgamation transmutation

ritual consisting of three progenitors.) Intricate runes are inscribed along each of these circles. The carved circles and runes must be filled with molten silver (silver often being used as a permanent linkage component, see *Components and Foci: The Materials of Magic*) and powdered gemstones.

Once the preparations have been made, the progenitors are each placed into their respective circles such that their heads are inside the inner circle and they are arranged in order, clockwise, from smallest to largest. (As with many of the standard crossbreeding rituals, it may be necessary to sedate the progenitors before the ritual to ensure their cooperation.) As the words to the transmutation ritual are spoken, the bodies of the smaller progenitors become smoky and insubstantial, transforming to vapours which stream into the next-largest progenitor until only the largest remains. At this point, the ritual is complete and the nested amalgamation arises in the form of its largest progenitor.

Requirements: Craft (stonemasonry) 4 ranks, Knowledge (arcana) 8 ranks, ability to cast either *ethereal jaunt* or both *dimension door* and *dimensional anchor*.

Advantages: Unlike similar crossbreeding transmutation rituals, the nested amalgamation ritual is ‘generic’ rather than keyed to various physical features of the progenitors. Thus, any circles and runes carved for a nested amalgamation ritual can be reused to create another nested amalgamation with the same number of progenitors, so long as the progenitors can fit inside one of the outer circles. (For this reason, many wizards make their circles larger than needed.)

Disadvantages: The molten silver and crushed gemstones used to fill the carvings are consumed during the ritual, so the cost of the transmutation ritual must be paid again for each subsequent use of the diagram, whether the ritual was a success or not.

Difficulty Class: The DC for a nested amalgamation ritual is as follows:

- $DC = 24 + \text{number of progenitors}$

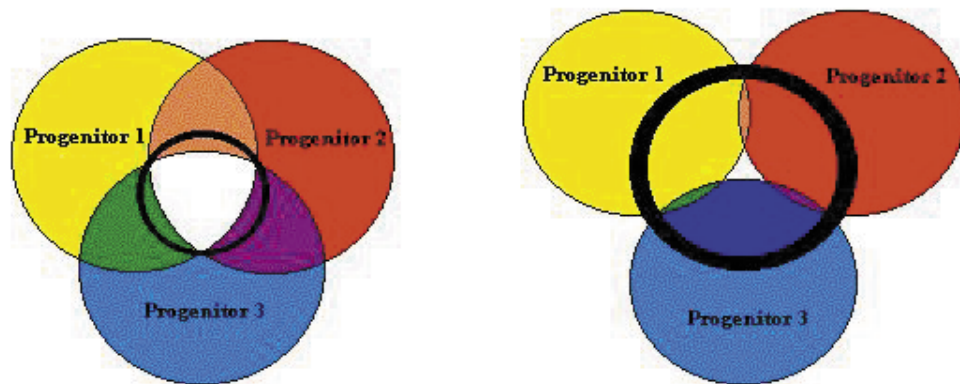
Determining Success: The wizard performing the ritual makes an amalgamation check using the following formula:

- Amalgamation check = $1d20 + \text{wizard level} + \text{wizard's Intelligence modifier} + \text{preparation bonus}$

The wizard must overcome the Spell Resistance of any of the progenitors before rolling his amalgamation check; should he fail to overcome the Spell Resistance, the ritual automatically fails. The wizard is also not allowed to take 10 or take 20 on his amalgamation roll.

The preparation bonus is as follows; depending upon how long the wizard takes to prepare for the ritual, inscribing the magical circles, runes and glyphs:

DIAGRAM 1: Possible Layouts for a Three-Progenitor Nested Amalgamation Ritual



Length of Preparation	Bonus
Less than one month	+0
1 month	+1
3 months	+2

Since the runes are not as intricate for a nested amalgamation ritual as they are for a typical crossbreeding ritual, there is no further bonus for extending the preparation time beyond three months; by that time you have either finished inscribing everything or you have not.

Failure: If the amalgamation check is failed, the results depend upon how close the roll was to success. If the roll missed by five or less, the smaller progenitors never merge into the largest, dissipating into ethereal nothingness. Fortunately for the largest of the progenitors – the one who would have provided the initial outermost body – he is unaffected by the ritual's failure. If the amalgamation check failed by more than five points, the minds of the smaller progenitors partially merge into the largest one's mind but there is no successful integration; not only are the bodies of the smaller progenitors lost as above but the largest progenitor loses 2d6 points of Intelligence, to a minimum score of 1. This loss is permanent but can be restored via the usual means: *restoration*, *greater restoration*, *wish*, *limited wish* or *miracle* spells or their like.

Material Costs: The cost of the ritual is the 10,000 gp plus an additional 2,000 gp per progenitor involved. Thus, a nested amalgamation with three progenitors costs 16,000 gp.

Nested Amalgamation Template

'Nested Amalgamation' is an acquired template that can be applied to any group of progenitors,

subject to the following constraints:

1. Only living creatures may become part of a nested amalgamation.
2. Each progenitor must be of the same general body shape (humanoid, quadruped, serpentine, etc.) or of an amorphous shape (such as an ooze).
3. Each progenitor, apart from the largest, must be able to 'fit' inside the body of the next largest one, assuming its body was hollow.
4. All but the largest progenitor must be naked, without any equipment, weapons or gear.

A nested amalgamation uses all of the base creatures' statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

Size and Type: The nested amalgamation's creature type changes to aberration regardless of which 'body' it is currently wearing on the outside. Even a nested amalgamation composed of progenitors solely from the humanoid type is immune to such spells as *charm person* and *hold person* that target only humanoids. However, it has the Hit Dice, Base Attack, Saves and skill ranks of the current body it is wearing.

Hit Dice: A nested amalgamation has the Hit Dice of its current outer body. When that body is slain, it instantly reverts to the Hit Dice of its next body in line. Nested amalgamations always have their maximum normal hit points each time a new body bursts forth from the remains of the old, regardless of the amount of damage its old body received.

Initiative: As per the current outer body.

Speed: As per the current outer body.

Armour Class: As per the current outer body. Note some creatures may not be wearing the armour that normally makes up part of their Armour Class.

Base Attack/Grapple: As per the current outer body.

Attacks/Damage: As per the current outer body.

Special Attacks/Special Qualities: As per the current outer body. Nested amalgamations cannot use special attacks or special qualities of bodies currently nested inside their other bodies. In addition, all nested amalgamations have the following special quality:

Nested Bodies: When a nested amalgamation's outer body is slain, its internal organs and skeleton reconfigure into the next body in line. The following round, the inner body rips forth from the outer body, sloughing it off like a shed skin. The nested bodies must be 'worn' in order; a nested amalgamation cannot choose to inhabit a body that is not 'next in line.' Piercing the outer body of a nested amalgamation (such as with a spear through its entire midsection) prevents its next inner body from forming but once the intrusion is removed the nested amalgamation can configure the next nested body in line. If an outer body is completely destroyed (as by a *disintegration* spell) or reconfigured such that the inner nested bodies cannot form in their original shape (such as by being crushed flat by a slab of rock or being cut in half), the reconfiguration into further inner bodies is impossible.

Saves: Nested amalgamations gain an inherent +1 bonus to Will saves for each additional progenitor beyond the first, a result of having multiple minds blended together into a unified whole.

Abilities: A nested amalgamation has the Strength, Dexterity and Constitution of its outermost body. (If its outer form is slain, it takes

on the physical abilities of the next body in line.) Its Intelligence, Wisdom and Charisma are the highest of all of its progenitors regardless of how many external bodies have been slain.

Skills: Nested amalgamations retain the skill ranks of all of their progenitors. Skills are modified by the nested amalgamation's new ability scores and those based on its physical attributes may be altered as its outer bodies are slain. Skills known by more than one progenitor do not stack; take the highest number of ranks and apply the relevant ability modifier of the current body worn.

Feats: Nested amalgamations retain the feats of their progenitors. This may result in a nested amalgamation having more feats than normal for its Hit Dice; consider these bonus feats.

Environment: Due to their artificial nature, nested amalgamations are often found in areas their individual progenitors do not normally frequent.

Organisation: Solitary.

Challenge Rating: As per the outermost body +1. If slain, treat the next body in line as a separate encounter with CR being normal for that creature +1 and so on down the line. The final body has a CR as per normal for its race.

Treasure: Normally, only the outermost body of a nested amalgamation starts with any armour, weapons or gear.

Alignment: Usually chaotic, as a result of the merging of multiple minds.

Advancement: As per normal rules of the progenitors.

Level Adjustment: —

Sample Nested Amalgamation: Trognohob

As an example of the nested amalgamation process, consider a humanoid bodyguard created with troll, gnoll and hobgoblin progenitors, which we will call a trognohob. (Often, the resultant hybrid is named using bits of each progenitor's name.) The troll body forms the outer shell using the troll's physical abilities, with Wisdom and Intelligence boosts provided by the gnoll and hobgoblin, respectively. The hobgoblin also provides ranks in the Hide and Move Silently skills, while the gnoll contributes the Power Attack feat.

Trognohob (in its original troll body)

Large Aberration

Hit Dice: 6d8+36 (63 hp)

Initiative: +2

Speed: 30 ft.

Armour Class: 20 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +4 chain shirt, +5 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 18

Base Attack/Grapple: +4/+14

Attack: Claw +9 melee (1d6+6)

Full Attack: 2 claws +9 melee (1d6+6) and bite +4 melee (1d6+3)

Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.

Special Attacks: Rend 2d6+9

Special Qualities: Darkvision 90 ft., low-light vision, nested bodies, regeneration 5, scent
Saves: Fort +11, Ref +4, Will +6 (boosted from the troll's +3 due to an increase in Wisdom from the gnoll and the nested amalgamation's inherent +2 bonus to Will saves for having three progenitors)

Abilities: Str 23 (as per troll), Dex 14 (as per troll), Con 23 (as per troll), Int 10 (as per hobgoblin), Wis 11 (as per gnoll), Cha 8 (as per gnoll and hobgoblin)



Skills: Hide +4, Listen +6, Move Silently +4, Spot +7

Feats: Alertness, Iron Will, Power Attack^B, Track

Environment: Any land

Organisation: Solitary

Challenge Rating: 6 (in troll form, since a troll is CR 5)

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Usually chaotic evil

Advancement Range: By character class

Level Adjustment: —

Initially, the trognohob looks identical to a normal troll, although perhaps there is a deeper intelligence visible in its eyes. Realising its nested forms, those of a gnoll and a hobgoblin, are reliant upon armour and weapons, the trognohob's creator often provides it with a wraparound leather kilt and a simple chain shirt. Similarly, the trognohob wears a longsword on a belt around its waist and a light shield strapped to its back. The fact it wears but does not use a sword and shield may be a clue that this 'troll' is not like normal trolls.

Trognohob (in its gnoll body, after the troll body has been slain)

Medium Aberration

Hit Dice: 2d8+2 (11 hp)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 30 ft.

Armour Class: 15 (+4 chain shirt, +1 light steel shield), touch 10, flat-footed 15

Base Attack/Grapple: +1/+3

Attack: Longsword +3 melee (1d8+2)

Full Attack: Longsword +3 melee (1d8+2)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: —

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., nested body
Saves: Fort +4, Ref +0, Will +4 (due to the nested amalgamation's inherent +2 bonus to Will saves for having three progenitors and the troll's Iron Will feat)

Abilities: Str 15 (as per gnoll), Dex 10 (as per gnoll), Con 13 (as per gnoll), Int 10 (as per hobgoblin), Wis 11 (as per gnoll), Cha 8 (as per gnoll and hobgoblin)



Skills: Hide +2, Listen +6, Move Silently +2, Spot +7

Feats: Alertness^B, Iron Will^B, Power Attack, Track^B

Environment: Any land

Organisation: Solitary

Challenge Rating: 2 (in gnoll form, since a gnoll is CR 1)

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Usually chaotic evil

Advancement Range: By character class

Level Adjustment: —

After having been 'slain' in its troll body, the trognohob undergoes a startling transformation: its body seems to shrink and its skin rips open, revealing a slaving gnoll underneath. Its tight-fitting chain shirt now hangs much looser upon its body. Drawing the longsword thus far ignored on its hip and slinging the shield from its back, it presses forward with the attack.

Trognohob (in its hobgoblin body, after the gnoll body has been slain)

Medium Aberration

Hit Dice: 1d8+2 (6 hp)

Initiative: +1

Speed: 30 ft.

Armour Class: 16 (+1 Dex, +4 chain shirt, +1 light steel shield), touch 11, flat-footed 15

Base Attack/Grapple: +1/+2

Attack: Longsword +2 melee (1d8+1)

Full Attack: Longsword +2 melee (1d8+1)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: —

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft.

Saves: Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +3 (due to the nested amalgamation's inherent +2 bonus to Will saves for having three progenitors and the troll's Iron Will feat)

Abilities: Str 13 (as per hobgoblin), Dex 13 (as per hobgoblin), Con 14 (as per hobgoblin), Int 10 (as per hobgoblin), Wis 11 (as per gnoll), Cha 8



(as per gnoll and hobgoblin)

Skills: Hide +3, Listen +6, Move Silently +3, Spot +7

Feats: Alertness, Iron Will^B, Power Attack^B, Track^B

Environment: Any land

Organisation: Solitary

Challenge Rating: ½ (in hobgoblin form, since it has no further nested bodies)

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Usually chaotic evil

Advancement Range: By character class

Level Adjustment: —

Sample Nested Amalgamation: Dire Render

Rather than attempting a humanoid bodyguard, many who delve along the path of nested amalgamations do so to create powerful lair guardians. One such possibility is the dire render, crafted by fusing together a dire bear and a gray render. The gray render grants the amalgamation

a slight improvement to its Intelligence score, a host of combat feats and quite a surprise to anyone thinking they were finished with combat after they slew the dire bear guarding the area they were trying to penetrate!

