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SHARK BYTES

THE UNOFFICIAL SAVAGE WORLDS FANZINE

**OVER 100
JAM-PACKED PAGES!**

THE QUEST FOR EL DORADO

AN INTERVIEW WITH ROB LUSK

PART TWO OF SMILIN' JACK SPEAKS

NIGHT CLUBS AND SECRET SOCIETIES

51 URBAN LEGENDS AND OCCULT EVENTS



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**Here's wishing you and yours a Very Savage
Christmas from the Staff of Shark Bytes!**

The Savage Nor'easter



CHANGES ON THE HORIZON

Welcome to the third issue of **Shark Bytes**! We must be doing something right because nobody's sent any death threats or hate mail my way... yet. Hopefully, this issue won't see a reverse in that trend!

Why? Well, this issue sees a few changes, nearly all of which are in response to what you, the reader, have been clamoring for since we released Issue #1. However, we all know most people don't take change well—even when they're the ones who asked for it in the first place!

The first change involves the inclusion of pulp serials. It ain't gonna happen anymore! After reviewing several websites devoted to the classic pulps, I decided that serializing these tales of adventure and the supernatural are best left to those who have the time, space and resources to "do it right". Be sure to check out the *Savage Dot Com* column in this issue for a listing of these websites and more. Just so you don't think I'm going to leave you hanging, the remainder of our initial attempt at running a serial, *Doc Savage: The Man of Bronze* can be found at: <http://www.blackmask.com/books84c/manbronzedex.htm>.

The second change involves the new **Shark Bytes** website. From here on out, any large graphic files or articles will be classified as "web-only extras". To get the files you'll have to stop by <http://www.sharkbytes.info> and download 'em yourself! I've also decided to release a weekly "nibble" on the website. Be sure to stop in every Wednesday to see what I've got cooking!

Of course, all of this leads into the third change, namely that of decreasing the file size of each issue of **Shark Bytes**. Starting with Issue #4, my goal is to keep the total download size of each issue at or below 3MB. This should work out to about 50 or so pages per issue. Now before you jump all over me for reducing the amount of Savage Goodness in each issue, let me finish!

In between each "full" issue of **Shark Bytes**, I will be releasing an issue of **Shark Nibbles**, a newsletter filled with stuff that just wasn't "substantial" enough to build a full-fledged article around, but is nice and crunchy all the same! Each issue of **Shark Nibbles** will be between 5-15 pages in length and