Dire Render (in its dire bear body)

Large Aberration

Hit Dice: 12d8+51 (105 hp)

Initiative: +1

Speed: 40 ft.

Armour Class: 17 (-1 size, +1 Dex, +7 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 16

Base Attack/Grapple: +9/+23

Attack: Claw +19 melee (2d4+10)

Full Attack: 2 claws +19 melee (2d4+10) and bite +13 melee (2d8+5)

Space/Reach: 10 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Improved grab

Special Qualities: Low-light vision, nested body, scent

Saves: Fort +12, Ref +9, Will +10 (due to the nested amalgamation's inherent +1 bonus to Will saves for having two progenitors)

Abilities: Str 31 (as per dire bear), Dex 13 (as per dire bear), Con 19 (as per dire bear), Int 3 (as per gray render), Wis 12 (as per dire bear and gray render), Cha 10 (as per dire bear)

Skills: Hide +3, Listen +10, Spot +10, Survival +3, Swim +13

Feats: Alertness, Cleave^B, Endurance, Improved Bull Rush^B, Power Attack^B, Run, Toughness, Track^B, Weapon Focus (claw)

Environment: Any land

Organisation: Solitary

Challenge Rating: 8 (since a dire bear has a CR 7)

Treasure: None (although a dire render is often found guarding its master's treasure)

Alignment: Usually chaotic neutral

Advancement Range: 13-16 HD (Large); 17-36 HD (Huge)

Level Adjustment: —

Initially, the dire render looks identical to a dire bear. It is only when it defends its lair (or the area it was trained since its amalgamation to defend) does its unnatural combat prowess become apparent.

Dire Render (in its gray render body)

Large Aberration

Hit Dice: 10d10+73 (128 hp) (as per the gray render, +3 hit points from the dire bear's Toughness feat)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 30 ft.

Armour Class: 19 (-1 size, +10 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 19

Base Attack/Grapple: +10/+20

Attack: Bite +15 melee (2d6+6)

Full Attack: Bite +15 melee (2d6+6); 2 claws +11 melee (1d6+3)

Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.

Special Attacks: Improved grab, rend 2d6+9

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent

Saves: Fort +14, Ref +7, Will +5 (due to the nested amalgamation's inherent +1 bonus to Will saves for having two progenitors)

Abilities: Str 23 (as per gray render), Dex 10 (as per gray render), Con 24 (as per gray render), Int 3 (as per gray render), Wis 12 (as per dire bear and gray render), Cha 10 (as per dire bear)

Skills: Hide +2, Listen +10, Spot +10, Survival +3, Swim +9

Feats: Alertness^B, Cleave, Endurance^B, Improved Bull Rush, Power Attack, Run^B, Toughness^B, Track, Weapon Focus (claw)^B

Environment: Any land

Organisation: Solitary

Challenge Rating: 8 (as per the gray render)

Treasure: None (although a dire render is often found guarding its master's treasure)

Alignment: Usually chaotic neutral

Advancement Range: 11-15 HD (Large); 16-30 HD (Huge)

Level Adjustment: —

The dire bear's hide suddenly rips asunder as a hulking, gray monstrosity bursts forth, its beady, black eyes burning with eagerness to finish the battle.

Other Ideas

A great idea for either a lair guardian or a riding mount would be to create a nested amalgamation from several dragons of different races and sizes. If the outermost form is a red dragon, you can expect its enemies to make their battle preparations accordingly, stocking up on cold-based attack spells and protection from its fiery breath. Imagine their horror when, upon finally slaying the red dragon after a lengthy battle, its skin cracks open to reveal a fully healthy white dragon of slightly smaller size, upon whom their cold spells (should any remain) are useless!

Just for fun, imagine a nested amalgamation created from a three-legged otyugh and a three-legged xorn. Otyughs are often used underground as area guardians; the nested amalgamation would probably be put to similar use.

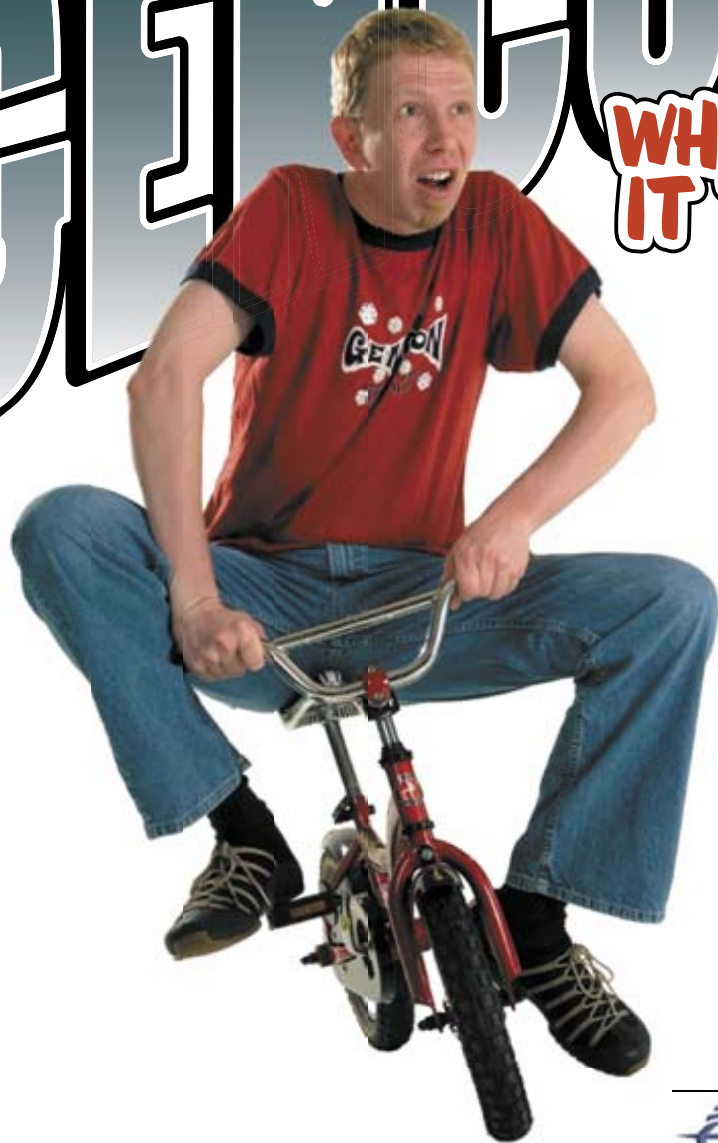
Nested amalgamations become much more interesting when you start playing around with progenitors having class levels. Imagine the trognohob above if the troll progenitor was a 3rd-level barbarian, the gnoll was a 10th-level ranger and the hobgoblin was a 6th-level rogue!

Oozes make for interesting progenitors in a nested amalgamation, whether the intended result is a lair guardian or personal bodyguard. Imagine slaying a hill giant, only to have a gray ooze pour out of its body orifices! Nesting an ooze inside an intelligent creature also results in something not normally found in nature: an ooze capable of discernible thought. Oozes also have the ability to form from outer bodies penetrated by spears and the like, making them a bit more versatile than many other nested forms.



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GAMING SYMPOSIUM

How to Create an Adventure

Nadim Brzezinski



What makes a Campaign memorable? How do some Game Masters create and weave plots and worlds that players want to come back to again and again? Where do good Games Masters find maps, and other material that they use to bring their games to life? Do they have secrets that the rest of us do not know? The short answer is yes. Moreover, I am about to spill the beans,

as it were. I am going to share with you the secrets behinds a tightly plotted novel and a tightly plotted game. Yes, they are the same.

Adventure Hooks

If you are running any adventure, whether this is fantasy, *OGL Cyberpunk* or *Armageddon 2089* you can find everything you need on the front pages of the *Guardian*, the *Observer*, the *New York Times* or the *Washington Post*. Any major newspaper across the world will do. In fact, some of the best hooks are in the Asian Press, as they are not known to your players. For this, I highly recommend the *Asia Times*. Be careful to also scan the business pages, as these are extremely good fodder for both *OGL Cyberpunk* and *Armageddon 2089*. The last place rich in hooks for all genres is the police blotter of any major paper across the world. You may ask yourself, how so? I mean, reading papers can be boring. Trust me, it stops being boring the moment you realise they are full of adventure hooks, and it also makes you a better informed citizen, hence you do kill two birds with one stone.

When dealing with both *OGL Cyberpunk* and *Armageddon 2089* there are several current stories that apply to both fictional worlds, well... like gloves. One of these stories, as

tragic as it is, is the Iraq War, and all the machinations, twists and turns, involving major Corporations such as Halliburton and WorldComm. These involve cronyism at the highest level, as well as favours, and in some cases disappearing money to the tune of billions of US dollars. In fact, some of these corporations do belong in the world of *Armageddon 2089* or *OGC Cyberpunk* and they could become a major actor in your game. I must add a word of caution, if real writers do this, why should you not? Just realise you will have to change names to protect the guilty... and yourself. With a little more creative work, they can also be imported into any fantasy setting as a new Guild. Oh, and incidentally if you want similar stories but do not want to read the newspaper you can search history. The Tea Pot Scandal in the United States in the early 1900s is ready made with even a Congressional Investigation and can be used with some creativity, and most people have no idea what this is.

Therefore, I have decided to use a real company to create my fictional Corp. This company is not one of the major players in the Iraq War, but one of the subcontractors. They have obtained contracts in the area of Intelligence Gathering as well as infrastructure. I will reserve the name of the guilty party to myself, let us just say, from news reports they are quite unsavoury. First question, where are they based? Like their real counterpart I will base them in San Diego, California. They are subcontractors for GenDef, and their work is in Intelligence Gathering and Signals Intelligence. They need an Armour company, your Armour Company, to run security at a research facility. Their contract is very good and looks unimpeachable, but as you go into the web you find more and more things that make you nervous, but they are offering five times the standard pay for this contract. This, in fact, should be making you quite nervous. I choose to model my contract on the real world, using those very real news reports I told you about. I know the party needs to have a security clearance and be able to speak several



European languages. It also seems pretty straightforward, as all supplies will come from GenDef. The contract looks good and the players take it. It is at this moment that I start playing the Company store game, and also asking players to get involved, increasingly, in things they did not sign for, but were in the fine print. In fact, these are things the characters are not trained for. When the players do something that they should not, and get caught, guess who will end holding the bag? My fictional company name is CAQUI, and this is as close as I will ever come in identifying the real company to either my players or my readers. Oh and bringing this company into Cyberpunk is not hard either. Now if I wanted to bring them into a fantasy setting, I would have to make them a guild, and Chaotic Evil, or Neutral Evil; after all, profit is their motive.

Now you too can do this. It will take a search of the *Guardian* or *Observer* archived stories, as well as North American papers. Be forewarned, the *Guardian* probably has the best archives and the easiest ones to search on-line. If you really want to do a through job, you may want to search the same story on American and European papers and print them. The way they are presented is different from paper to paper and will help you write the background material you need for your fictional company. It will also allow you to write fictional releases that are coming from different points of view. If you want to go above and beyond the call of duty, you can even find most of these companies on line, and they do have a company profile that you can use to create your fictional company. Remember, this is a game, but you are also creating a plausible world. If anybody complains, do remind them, most writers use the real world as inspiration for characters and plot, why should you not?



Characters

The next elements of any given campaign are the characters that your players will encounter. They range from major Non Player Characters to very secondary people used for background. The easiest mistake made by both writers and Games Masters is to create 'cardboard' characters. These are people who have no personality, or only one set of motivations. Granted, these cookie cutter Non Player Characters are easy to create, but they are very unreal.

When I write a character for a novel or a short story, my process is not that different from developing my Non Player Characters. In fact, my Non Player Characters see a character sheet long after I finished doing this initial work up, which is a far more detailed character concept than even your players will do for their characters, most of the time. I also admit this is reserved for those major Non Player Characters that will work with the party or against the party. So first things first, let's list the questions:

- 'What's in a name?'
- 'What do they look like?'
- 'What drives them?'
- 'Families, do they have any?'

Now let us add some meat to the questions: Spend time on the name; think, John Smith is hardly memorable, but Phineas Gould is. Use the phone book, one of the best resources ever invented. Be creative, and have fun. Make sure it rolls down the tongue easily, since you will have to pronounce it early and often.

Physical characteristics: Does this person have a limp? How about an artificial eye? Is that arm real or cybernetic? Why does she wear very short hair? Why does he have a scar running down his face? Giving a character a specific physical identifier helps to create something unique to that character. Think, if you will, of Sherlock Holmes' pipe and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Captain Ahab's leg places the hate in *Moby Dick* in context. Whether you choose to give your character a tick, or a pipe, come up with a reason. That scar down the face may be the result of a bad ejection from a WarMech. On the other hand, it may be a sword slash acquired in a battle that happened long ago. It could also be a sign of honour as our Non Player Character survived a horrible initiation in a gang that is fighting the Corps. Minor details like these ones make characters memorable and more rounded.

Agenda: Everybody has an agenda. Remember, real people are very complex. Even the worst villains in human history loved pets and children, and were not obsessed with the horrors they perpetrated 24/7. They also at times had families and spent quality time with them. Just think of Joseph Stalin, he *did* have a family. Writers usually ask what drives this person? For example, our hiring manager in our mythical corporation above is obviously driven by money and quotas. Yet this manager may also be driven by some sense of internal honour and as the plot develops, this character may decide to switch sides. They may also reveal another side of themselves if their family is suddenly

at risk. In fact, does this Non Player Character have a family? Realise that most real people do, so giving them a family just makes them better characters and an adventure could indeed revolve around rescuing the child of this major Non Player Character. The same can be said for any fantasy game, damsels in distress notwithstanding. Alignment is a good method to get to the basics of role-playing, but what truly drives the king? What truly drives the noble knight?



Physical features: It may seem trite but when you read a piece of fiction, you tend to put yourself in the place of the characters you read. This is neither rare nor strange. Hence why coming out with a good character description is important, 'But I already came up with the archetypical pipe.' Good, now come up with height, weight, body type, skin colour, eye, hair type and hair length. Remember this is a major character in a role-playing game; he or she is a real person. Professional writers write all this background material because it makes their characters come alive. Moreover, most of the background that writers produce is never seen by the reader, nor should your work be seen by your players. They will only see a memorable character.

Oh, and a note on bartenders: We all use them, but they are cardboard cutouts. Want to make your keep memorable? Give him the full treatment you would give your Major Non Player Characters that will work for and against the party. Barkeeps deserve it, as well as the bar.

Support Characters

Do I have to do this for every character out there? The answer simply is no. This work is necessary on major characters, but the kid on the corner that shines the character's shoes does not need this. You can still make that character memorable by adding some of the elements: agenda, physical tick and even an accent. If your players ever decide to ask him for anything, the kid may surprise them by telling them more than what they asked. At times it will suffice to give him something in his equipment. For example, the box he is using to shine those shoes looks old and battered. The shoeshine paste... well his cans are never full, or even close to full. He may be recovering them from the trash, or be very busy. He may speak with a foreign accent and be a war refugee (which is a way to make the consequences of war real for players). He may even be a war orphan.

Some characters, such as the random encounters in the street truly do not even deserve this much treatment. Those are characters that players will encounter on and off and should be used to emphasise that characters are part of a real world. We do not live alone, neither do our characters. One element of *Cyberpunk* or *Judge Dredd* is very crowded cities. Hence having characters bump against people randomly from time to time is not a bad idea (although bumping into a judge in Mega-City One can lead to two years in the Iso Cubes for obstruction). We do it, why not our characters?

Other Resources

We all love maps and, and they are available in the most surprising of places. This is the World Wide Web, and if you let your fingers do the dancing you will be able to find what you need.

There are several search engines on the World Wide Web. It really does not matter what is your favourite one. If you need a map for Dublin, you can find it. If you need a map for Washington DC, you can find it. Just look for the tourism board of either city. Chances are those maps are on-line, and you can print them. Due to the new Age of Terror those maps may or may not be as accurate as they once were. Yet they are accurate enough for your games. You can also use Yahoo Maps, which have the local street maps on them.

In fantasy games a modern map may seem to be a little more problematic, but not really. Prague has not changed that much in its downtown area since the Middle Ages, and neither has Paris. There are cities all across Europe that still have the narrow winding streets that were common in the Middle Ages. So you may have to remove the subway from the map, a little white out will do wonders, or an electronic drawing program. *Microsoft Draw* © will do the trick, and if you have access to *Corel Draw* © or *GIMP* ©, you are set.

If you do not have access to the web you still can use pre-made maps. Any good tourist guide, even of your own city, will contain maps that can be used in your games, as well as a driving guide. They are colour maps and they are readily available. I also recommend *National Geographic*. From time to time they do print beautiful maps that can be used for either overland travel or city reference.

Another invaluable resource is office and building maps. If you happen to rent a flat and the agreement comes with a diagram, you can photocopy it and use it as player reference. You can also find those references on the web by searching for flats for rent. If you should decide to do this in North America, use the key words Apartment for Rent. I know I have found invaluable architectural references this way.

Map Makers

So you want to create your own maps? You are in luck, grasshopper; there are great programs available on the web to create your own maps. The two top contenders right now are *Campaign Cartographer Pro* by Profantasy and *Fractal Mapper* by NBOS. They have their advantages and their disadvantages and I will try to list them in this short review of both.

Campaign Cartographer Pro is the industry standard; this is not a slogan, it is the truth. The reason why it is the industry standard is the richness of its symbol library. For those of you interested in producing fantasy maps this will not make much of a difference. Both libraries are good when it comes to fantasy maps. Now if you want to create modern or science fiction maps, I will definitely recommend Profantasy's *Campaign Cartographer*. Right now the library is quite extensive. You can use the base set, with the modern symbol set and *Cosmographer* and you have almost all you need to get going. I will add the *City Designer*, if you want to get an extensive symbol library for your pleasure. Now the down side is both price and usability. This is not the easiest program to learn to use, and all those extras add to some real cash. The effort and money though, are worth it. You can also download the free viewer from their site and there is an extensive library of maps in their free library, ranging from overland maps to ship diagrams, few if any in the sci-fi setting. That, I suspect, will soon be corrected.

NBOS *Fractal Mapper* is easier to use, and I have been able to produce cities with small symbol sets faster than I have ever been able to do with *CC2 Pro*. The package is rather robust and it will fit most of your needs. The down side is the symbol library size. It is a small library compared to *CC 2 Pro*, but for fantasy use it is more than sufficient. It is also mostly sufficient for modern gamers, where it no longer competes in the science



fiction realm. Here it falls on its face and *CC 2 Pro* is a far better choice. Overall it is a cheaper program and if you need it for fantasy it will do what you need.

If you are good at producing your own symbols, both programs can take new symbols. So, that may not be a problem for you. Either way, both programs do require a steep learning curve, but the results of both programs are anywhere from pretty good to very good, if you are willing to spend the time to master them. You will require a computer that can handle graphics. Any computer with a good graphics card should suffice.

Now for those of you who play science fiction games I highly recommend *Astrosynthesis* from NBOS, This is an absolute must have. This program will allow you to create whole stellar sectors, but also go down to the level of creating solar systems that conform to the latest in astronomical knowledge. It is only down side is the stellar chart does not have names on it, but otherwise it is an extremely good program.

Of course, there is always paper, pencil and rulers, as well as graph paper.

Happy Gaming!





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Inside the Chainmail Bra

More Realism?

Fey Boss

Why is it that everyone wants more realism in their campaigns? The one thing that we're all trying to do by gaming is to escape: to get away from pesky reality, with its taxes, bills, exams, traffic, pollution and wars. The last time I saw an elven army storming a city was on the silver screen, and even that was a few years ago by now. Once in a while someone might raid the snack aisle of the local grocery shop with blood and cream running thick in the aisles. Cheese puffs scatter as broken glass. Caltrops made of iced cakes left over from the Easter sales before last strewn to trip the unwary. Liquorice whips lashing the salesclerk to an altar of countertop weighed down by cash register, festoons of register tape spilled like entrails - well, perhaps nothing quite that graphic and gourmand.

But really, of what good is realism in a campaign? When is it too much? I think I'll have a look at the last time I went camping, more years ago than I care to count (though my subconscious supplies the number as being probably 16 - o fickle subconscious!) There were a large number of us - probably about thirty, the rough equivalent of a squad. Most of us were teenagers, with a couple of people in their twenties and our fearless youth group leader being in his late thirties or early forties. We can draw a comparison here to grizzled sergeant with non-coms and then the unseasoned but relatively fit kids in uniform. Never mind our uniform was t-shirt and jeans and we

weren't armed with anything more deadly than our backpacks. We were not young hooligans, no matter our fondest dreams of toughness.

We were driven from the departure point to where our expedition would set forth and given access to our next form of transportation: canoes. We would head 30 miles down the Peace River to the campgrounds, where we would set up camp for the night and then paddle further downstream the next day to where the vans would be waiting to take us all home. There were no snipers in the underbrush, and we were assured (this was in the American South) that there were 'probably' no alligators around to worry about that time of year, but if we saw any, just keep moving and not dip our hands or feet in the water around that part of the river. None of us were entirely sure if the canoe renters were having us on, but after a mile or so, limbs were dangled all the same. None of us ended up being called Lefty or Shorty afterwards.

The main thing I remember is that somehow I ended up in a canoe with one of the aides, a 26 year old former footballer who was called Tank, and coincidentally, the coolers containing all of the food for the weekend. I'm not a small woman now, and I wasn't then; Tank lived up to his nickname without the slightest suggestion of irony. With the two fully loaded coolers,

we rode so low in the water that if an alligator had wanted a snack, it could very easily have swam up and crawled in with us. 'So how do you feel about bacon and eggs? Boy howdy, my offspring'd love you! Come on home with me for breakfast!' By the time we got to the campground, I was referring to it as the crampground; my back and shoulders wasted no time in seizing up into one solid mass.

Now, this is what I remember after more than a dozen years. I'm sure my mind is glossing over the details and keeping things from seeming as unpleasant as they did then. If I give it a lot more thought, I could pull up details such as lacking a sleeping bag so that I slept in a tent with no padding but for that thin layer of vinyl and my jeans between me and the cold, hard ground; that the only thing which kept us from getting lost was that we were following the river, which didn't fork even if it bent; and that I was for all intents and purposes, like it or not, spending the entire weekend in the company of my 'peers', who at that time were sixteen years old and not very interested in the same topics as me. (Granted, having been stuck in a canoe with a former football player, his choice of conversation was largely limited to football, of which I knew nothing then and know nothing now. This limited our conversation to 'Do you think that's an alligator? I think it just moved. Wait - it's just a log. Are you sure - aieee, you're steering us into a wasps' nest!')

Are these the sorts of details we really want to highlight in our campaigns and in our roleplay?

This is not to decry the need for some realism in a game. If we don't have something to draw us in, a bridge between our real selves sitting around a table with paper and dice (and Cheese Puffs!) and our heroic alter egos, if the line between fantasy and reality isn't blurred, it becomes dull; it doesn't engage us. While the above retelling might sound like the groundwork for either a

buddy movie or a romantic comedy, it's the interpretation of the details; not the details themselves. It's what makes such movies work; we can relate to those details, without putting ourselves so deeply in the affected characters' place that we cringe. Films which fail at that tend not to be runaway successes - unless it's drama or horror, of course, in which case they're lauded for their success. It's a fine line to walk, and what's appropriate for one kind of campaign isn't necessarily appropriate for another.

It's easy to get bogged down in detail to the point where the game stops being fun. Some people thrive on these sort of details, and war games in particular require them; however, in a roleplay-oriented campaign, focusing too heavily on these sorts of details tends to take away from the 'fun': movement rates, weight calculation tables, I've even seen charts dictating what sort of mood a character wakes up in based on the roll of a die. Especially as a woman, I'm subject to random mood swings at least once a month. I don't particularly want that during my gaming endeavours as well. So what can a truly conscientious GM do?

The truly conscientious GM takes a step BACK from being conscientious. Put away the tables. Try something new! If you're worried about it affecting the continuity of a campaign in progress, then pause that campaign; roll up characters for a one-shot affair. Experiment that way; if people get attached to those characters enough that they start to object, then you've done something right. If you manage to make them yell out loud - well, there's a reason why movie theatres make patrons pay on the way in instead of the way out, isn't there?

Though that doesn't do anything to remove the risk of their concession counter being turned into a sacrificial altar. We thrifty patrons have a responsibility to protest the rising cost of snacks - however gory and realistic the result.



ADVANCED TRAINING

NEW CROSS TRAINING CLASSES FOR THE
STARSHIP TROOPERS ROLEPLAYING GAME

MARK 'NEO' HOWE

BUG WRANGLER

Cross-trained Speciality Class

Something of a recent development, the Bug Wranglers were initially non-existent as a specific subsection of the Mobile Infantry; however, with the growing number of new bugs being discovered, illustrating perfectly the enemies' proficiency at adapting their forms to the war as it evolves, effectively allowing them to keep pace with any technological advances that would otherwise give the Mobile Infantry an edge, it quickly became of growing importance to the Intelligence and scientific communities that they receive living specimens of any new bugs encountered so that they could be analysed, their threat assessed and new means of defeating them developed. It is here that the bug wranglers found their cause, initially chosen from among platoons that had already shown proficiency or success at retrieving specimens as per orders. This new unit has quickly become a highly specialised and prestigious unit to serve and train with.

These shotgun-toting Mobile Infantry are highly regarded but generally regarded as somewhat unhinged by their contemporaries. They are also extended a greater leniency and granted more personal freedoms than most because of the difficult and suicidal nature of their day-to-day operations. Indeed, the bug wranglers have a very high mortality rate.



The Bug Wranglers are charged with the task of hunting down newly reported bugs, often travelling deep into hostile territory. Once the target is located, they are neutralised with precision shots to the limb stems and nerve clusters using their shotguns as such weapons

offer enough punch to knock any bug senseless or remove its limbs, effectively incapacitating it. Once the bug is down, the Wranglers move in and pacify it with their shock sticks; they then retrieve the specimen to a pre-designated retrieval point to be shipped off to be researched and its threat assessed.

ADDITIONAL STANDARD ISSUE

The Mobile Infantry bug wrangler gains the following standard issue equipment in addition to his normal allowance.

- Either a Brunham XW-103-S7 Shotgun or pump action underslung Morita mount as standard.
- CC-176-ER Shock Stick

GAME RULE INFORMATION

Mobile Infantry Bug Wranglers have the following game statistics.

REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to become a Mobile Infantry bug wrangler, a character must fulfil the following criteria.

Skills: Handle Animal 5 ranks, Perception 8 ranks, Stealth 5 ranks.

Feats: Alertness, Point Blank Shot, Far Shot, Dead Aim, Precise Shot

Special: Must have either been part of delivering and/or reporting a new bug type or put forward for selection by commanding officer.

HIT POINTS

Mobile Infantry bug wranglers gain two hit point per level, adding this to their total gained from previous class levels.

CLASS SKILLS

The Mobile Infantry bug wrangler's class skills, and the key ability for each skill, are as follows: Acrobatics (Dex), Athletics (Str), Computer Use (Int), Drive (Dex), Handle Animal (Cha), Knowledge (alien species -arachnids) (Int), Knowledge (tactics) (Int), Perception (Wis), Stealth (Dex), Survival (Wis) and Technical (mechanical) (Int).

Skill Points at Each Additional Level: 6 + Int modifier

CLASS FEATURES

The following are class features of the Mobile Infantry Bug wrangler.

Bug Pacification (Unique): The Bug Wranglers are proficient in taking a bug down without killing it, this works best when done with shotgun type weapons as they are most able to take a chunk out of a bug or blow off a limb quickly. However this is no precise science and if a bug gets hurt in the process, that is fine too - just so long as it does not die. A bug wrangler using the Dead Aim feat can choose to inflict non lethal damage. This ability only works on Arachnids and as it requires the Mobile Infantry to be using Dead Aim. Use of this ability requires a full round action. Bug Pacification as noted can only be used via any shotgun or underslung shotgun mount; other weapons either do not inflict enough damage or deal too much. Note any critical hit scored while using bug pacification always causes lethal damage.

Fearless: Bug Wranglers, more so than other Mobile Infantry, have to be undaunted by the charge or attacks of their enemy. Nor can they rely on unleashed weapon fire to kill the enemy before it kills them; indeed, they must carefully place their shots and hopefully bring their target down alive. Because of this, they are seen as suicidal by many other Mobile Infantry, putting them on an equal footing with Pathfinders and other elite units. Effectively this provides the Bug Wrangler a +3 morale bonus on any saves against being feared or suffering mental trauma (such as shaken, terrified and so on).

Tunnel Fighter: Bug wranglers are often required to delve down into the bugs' home turf, the dreaded tunnel networks that lead miles below the surface of some planets. At 3rd level, the bug wrangler is trained to retain his sense of direction while underground without needing to leave flares or markers behind that would draw the enemy to his position. With a Survival check (DC 15), the bug wrangler can remember which direction leads the way he came in order to reach the surface again. With a Survival check (DC 25), the bug wrangler can use the technical knowledge and surface scans of the planet to guess which direction would lead him to his target whilst still underground. Either use of this feature is a full round action.

BUG WRANGLER

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Class Features	Defence Bonus	Prestige Bonus
1 st	+1	+1	+2	+0	Bug Pacification, Fearless	+1	+1
2 nd	+2	+2	+3	+0	Bagged and Tagged +2	+2	+1
3 rd	+3	+2	+3	+1	Tunnel Fighter	+2	+2
4 th	+4	+2	+4	+1	Limb Damage	+3	+2
5 th	+5	+3	+4	+1	Bagged and Tagged +4	+3	+3

Limb Damage (Unique): When the bug wrangler reaches 4th level they are so competent at taking down a bug without killing it by using bug pacification that in addition to the non lethal and lethal damage done they also cause 1d3 pints of Dexterity damage to the bug as they damage their limbs and knock them senseless under the force of their precision shooting. Should an arachnid have its Dexterity score reduced to 0, all its limbs have been blown off and it lies motionless on the floor unable to move or defend itself.

Bagged and Tagged (Unique): Whenever the Bug Wrangler attempts to use his Bug Pacification ability is so proficient that for purposes of determining if a grievous wound is inflicted that its Constitution score is considered to be two points less at 2nd level and four points less at 5th. This reduction only comes into play for bug pacification attempts, for purposes of all normal attacks the enemy's Constitution remains unaltered.

SICON MILITARY INTELLIGENCE AGENT

Cross-trained Speciality Class

Contrary to popular belief, not all members of the Military Intelligence are psychics. Easily distinguished on the battlefield by their long, flowing coats and jackboots, these agents are the Military Intelligence personnel most commonly encountered by troopers. Though usually found giving high-level briefings for critical missions, these agents can also be found on the battlefield, taking a personal interest in operations they have crafted themselves. This is often a comfort to the troopers they fight alongside, for while Military Intelligence has not garnered a good reputation for accuracy among the Mobile Infantry, few seriously believe that these agents will willingly put themselves in harm's way if another platoon of Mobile Infantry can be sent along instead.

GAME RULE INFORMATION

A SICON Military Intelligence Agent has the following game statistics.

REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to become a SICON Military Intelligence Agent a character must fulfil the following criteria.

Abilities: Charisma 13+

Skills: Code Breaking 5 ranks, Investigate 8 ranks, Knowledge (history and moral philosophy) 5 ranks, Persuasion 8 ranks.

Feats: Confident, Educated, Quick Draw, Pistol Fighter

Special: Prestige bonus of +5 or more

HIT POINTS

SICON Military Intelligence Agent gain one hit point per level, adding this to their total gained from previous class levels.

CLASS SKILLS

SICON Military Intelligence Agent's class skills, and the key ability for each skill, are as follows: Acrobatics (Dex), Athletics (Str), Code Breaking (Int), Computer Use (Int), Drive (Dex), Escape Artist (Dex), Investigate (Cha), Knowledge (any, each chosen separately) (Int), Perception (Wis), Persuasion (Cha), Pilot (Dex), Sabotage (Int), Stealth (Dex) and Technical (Chemical) (Int).

Skill Points at Each Additional Level: 7 + Int modifier

CLASS FEATURES

The following are class features of the SICON Military Intelligence Agent

Federation Presence (Unique): Whereas an officer cadet will inspire a sense of duty and confidence in others, girding them against the horrors of what awaits them, a Military Intelligence Agent inspires patriotism and a gung-ho attitude; everyone knows a Military Intelligence Agent who has doubt about your loyalty can bring you up on charges (or worse!) with or without evidence. All characters within five feet of an Intelligence agent gains a +1 morale bonus to attack rolls. This bonus increases to +2 if the Military Intelligence Agent has completed all three levels of this class.

Strictly Need to Know: The Military Intelligence Agent is privy to information regarding operations that your average trooper, and indeed many officers in the field, are not. For example, a mission to retrieve a downed ROV may seem like a waste of time to your average trooper. Who wants to die looking for a chunk of twisted metal, yet the Military Intelligence agent knows exactly what the ROV was doing? In effect a Military Intelligence agent can ask one question of the

ADDITIONAL STANDARD ISSUE

A SICON Military Intelligence Agent gains the following standard issue equipment in addition to his normal allowance.

- Military Intelligence Agent Uniform (long black coat, cap, jack boots, identification and so on)
- TW-109-e Emancipator pistol in place of the standard issue TW-102-e Peacemaker.
- Encrypted Databox (Exceptional Computer security)

Choice of one cybernetic implant or replacement with a requisition DC of no higher than 20.

SICON MILITARY INTELLIGENCE AGENT

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Class Features	Defence Bonus	Prestige Bonus
1 st	+1	+0	+0	+2	Federation Presence, Strictly Need to Know	+0	+1
2 nd	+2	+0	+0	+3	Intelligence Techniques	+1	+1
3 rd	+3	+1	+1	+3	For the Federation	+1	+2

Games Master regarding any individual mission or adventure. Question could be 'are there other ways out of this facility?', or 'how many bugs do we face?', or 'what support do the skinnies have available?' and so forth. Such questions cannot be mission breakers i.e. 'how many hit points does the villain have?' or 'which door is trapped?' or 'how do we defeat the queen bug with ease?' The Games Master has final say on what questions are acceptable or not, but it is up to the Military Intelligence Agent whether or not they share the answers they receive.

Intelligence Techniques: When the Military Intelligence Agent reaches 2nd level they have gained such a degree of competence in investigation, interrogation, body language and information gathering that they can easily determine falsehoods, root out traitors and obtain the information they require. In effect they add +4 to all Investigate and Persuasion checks.

For the Federation (Unique): The Military Intelligence Agents, although feared and respected, are also seen as representative as upholders of all that the federation represents, and as such if they lead any attack they grant all within five feet of them 2d8 temporary hit points, all damage they receive comes off these temporary hit points first. These hit points last for the duration of the engagement.

WASP PACK TROOPER**Cross-trained Speciality Class**

Fleet does the flying, while the mobile infantry does the dying; well, most of the time. The WASP Pack Troopers are the exception to this rule. These specially trained troopers are able to utilise the WASP pack to extend their jumps significantly and even hover for limited periods of time, granting them the ability to reposition themselves quickly in order to make reconnaissance runs or lightning strikes.

WASP troopers are the real life embodiment of the old adage that death comes on swift wings, swiftly dropping into combat unleashing death in a hail of gunfire as they do before rapidly jumping out of harms way once more.

GAME RULE INFORMATION

The WASP Pack Troopers have the following game statistics.

REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to become a WASP Pack Trooper a character must fulfil the following criteria.

Skills: Athletics 5 ranks, Acrobatics 5 ranks, Pilot 8 ranks, Technical (electrical) 6 ranks.

Feats: Atmospheric Vehicle Operation, Disengage and Strafe.

HIT POINTS

WASP Pack Troopers gain one hit point per level, adding this to their total gained from previous class levels.

CLASS SKILLS

The WASP Pack Trooper's class skills, and the key ability for each skill, are as follows: Acrobatics (Dex), Athletics (Str), Computer Use (Int), Drive (Dex), Knowledge (alien species) (Int), Knowledge (tactics) (Int), Perception (Wis), Pilot (Dex), Survival (Wis), Technical (electrical) (Int) and Technical (mechanical) (Int).

Skill Points at Each Additional Level: 5 + Int modifier.



ADDITIONAL STANDARD ISSUE

WASP Pack Troopers gains the following standard issue equipment in addition to his normal allowance.

- WSP-T-130 WASP Pack
- 6 M-901 HE Grenades
- Basic Mechanical Toolkit
- Basic Electrical Toolkit

CLASS FEATURES

The following are class features of the WASP Pack Troopers

WASP Pack Proficiency (Unique): All WASP troopers receive specialist training in the use, maintenance and repair of the WASP Pack. In effect, the Trooper gains the equivalent of a WASP Pack proficiency feat, without which they would otherwise suffer a -3 penalty to their normal power armour Defence bonus (in effect losing that granted by the Power Armour proficiency feat) when using the pack in addition to be considered flat footed when in flight, as the pack is bulky and difficult to manoeuvre without training making any form of effective defence extremely difficult.

Jet Wash (Unique): At 1st level the WASP Pack Trooper is able to use his WASP pack's wing-mounted jets as an attack. The trooper must be on the floor and not in flight to begin with, provided he is, he can turn his jets rearward toward the enemy behind him and ignite them, creating a momentary backwash of searing flame and wind. In effect, all characters and objects in a line 20 foot long and five feet wide behind him must make a Reflex save (DC 20) or take 3d12 points of fire damage. Any that fail the first Reflex save will be set alight, and suffer another 1d12 points of damage for the next 1d4 rounds as they continue to burn. Living or mobile targets can spend an entire round putting out the flame to prevent this additional damage.

Bonus Feat: At 2nd level, the WASP Pack Trooper driver gains a bonus feat. This feat must be selected from the following list, and the WASP Pack Trooper must meet any prerequisites.

Advanced Two-Weapon Fighting, Alertness, Block, Brawl, Burst Fire, Dodge, Drive-By Attack, Endurance, Far Shot, Great Fortitude, Heroic Surge, Improved Brawl, Improved Initiative, Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Knockout Punch, Marauder Mastery, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Quick Draw, Quick Reload, Surface Vehicle Operation, Two-Weapon Fighting, Vehicle Dodge, Vehicle Expert and Weapon Focus.

Hover (Unique): At 2nd level the WASP troopers have gained such competence with the WASP packs that they may now use them not only for jet assisted leaps but also to hover for limited periods of time, requiring a Pilot check (DC 20) each round it hovers up to a maximum of four rounds before it needs to land so its jets can cool.

WASP PACK TROOPERS

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Class Features	Defence Bonus	Prestige Bonus
1 st	+1	+0	+2	+0	WASP Pack proficiency, Jet Wash	+1	+0
2 nd	+2	+0	+3	+0	Hover, Bonus Feat	+1	+0
3 rd	+3	+1	+3	+1	Death From Above	+2	+1

Essentially, when flying the WASP trooper can halt his forward motion and hover in place as a move action. It can then fly in any direction, including straight down or straight up, at half speed.

If a WASP trooper begins his turn hovering, he can hover in place for the turn and take a full-round action. A hovering trooper cannot perform the jet wash manoeuvre, but he can attack with any other weapon, such as the trooper's Morita. If a WASP trooper hovers within 20 feet of the ground in an area with lots of loose debris, the wash from its jets creates a hemispherical cloud with a radius of 60 feet. The winds so generated can snuff small, open flames. Clear vision within the cloud is limited to 10 feet. WASP Trooper has concealment at 15 to 20 feet (20% miss chance). At 25 feet or more, the WASP trooper has total concealment (50% miss chance, and opponents cannot use sight to locate the trooper). It should be noted that while hovering a WASP trooper is considered flat-footed just as he would be if he were jumping.

Death From Above (Unique): When the WASP trooper reaches 3rd level he is able to use an action point to unleash a devastating attack that can be devastating, thanks to the advantage of height and visibility. Effectively, while hovering he can, as a full round attack, unleash an attack that if it hits, adds additional damage equal to the action point dice.

NEW EQUIPMENT

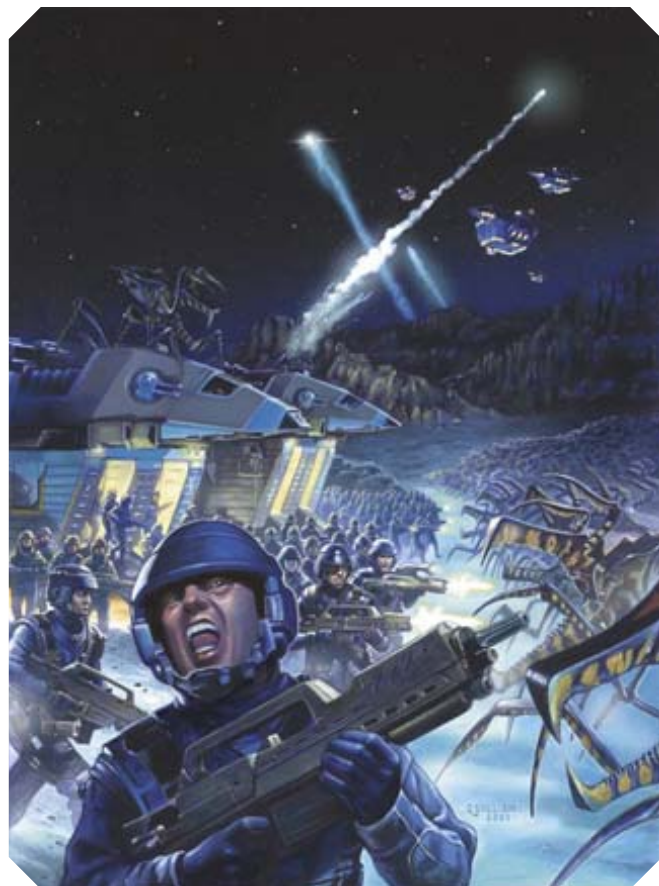
WSP-T-180 WASP PACK

The Winged Aerial Support Pack (known more commonly as a WASP Pack) is a detachable jump pack; essentially, it appears as a bulky frame worn over the back that reaches over the head of the user. On top of the pack are two extended wings; overall it has a wingspan of around 16 feet. On the sides of the pack are two 'C' shaped arms, that extend over the shoulder of the user and down under and around the forearm like arms rests at the end of which are the thrusters' controls. Each wing supports two rotate able jump jets similar in design to those commonly found on the standard M-1A4 Power Suit, but larger and more powerful. A Wasp pack does not grant true flight and merely

enhances the troopers jump capability but over a limited area it works well enough and can reach elevations of around 1,000 feet. The WASP packs fuel can carry the trooper for 8,000 feet (1600 spaces) before needing to be refuelled. This allotted distance can be spent in any increment up to 180 feet per round, such as 80 jumps of 100 feet or whatever the WASP trooper needs during a mission. The WASP pack can be used to hover by trained operators but such careful manoeuvring requires constant adjustment and is beyond the skill of a casual operator. As with normal armour jump jets a trooper using a WASP pack is considered flat-footed while in the air when determining an opponents attack roll.

Weight: 120 pounds

Requisition DC: 25



RAMBLER

MOBILE SCOUT

Cross-trained Speciality Class for Light Armour Troopers

Fast moving, manoeuvrable and daring, the Rambler Mobile Scouts are light troopers who specialise in the use of the RMB-1 Rambler Scout bike, a resilient ground bike that is both fast and able to go over rough terrain with ease.

These scouts often move in advance of a platoon in order to scout the terrain and spot enemy forces and are fast enough to get out of the area and report back without too much risk. Indeed, the rambles, as they are commonly referred, are also used to harry retreating bugs or confuse and herd the enemy into pre-designated fire zones.

GAME RULE

INFORMATION

Rambler Mobile Scouts have the following game statistics.

REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to become a Rambler Mobile Scouts, a character must fulfil the following criteria.

Skills: Drive 8 ranks, Perception 8 ranks, Technical (mechanical) 2 ranks

Feats: Drive by Attack, Surface Vehicle Operation, Vehicle Expert (ground).

Special: Must have five levels of Light Armour Trooper or more before taking this cross training.

HIT POINTS

Rambler Mobile Scouts gain two hit point per level, adding this to their total gained from previous class levels.

CLASS SKILLS

The Rambler Mobile Scouts class skills, and the key ability for each skill, are as follows: Acrobatics (Dex), Athletics (Str), Computer Use (Int), Drive (Dex), Knowledge (tactics) (Int), Perception (Wis), Stealth (Dex), Survival (Wis) and Technical (Mechanical) (Int).

Skill Points at Each Additional Level: 5 + Int modifier

CLASS FEATURES

The following are class features of the Rambler Mobile Scouts.

Two Wheels are better than Four (Unique): The Ramblers learn through long hours of training to make the most of their bikes, learning to use them as an extension of their own bodies. At first level this provides the Rambler scout a +2 competence bonus to all Drive checks while on their bikes. When the Rambler reaches 2nd level they learn how best to use their bikes to aid in their protection when enemies are near, keeping their forms tuck tight to the bike, hunkering down or hanging to the side in order to avoid incoming attacks effectively increasing the Damage Reduction (Crew) rating while on their bikes by +1 (or making it one in their case). Finally when they reach third level they are so proficient in the user of their bike as an extension of themselves they are able to come out of the worst of mishaps or accidents while on their bikes somewhat less scathed than normal. In effect any time they fail

ADDITIONAL STANDARD ISSUE

The Rambler Mobile Scouts gains the following standard issue equipment in addition to his normal allowance.

- Rambler Scout Bike
- Basic Mechanical Toolkit
- Search and Rescue Kit with two additional flares

a control roll the mishap is always considered to be one step less severe. Therefore they cannot have an accidental collision with it instead becoming a roll, a roll becoming a spin, a spin becoming a skid and so forth.

Bonus Feat: At 2nd level, the Rambler Scout gains a bonus feat. This feat must be selected from the following list, and the Rambler Scout must meet any prerequisites.

Alertness, Beat Feet, Block, Brawl, Burst Fire, Disengage, Dodge, Endurance, Far Shot, Great Fortitude, Heroic Surge, Improved Brawl, Improved Initiative, Mounted Weapon Proficiency, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Quick Draw, Quick Reload, Surface Vehicle Operation, Vehicle Dodge, Vehicle Expert and Weapon Focus.

Corral Foe (Unique): The Ramblers are able to use their bikes, to lure and drive the enemy away from them by charging directly at them and then veering away at the last moment, this is very dangerous but if done correctly can push an enemy away from then and into a pre-designated fire zone so that it can be brought down with ease.

Essentially the Rambler must move into the enemies space and make a control check against a DC equal to that of avoiding a hazard of the same size of the enemy, failure potentially leaving them sprawled at the foot of the enemy... or worse. However, if successful the enemy must make a Will save with their size modifier as a bonus against a DC equal to the Rambler's control check result, if the enemy succeeds they are unperturbed and may make a free attack against the Rambler as he comes close, but if they fail they are moved back away

from the Rambler 5 feet, plus another 5 feet for each additional five points by which the enemy failed their save.

Multiple ramblers can gang up on a target to improve the chances of corralling them, One Rambler is designated at the leader and each additional Rambler who passes his control check adds +2 to the leaders control check result for purposes of determining the DC the enemy needs to overcome with their Will save.

For example: Four ramblers try to drive a tanker bug back down the valley into an awaiting ambush by hidden troopers, they all ride around and at the tanker bug. One is designated as the leader and the other three assist. The tanker bug is a Huge enemy meaning they have a DC 30 control check. They each roll the leader gets a total of 31, and his three companions 34, 18 and 22 respectively. Of the two ramblers who failed one goes into a spin momentarily losing control as the tanker bug swings around its head and the other who suddenly finds his companions spinning across his path sends his back into a slide, trying desperately to avoid him.

The leader succeeds at his check and of his three companions one is successful in aiding him. This makes the Will save DC for the tanker bug 31 +2 for on successful aid for a total of 33. The tanker bug will save modifier of +6 is modified by its size modifier of +8 for a total modifier of +14, the GM rolls for it gets 17 for a total of 31, the tankers bug confused by these noisy fast moving humans backs up five feet, slowly bringing it closer to the waiting troopers.

NEW VEHICLE**RMB-1 RAMBLER SCOUT BIKE**

A lightweight, fast moving all terrain motorcycle, it is not built for combat but for speed and durability. The Rambler can traverse most rough terrain with relative ease. The Rambler scout bikes are used by the Rambler Light Troopers to scout out enemy positions and harry their movements. The Rambler is designed with integrated rear firing jump jets that work in all ways like those most commonly found in the M-1A4 Power Suit, granting the Rambler the ability to power over obstacles or hazards in their path to a limited degree. Using the jump jets always requires a control check not only to avoid any hazard but also in order to land again.

Medium Soft-armoured Surface Vehicle; DV: 15; **CC:** 1 driver; **Chassis:** 35 hp; **Wheels:** 6 hp; **Crew (open):** 0 hp; **DR:** chassis 5, wheels 2, crew 0; **Spd:** 300; **Acc/Dec:** 30/60; **Han:** +5; **Cargo:** 30 lb.; **Weapons:** none; **Equipment:** Geosynchronous Location Sensor, Jump Jets; **Weight:** 0.4 ton

RAMBLER MOBILE SCOUT

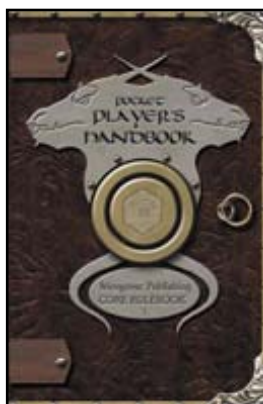
Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Class Features	Defence Bonus	Prestige Bonus
1 st	+1	+1	+2	+0	Two Wheels are better than Four	+1	+0
2 nd	+2	+2	+3	+0	Bonus Feat	+2	+1
3 rd	+3	+2	+3	+1	Corral Foe	+2	+2



Monty's Offer of the Month

pocket paradise!

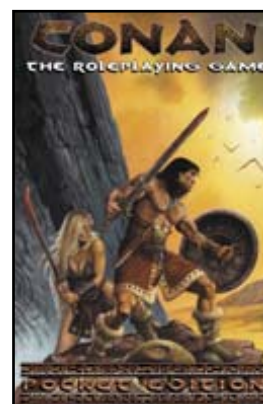
This month Monty has picked his pockets (groan) for his Offer of the Month. Everybody seems to love our pocket editions. After all, they are easy on the wallet, convenient to carry around and always there when you need a reference. And now they are even easier on the wallet, with our Pocket Paradise offer! For one month only you can now get the Pocket Player's Guide, Pocket GM's Guide and either the Pocket Conan or Pocket Modern Handbook for just \$45/£30, post free!



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OFFER OF THE MONTH

SIGNS & PORTENTS ISSUE #33 MAY '06

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#33 MAY '06

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Old Father Crime

A D20 Fantasy Scenario

Carl Walmsley

'Old father Time' is a d20 fantasy adventure for four 6th level Player Characters. Though details are provided to set it in the troubled city of Brudhame, it can be run in any large settlement with an active Thieves' Guild.

Adventure Background

The city of Brudhame has endured a chequered past, with several dubious changes of leadership and more than its fair share of intrigue and skulduggery. At present, the affairs of the city are overseen by elected Mayor, Sylus Haldoran. A clever and resourceful fellow, Sylus has managed to balance the books and keep all manner of rival guilds content if not happy. After seven years in office, Sylus is the most successful administrator Brudhame has seen in a long time and the city is as peaceful as any can remember it.

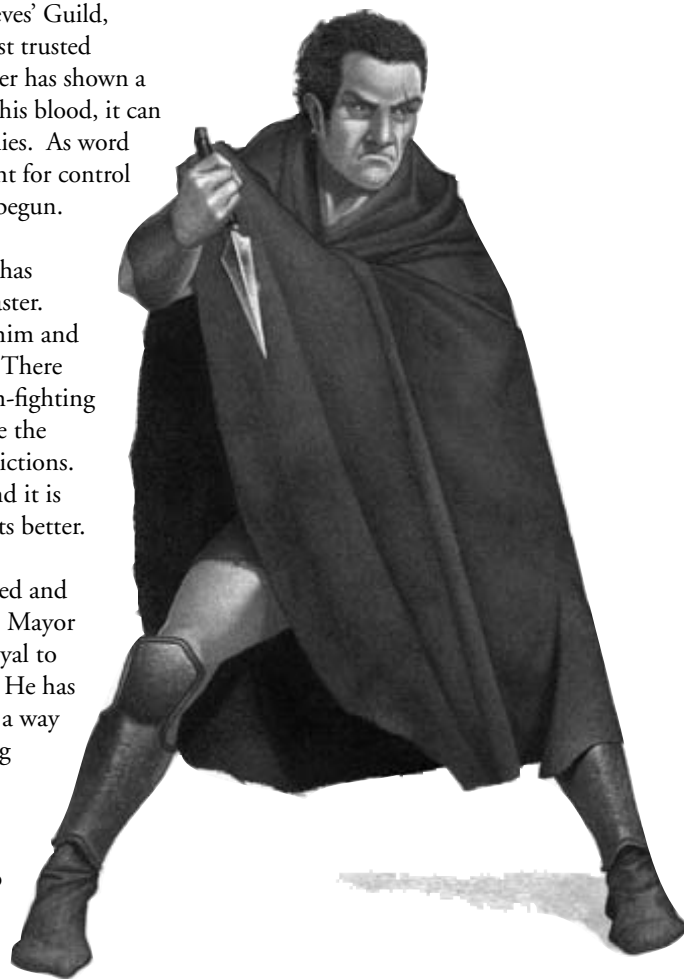
Unfortunately for Sylus things may be about to change. There is unrest in Brudhame's criminal underworld. A spate of violent clashes between rival gangs has plagued the city in recent nights, and the number of robberies has more than doubled in a matter of days. Already, people have begun to mutter and complain and there are those who talk of leaving the city until things calm down. Sylus does not need the guilds breathing down his neck to tell him that something is wrong.

For the Games Master

Three days ago the head of the Thieves' Guild, Vitus Kale, was poisoned by his most trusted lieutenant. Though the Guild master has shown a surprising resistance to the toxin in his blood, it can only be a matter of time before he dies. As word of Vitus' condition has spread, a fight for control of Brudhame's dark underbelly has begun.

Vitus' traitorous lieutenant, Malis, has declared himself the new Guild Master. Those loyal to Vitus have rejected him and two distinct factions have formed. There are also those thieves who see the in-fighting as the perfect opportunity to pillage the city, free from the usual Guild restrictions. Already, the conflict is spreading and it is likely to get a lot worse before it gets better.

Desperate to avoid further bloodshed and damage to the city's reputation, the Mayor has made contact with those still loyal to Vitus and learned of the situation. He has persuaded them that he may know a way to save the Guild Master – a healing shrine, known only to a few but located within a days journey from the city. Reluctantly, the thieves have entrusted their ailing leader to the Mayor's keeping. They realise that it may be their best chance to save Vitus and the Guild.



The Mayor left out one important detail when he persuaded the thieves to hand over the Guild Master. The shrine is located within a monastery, guarded by an order of devout monks that have refused healing to almost everyone that has ever asked for it. According to the monks – known as *The Unyielding* – only the most pious and worthy of individuals may visit the shrine. It is extremely unlikely that they will agree to help the head of the Thieves' Guild.

Undeterred, and resourceful as ever, Sylus has employed a trusted wizard to *polymorph* Vitus to conceal his true identity. He now intends to hire a group of willing adventurers and persuade them to take his dying 'brother' to the shrine to receive some much needed healing.

Players' Introduction

The Games Master may chose to foreshadow the adventure in a variety of ways:

- A friend of one of the Player Characters may live in Brudhame. The friend claims that the city is a wonderful place, full of wealth and opportunity, and invites the Character to visit. When he arrives, he finds a frightened populace with many citizens preparing to flee from a thieves' paradise.
- The Games Master may also choose to make the party victims of the increased underworld activity. Such incidents might range from having their belongings pilfered to an attack by unruly footpads close to the city.

Whether the party becomes embroiled in the situation beforehand or not, the adventure really begins when they are approached by Mayor Haldoran's assistant, Smyke. As his most trusted aide, Smyke has been given the task of finding suitable candidates to take the Guild Master to

A Reluctant Party

Should the Games Master find the party reluctant to help the Mayor (or at least to investigate the situation), he should not hesitate to show them the consequences of an unruly Brudhame. Feel free to have a thief make off with some of their belongings. If necessary, place someone they care about in jeopardy. It should be clear that the thieves in Brudhame are a growing problem. They will hear from anyone that knows the city that the Mayor is the only chance to restore order but seems to be strangely inactive (because he is worried about his 'brother' the party should believe).

Poking Around

The party may choose to investigate the situation in Brudhame before setting off for the shrine. With a little digging, any character that makes a Gather Information check (DC 15) will learn that members of the Thieves' Guild are fighting amongst themselves and that there has been a surge in the number of robberies and muggings. A second Gather Information check (DC 20) reveals that the Guild Master has been poisoned by his second in command and may be dead.

Any inhabitants of Brudhame questioned about Sylus Haldoran express respect for their quietly efficient Mayor. No one has ever heard of him having a brother, though.

the shrine where he can receive healing. Smyke is charming and likeable and should know enough about the party's exploits to flatter them without seeming insincere.

Smyke's proposition should go something like this:

I work for the Mayor of Brudhame, Sylus Haldoran. Recently his brother, Bryndon, became very ill with a disease that no one seems able to identify or cure. None of Bryndon's healers have contracted the sickness so we are quite confident that it is not contagious. The Mayor is beside himself with worry, however. He and his brother are very close and he cannot bear the thought of losing him. I am afraid that it is hampering his ability to govern properly. He cannot focus on dealing with the city's current crime spree until his brother is cured.

I know of a monastery, located near the village where I was raised, that contains a healing shrine. It is only a day's travel from Brudhame. Were it not for his position, the Mayor would take his brother there

himself but, alas, he dare not with the brigands that operate in the area. Instead, he must entrust his brother's fate to others. Those others, I hope, will be you.

According to Smyke, Bryndon is a saint amongst men and Mayor Haldoran a gifted leader who has brought prosperity and stability to the city. Both truly deserve the help of the party. As Smyke is wearing a *ring of mind shielding* there is no guaranteed way to determine if this is true.

To sweeten the deal, Smyke offers each adventurer 1,000 gp for escorting Bryndon safely to the shrine. In truth, he is authorised to pay up to double that amount if it secures the services of the party.

Assuming that the party are willing to help, Smyke will arrange to meet them outside Brudhame's eastern gate the following morning, from where they can set out for the shrine.

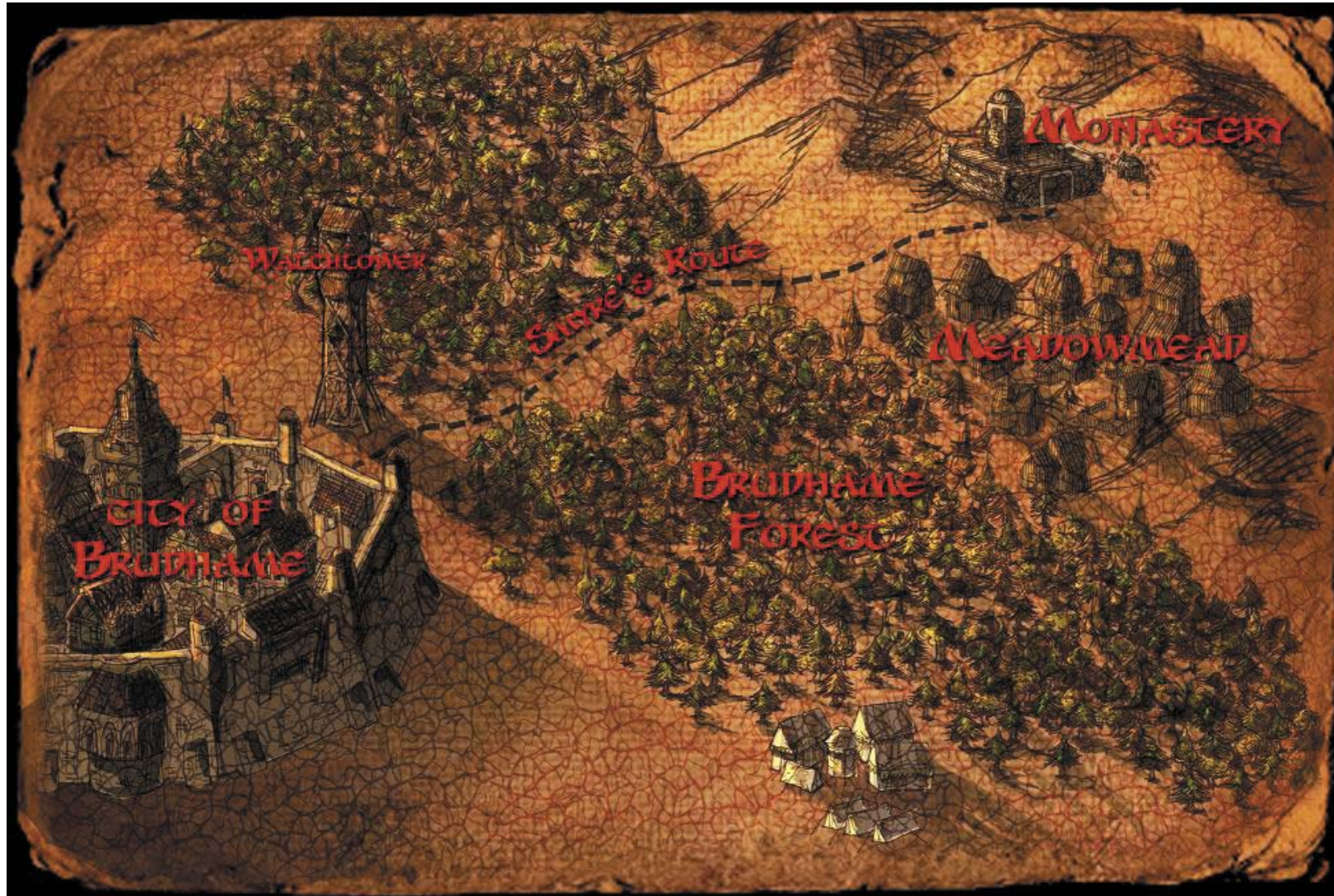
Journey to the Shrine

Smyke will be waiting for the party at the eastern gate as arranged. He rides a wagon bearing a sick man – the supposed brother of the mayor. Smyke will hand over half of the payment promised to the Player Characters before they set off. He will

explain that the route to the monastery is a day's ride through a forest to the foot of some nearby hills.

Smyke, 4th level Human Expert: HD 4d6+8; hp 28; Init +2; Spd 30; AC 16 (+2 Dex, +4 mail shirt), touch 12, flat-footed 14; Base Atk/Grapple +3/+3; Atk: long sword +3 (1d6) or +1 light crossbow +7 (1d8+1); Full Atk: short sword +3

(1d6) or +1 light crossbow +7 (1d8+1); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Wil +5; Str 10, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 13; AL NG; Appraise +6, Bluff +7, Diplomacy +7, Forgery +5, Gather Information +6, Knowledge (Geography) +6, Knowledge (Local) +7, Listen +4, Move Silently +7, Ride +5, Spot +6, Survival +4; Toughness, Track, Weapon Focus (light crossbow)



Possessions: *Ring of mind shielding*, +1 *light crossbow*, masterwork shortsword (for Vitus Kale)

Burdened with a wagon, the party will have little choice but to take the road east through the forest shown on Map One.

Note: In his comatose state, Vitus' mind cannot be read and any attempt to detect his alignment will fail.

Ambush (EL 8)

A few hours travel from Brudhame, the party will encounter what seems to be a fellow traveller in difficulty.

On the road ahead is a lop-sided cart, two splintered wheels sunken into the muddy track. An angry looking merchant is attempting to coax a mule into hauling the damaged vehicle out of the rut but with little success. The mule seems to be lame and is protesting noisily.

Creatures: The entire situation is a set-up. The 'merchant' is one of the Guild thieves that have sworn allegiance to Malis. Hidden in the trees are six of his companions. They have been dispatched by Malis to finish off the ailing Guild Master. The leader of this band is the mule, who is actually a polymorphed wizard named Ketch.

Seven 3rd level Human Rogues: HD 3d6+3; hp 16 each; Init +2; Spd 30; AC 16 (+2 Dex, +3 studded leather, +1 buckler), touch 12, flat-footed 14; Base Atk/Grapple +2/+3; Atk: short sword +3 (1d6+1) or masterwork mighty short bow +5 (1d6+1); Full Atk: short sword +3 (1d6+1) or masterwork mighty short bow +5 (1d6+1); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA sneak Attack +2d6; SQ Evasion, trapfinding, trap sense +1; SV Fort +2, Ref +5, Wil +1; Str 12, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 8; AL NE; Appraise +8, Balance +8,

Climb +7, Disable Device +8, Gather Information +5, Hide +8, Listen +5, Move Silently +8, Open Locks +8, Search +8, Spot +7, Tumble +5, Use Rope +5; Weapon Focus (short sword), Weapon Focus (short bow), Alertness.

Possessions: masterwork mighty shortbow (+1 Str bonus), 12 arrows, short sword, 50 gp.

Ketch, 7th level Human Wizard: HD 7d4+14; hp 31; Init +8; Spd 30; AC 14 (+4 Dex), touch 14, flat-footed 10; Base Atk/Grapple +3/+3; Atk: dagger +3 (1d4+1); Full Atk: dagger +3 (1d4+1); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA spells; SV Fort +4, Ref +6, Wil +7; Str 10, Dex 18, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 11; AL NE; Concentration +11, Hide +6, Knowledge (Arcana) +11, Listen +3, Move Silently +5, Spellcraft +10; Spell Penetration, Dodge, Iron Will, Improved Initiative

Possessions: *ring of polymorphing*, +1 dagger, *potion of cure moderate wounds*, 250 gp

Ring of Polymorphing: This simple copper band allows the wearer to activate a *polymorph* spell twice per day. The ring may still be used whilst the wearer is polymorphed. Moderate transmutation; CL 11th; Forge Ring' *polymorph*; Price 20,000 gp

Spells (4/5/4/2/1): 0th – *detect magic*, *detect poison* (x2), *light*; 1st – *burning hands*, *charm person*, *ghost sound*, *magic missile*, *sleep*; 2nd – *darkness*, *mirror image*, *protection from arrows*, *summon monster II*; 3rd – *displacement*, *hold person*; 4th – *shout*. Spell save DC = 12 + spell level.

Tactics: The merchant will feign wariness of anyone that approaches, stating that there are thieves operating in this area. He hopes to get as many members of the party to help him as possible before the ambush can be sprung.



As the 'merchant' attacks (or is himself attacked) so will the six thieves, firing arrows from their hiding places in the trees. There are three either side of the road. A Spot check (DC 24) is needed to notice the thieves before they attack. In the first round of combat, Ketch will use his *ring of polymorphing* (see above) to change into a six-headed hydra and attack the party (see the MM).

If more than two thirds of the thieves are killed, the others will try to flee.

Development: If they think it will buy their freedom, any of the thieves that are captured will reveal that they were sent by Malis to kill the man Smyke is sneaking out of the city. They do not know who the man is.

The Burnished Fist (EL 8)

Another few hours into their journey the party hear the sound of approaching horses a few minutes before their next encounter.

With the thundering of hooves three figures charge into view, each astride an enormous warhorse. Their armour glimmers in the morning light, illuminating a holy symbol carved into their breastplates. The lead riders vaults from his saddle only yards from your wagon and, with a flourish, draws his sword.

The men are in fact paladins, sworn to a brotherhood known as *The Burnished Fist*. They are followers of a Lawful Good deity associated with war or justice (the Games Master should choose one that fits his campaign). They believe that they are agents of righteous fury, having adopted the view that all evil must be met head on and destroyed.

The leader will issue a command to move immediately away from the cart. He will offer no explanation as he advances with his sword raised. The paladins have strict orders to kill the man the party are protecting and do not plan to let anything stop them.

Three Knights of *The Burnished Fist*, 5th level
Human Paladins: CR 5; Medium Humanoid; HD 5d10+10; hp 42, 44, 46; Init +1; Spd 20; AC 21 (+1 Dex, +8 Full Plate, +2 heavy steel shield), touch 11, flat-footed 20; Base Atk/Grapple +5/+7; Atk: masterwork longsword +9 (1d8+2) or masterwork composite longbow +7 (1d8+2); Full Atk: masterwork longsword +9 (1d8+2) or masterwork composite longbow +7 (1d8+2); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA Smite Evil 2/day, Turn Undead 5/day; SQ aura of courage, *detect evil*, divine grace, divine health, empathic link with mount, heavy warhorse mount, lay on hands,

Figuring things out

At some point in the adventure the party will probably realise that the man they are escorting is not Bryndon, the Mayor's brother. They may react to this discovery in a number of ways. It is likely that they will try to examine Vitus' body for clues, confront Smyke and/or contact the Mayor.

Searching Vitus turns up nothing. He is not currently under the effects of any spell, nor can his mind be accessed in any way.

If either Smyke or the Mayor is confronted with evidence that they lied to the party then they will admit that the man being escorted is the poisoned Guild Master. However, both will stress that Vitus Kale is not an evil man (his Alignment is Neutral), and that Malis would make a far more unpleasant Guild Master. Added to that, the city is descending towards chaos. The only realistic way to end the conflict without serious loss of life (and damage to the city's reputation) is to heal Vitus. It truly is the lesser of two evils.

This may present some parties with a real moral dilemma. But hey! That is half the fun of roleplaying!

share spells with mount; SV Fort +8, Ref +3, Wil +5; Str 14, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 15; AL LG; Concentration +9, Heal +10, Ride +7; Weapon Focus (longsword), Mounted Combat, Ride-By Attack.

Spells: *bless weapon*.

Possessions: Full plate armour, masterwork longsword, masterwork composite longbow (+2 Strength bonus), 10 arrows, 10 silvered arrows, 2 flasks of holy water, 2 *potions of cure light wounds*, masterwork scale mail barding (mount), silver holy symbol, 25 gp.

Heavy warhorses (3): hp 39 each; AC 18 (see the *MM*).

Tactics: The paladins will attack immediately and without mercy. If the party gets in their way then they will consider them enemies as well and seek to destroy them. The leader of the group, Sir Garick, will fight on foot, his companions from horseback.

Development: Though the paladins will be reluctant to talk, the party can persuade them to do so if they can capture any of them. Alternatively, if the party can show that they have no wish to harm them then after a few rounds of combat the paladins can be coaxed into revealing the details of their mission.

The paladins were ordered to kill the man the party are escorting by the leader of their order, whom they refer to as the Archknight. They believe the sick man is a notorious thief who must die for his crimes. Even if the paladins can be persuaded to reveal this information, they still have an oath to uphold and will not willingly allow the Guild Master to escape.

Meadowmead

Situated only five miles from the monastery, Smyke's route will take the party within sight of the village of Meadowmead where he grew up. Though he will see no reason to stop here, the party may wish to do so in order to replenish basic supplies or try to find out more about

the monastery. Anyone that makes a Gather Information check (DC 10) will learn that several of the people living in the village originally came to the area seeking healing at the shrine. None of them were successful and it will be clear that the villagers do not like the monks whom they consider cruel for restricting access to the shrine. It would seem that no outsiders have been allowed into the monastery for many years.

The Shrine

Assuming that the party allow Smyke to guide them, they will reach the Shrine just before nightfall.

The sun sets behind the squat tower of an austere looking monastery. A pair of heavy wooden doors are pushed wide, revealing a courtyard within the thick, stone walls. There is a small burial ground and mausoleum just west of the monastery. Several monks, dressed in simple brown garments, are clearing away tools used to tend the gardens lining the road up to the gate.

If approached, the monks will direct the Player Characters into the courtyard where they may find the head of the order, Master Ichlinus.

Ichlinus (9th level Monk) will listen patiently to any request for access to the shrine. Eloquent words mean nothing to him, however, and his only interest will be in seeing the sick man for himself. Ichlinus will take one look at Vitus, shake his head and declare that 'Only the worthiest of men may be healed in the shrine. He is not an evil man, but nor is he a good one.'

Ichlinus will consider the matter closed and will politely but sternly ask the party to leave. No amount of persuasion will change his mind. Once they are beyond the walls of the compound, he will order the doors closed for the night.

From bad to Worse...

The party's attempts to get permission to enter the shrine are doomed and Smyke knows it. After the failed petition, Smyke will reveal that Master Ichlinus has not granted anyone access for more than ten years. Smyke had, genuinely, hoped that he might make an exception this time.

Smyke will stress the need to get to the shrine quickly, with or without permission. He has no wish to come into conflict with the monks but he will insist that the party must get inside somehow and heal Vitus.

There are two ways that the party can gain access to the shrine without the monks' permission. The first is via the mausoleum in the burial ground. The second is by sneaking into the monastery.

The Monastery

Unless otherwise noted, all doors within the monastery have Hardness 5, hp 15, Open Lock DC 22.

By day, the monks spend their time between tending the gardens just outside the gates, rearing the animals in the pens, practising their martial skills and praying in the chapel. After sunset, two members of the order will patrol the site, while the others retire to their rooms.

The Unyielding, 24 4th level Human Monks: CR 4; Medium Humanoid; HD 4d8+8; hp 29 each; Init +2; Spd 40; AC 15 (+2 Dex, +3 Wis),



touch 15, flat-footed 10; Base Atk/Grapple +3/+5; Atk: masterwork quarterstaff +7 (1d6+2) or unarmed strike +5 (1d8+2); Full Atk: masterwork quarterstaff +7 (1d6+2) or unarmed strike +5 (1d8+2); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA *Ki* strike, Flurry of Blows; SQ Evasion, Still Mind, Slow Fall 20 ft.; SV Fort +6, Ref +6, Wil +8; Str 14, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 15, Cha 8; AL LN; Balance +7, Concentration +8, Knowledge (Philosophy) +6, Knowledge (Religion) +5, Listen +6, Move Silently +4; Weapon Focus (quarterstaff), Iron Will, Stunning Fist, Deflect Arrows, Improved Grapple.

1. Outer Wall

15 ft. high and 5 ft. wide, these walls are made of limestone (Climb DC 15).

2. Training Circle

This 25 ft. diameter circle of sand provides the monks with somewhere to practise their martial arts.

3. Chapel

This angular, heavy looking building has a pair of sturdy wooden doors on the western side (Hardness 5, hp 20; Open Lock DC 25). There are two large leaden windows in the chapel, one in the south wall, one in the north. During the day, the monks take it in turns to come here and pray. At night, it is locked up tight.

4. Storage shed

The monks' food and gardening tools are stored here. There are also six longbows and four dozen arrows, used by the monks to hunt food for their dire beast guardians.

5. Dining Hall

Four simple tables are set out in this room, each flanked by two benches. A modest pantry and a



simple kitchen are located just off the main hall to the east. The monks can be found eating in here just after dawn, at midday and again at around 5 o'clock.

6. Library

This room contains several hundred volumes, most of which are religious and philosophical treatises. A Search check (DC 21) will turn up a sheet of parchment tucked away on a top shelf, which reads: *Guardian, protector, watcher of stone; Turn aside thy sentinel's gaze.*

This is an incantation that must be read aloud in **Room 21** before the healing shrine can be safely used. Only Master Ichlinus knows the location of this scroll and the words inscribed upon it.

7. Living Quarters

There are twelve identical cells, each shared by a pair of monks. The inhabitants are forbidden personal belongings, so each room contains only a bed, blankets, candles and any books that may have been borrowed from the library.

8. Entrance Chamber

Slightly grander than the rest of the monastery, this room contains a statue of Khezekain, the man who founded *The Unyielding*. His name is inscribed upon the plinth supporting the statue, along with the inscription: *In his footsteps, we tread with safety and wisdom.*

The statue's eyes are made from large emeralds and will fetch a handsome price for any Player Character unscrupulous enough to take them (500 gp each).

9. Training Room

This 20 ft. by 40 ft. chamber contains a number of training dummies, each clearly well used. Upon a rack rest twelve quarterstaves, ten sianghams and four pairs of nunchaku. All of these weapons are masterwork.

10. Master Ichlinus' Cell

Though seemingly as bare as the other cells, Ichlinus' has hidden a small bronze key beneath his bed. This opens a number of locks in the monastery – see individual room descriptions.

11. Meditation Chamber

This sound proofed room is filled with the smell of incense. Each night before he sleeps, Ichlinus spends an hour in here contemplating the world. A Search of this room (DC 20) reveals a loose stone, behind which is hidden a small bronze lever. Pulling this re-sets the positions of all the walls in **Rooms 15, 16, 17 and 18.**

12. Animal Pens

The monks are rearing two dozen chickens, six pigs and two cows.

13. Mausoleum

Located just east of the monastery walls, this small cemetery houses the remains of those who have died whilst serving in the order. The stone mausoleum is in memory of Khezekain, the man who founded the monastery and the order.

Anyone that explores the burial ground should make a Search check (DC 15) to notice that the grass around the mausoleum is scuffed and worn away. The door to the mausoleum is unlocked. Within the tomb is a stone sarcophagus. Pushing the lid aside reveals a secret stairway that leads down into **Room 15** of the Tunnels beneath the monastery.

14. Bell Tower

This ugly building has a single door in its south wall (Hardness 5, hp 20; Open Lock 30). This is kept locked at all times, but can be unlocked with the key from Ichlinus' cell. Within the tower is a spiral stairway leading up to the bell. Beneath the stairway is another door (as above). This can also be opened using Ichlinus' key. Beyond, is a stairway leading down to **Room 15.**

The Tunnels

Hidden beneath the monastery are a series of tunnels that lead to the shrine. Generations of *The Unyielding* have controlled access to them and a number of traps and defences have been put in place. These include various dire beasts bred by the monks and caged within the tunnels. The monks enter these tunnels once every other day to feed the dire beasts.

Unless otherwise noted, there is no illumination in the Tunnels.

15. Entrance Chamber

This circular chamber has four large wooden doors, each located at one of the cardinal compass points. The air is thick with the smell of animals.

Each of the doors leading from this chamber is secured with a heavy metal bar. This is a precaution, in case any of the dire beasts should ever turn on their masters. They may only be opened from this side.

In the southeastern wall is a secret door. A Search check (DC 20) is required to locate it from this side. The door is opened from either side by turning a loose brick, which reveals a passage that leads up to the Mausoleum.

The corridors leading north, east and west from this room are all 30-feet long, each ending in a solid wall of rock (**15a, 15b and 15c**). In the centre of each wall is a small opening, just big enough for a key. Sure enough, hanging from a hook beside each of the three openings is a key. If any of the keys are used in the locks beside which they hang, two things will happen. Simultaneously, the wall will shoot up into the ceiling revealing the room beyond, and a solid block will drop down cutting the corridor in two. Anyone beneath the falling block must make a Reflex Save (DC 19). If the save is successful, the

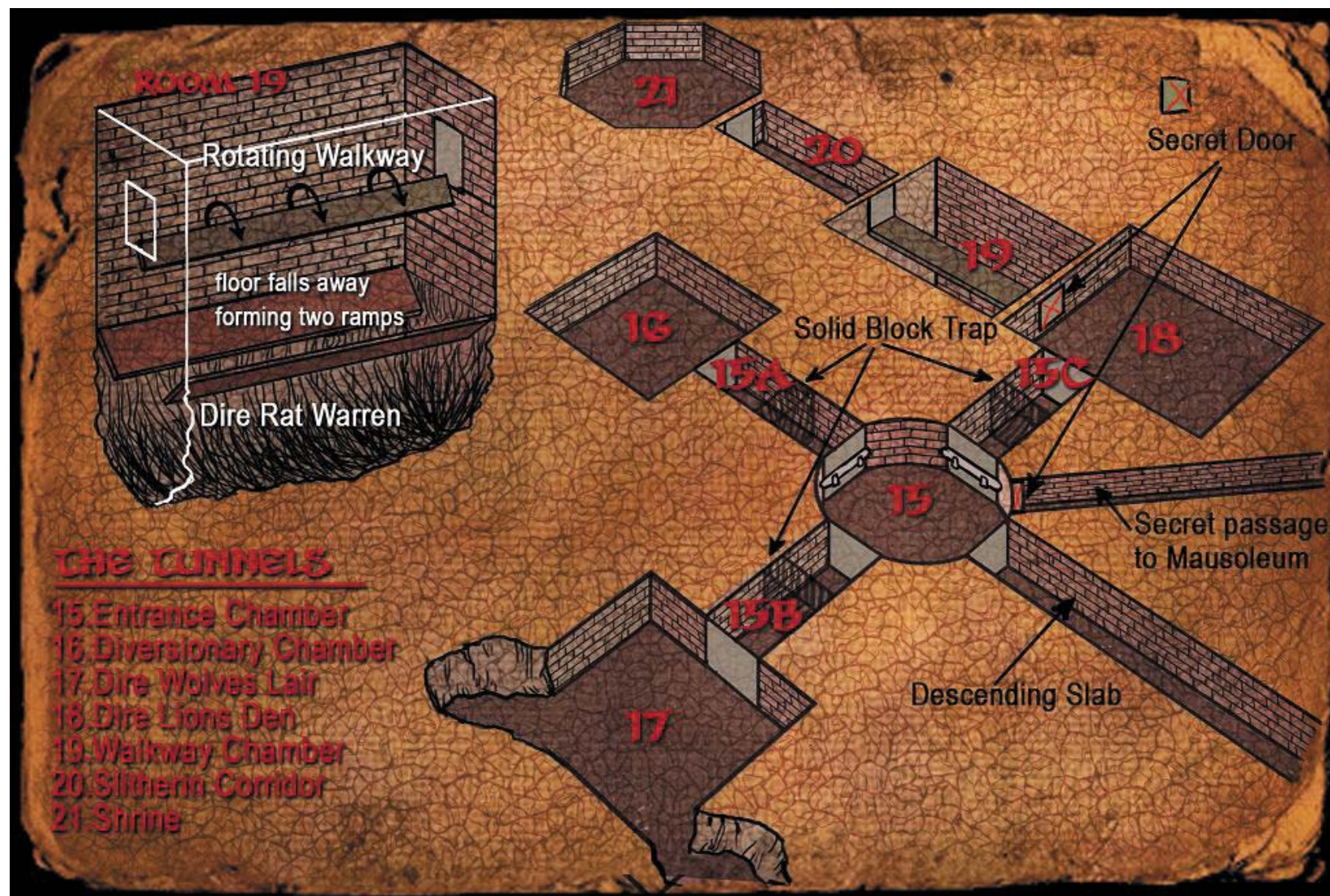
Player Character may choose which side of the block they end up on. If they fail, they take 4d10 damage and end up on a random side.

A character that explores the lock and/or corridor before the key is turned may deduce what will happen with Search check (DC 28).

16. Diversionary Chamber

This 30-foot square chamber has a single door in its northern side. It is entirely bare of furnishings and equipment, though two metal levers protrude from the floor in the centre of the room. The smell of animals is not as strong in here.

Pulling either of the levers individually activates a trap. If both of the levers are pulled simultaneously then the block sealing the passageway rises back into the ceiling, while the wall (15a) slides slowly back down over the next ten rounds resealing the chamber.



Electrified Lever Trap: CR 3; magic device; touch trigger; automatic reset; spell effect (*shocking grasp*, 5th level wizard, 5d6 electricity); Search DC 26; Disable Device DC 26.

The false door in the far wall is a trap that activates as soon as someone tries to open it.

Pendulum Trap: CR 3; mechanical; timed trigger; automatic reset; Atk +15 (1d12+8/x3, greataxe); Search DC 15; Disable Device DC 27.

17. Dire Wolves Lair (EL 7)

This 30 ft. square chamber is divided into two levels, with a ten-foot high shelf filling the back of the room. Off this are two openings like cave mouths, one in the north wall and one in the south. Cracked and splintered bones litter the room.

Creatures: There are six dire wolves in this room – four in the main chamber, two in the southern cave. All are kept lean and hungry and will attack anyone other than the monks that enters this room.

Dire Wolves (6): hp 41, 42, 45(x3), 55 (see the *MM*)

Development: In the southern cave is a metal lever. If this is pulled, the slab blocking the corridor to this room retracts into the ceiling. Over ten rounds, the wall (15b) sinks back down to seal the chamber.

18. Dire Lion's Den (EL 7)

Numerous animal carcasses litter the floor of this chamber and smears of dried blood stain the ground. From wall to wall this square room is 40-foot across. A metal lever is visible in the southeastern corner. There is no sign of any other way in or out.

Creatures: There is a pair of dire lions in this room. Both are ravenous and will attack anyone other than the monks that enters this chamber.

Dire Lions (2): hp 56, 62 (see the *MM*)

Development: Hidden in the northern wall is a secret door. A search check (DC 22) is required to find it. Like the one in **Room 15**, it is triggered by turning a loose brick.

If pulled, the lever in this room retracts the slab blocking the connecting corridor. It also causes the wall (15c) to descend over ten rounds, sealing the room.

19. Walkway Chamber

The hidden door opens out on a walkway some three feet wide and thirty feet long. At the other side of the walkway is a closed wooden door. A flat featureless rock floor lies some fifteen feet beneath the walkway, and the ceiling of the chamber is a similar distance above it.

The walkway is a trap. There is a pressure pad, five feet long, located in the middle. If anyone steps on this, the walkway rotates 180 degrees. At the same moment the floor beneath the walkway splits along the centre, dropping away to form two ramps that funnel anyone knocked off down into a hidden pit. Two rounds after being triggered, the floor returns to its original position, cutting off access to the pit.

Rotating Walkway Trap: CR 3; mechanical; location trigger; automatic reset; DC 21 Reflex save avoids; 30 ft deep (3d6, fall); Search DC 21; Disable Device DC 21.

Creatures: Living inside the pit is a pack of dire rats. These will attack anyone that falls in.

Dire Rats (8): 5 hp each (see the *MM*)

Development: The door on the far side of the walkway is locked (Hardness 5, hp 20; Open Lock 25). It can be opened using the key found in Ichlinus' cell.

20. Slithering Corridor (EL 5)

A narrow, straight corridor lies before you. At least 50 feet long, it leads to another closed door. The walls, floor and ceiling of the corridor are peppered with circular openings, each about six inches in diameter.

On the floor directly in front of you is a line of tiles, one corresponding to each letter of the alphabet.

Creatures: The circular openings connect to a hidden network of narrow tunnels that house a dozen vipers. These will smell anyone that tries to move along the corridor and attack them, appearing suddenly out of the numerous openings.

Snake, medium vipers (12): hp 9 each (see the *MM*)

The tiles in the floor are the key to safely navigating this corridor. Each tile can be slightly depressed if pushed and if this is done so as to spell out *Khezekain* metal lids slide into place to seal the openings. These remain in place until another tile is pressed.

Development: The door on the far side of the walkway is locked (Hardness 5, hp 20; Open Lock 25). It can be opened using the key found in Ichlinus' cell.

21. Shrine (EL 6)

The floor slopes away from the edges of this octagonal chamber, down towards a pool located in the centre. The air is remarkably fragrant, rather like an unspoiled forest, and the plants that bloom at the water's edge glisten with colours almost too bright to be natural.

The pool itself is the shrine that the party have been looking for.

Creature: The shrine is protected by an earth elemental. It remains dormant until someone tries to enter the pool without first reciting the following incantation:

*Guardian, protector, watcher of stone;
Turn aside thy sentinel's gaze.*

If the elemental becomes active, it takes the shape of an enormous stone mammoth and attacks anyone in the chamber.

Large earth elemental (Advanced): HD: 15; hp: 99 (see the *MM*)

Any a living creature that is immersed in the pool for an entire round is immediately healed of any damage they have taken. In addition, any spells, curses, magical or supernatural effects are also ended. For Vitus Kale, this will mean that he reverts to his true form, revealing his identity to the party if they have not already figured it out. The Guild Master will have no memory of the events that brought him here but will listen eagerly as Smyke or the party explain them to him. After this, he will be keen to return to Brudhame and deal with Malis. He will also state that the party have earned his gratitude and that he will not forget the service they have done him.



Leaving the Shrine (EL 7)

Though the party have made it to the monastery they have not shaken off either of the groups that wish to see Vitus Kale dead. When they leave the site, they will find more of Malis' Guild Thieves waiting for them, as well as another group of paladins from *The Burnished Fist*!

Creatures: Hidden a hundred yards back from the compound walls, six thieves watch the main gates, whilst two more watch each of the other walls. Once the party leaves the monastery they will attack.

Human thieves (12): use the statistics for the rogues that ambushed the party earlier in the adventure.

Tactics: The thieves will use their bows, seeking to ambush the party then to keep them at a distance for as long as possible.

Unknown to the traitorous Guild Thieves, the monastery is also being watched by members of *The Burnished Fist*.

Human paladins of *The Burnished Fist* (5): use the statistics for the paladins that attacked the party earlier in the adventure.

Tactics: Two rounds after the Guild Thieves attack, the paladins will come charging out of a thicket of trees two hundred yards from the monastery gate. They will close on the party attacking anyone in their way and seek to kill Vitus Kale.

This battle is the climax of the adventure and could go a number of ways for the party. They may see themselves as hopelessly outnumbered or may realise that the Guild Thieves and paladins can be manoeuvred into fighting amongst themselves. The Games Master is encouraged to run this final encounter as a chaotic three-way battle with both groups of enemies seeking the death of the Guild Master.

Vitus Kale, now fully healed, will fight beside the party. He has no equipment other than any which the party can lend him and a masterwork shortsword that Smyke had the foresight to bring along.

Vitus Kale, 9th level Human Rogue: HD 9d6+9; hp 51; Init +8; Spd 30; AC 14 (+4 Dex), touch 14, flat-footed 10; Base Atk/Grapple +6/+7; Atk: masterwork short sword +12 (1d6+1); Full Atk: masterwork short sword +12/+7 (1d6+1); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA sneak Attack +5d6; SQ Evasion, uncanny dodge, improved uncanny dodge, trapfinding, trap sense +3; SV Fort +4, Ref +10, Wil +4; Str 12, Dex 18, Con 13, Int 15, Wis 13, Cha 11; AL N; Appraise +10, Balance +12, Climb +9, Decipher Script +7, Diplomacy +5, Disable Device +6, Forgery +6, Gather Information +6, Hide +9, Intimidate +6, Knowledge (Local) +6, Listen +7, Move Silently +14, Open Locks +10, Ride +7, Search +8, Sense Motive +6, Sleight of Hand +8, Spot +11, Tumble +9, Use Rope +6; Leadership, Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (short sword), Weapon Focus (short bow)

Wrapping things up (and further developments)

Assuming that the party make it back to Brudhame, Smyke will hand over any payment still owing. The party will also have earned the gratitude of Mayor Haldoran and Vitus Kale. With the usurper, Malis, still at large either of them might ask for the party's assistance in tracking him down. In addition, some of the bandit gangs within and without the city need to be brought back into line. Just the kind of thing for daring adventures to deal with...



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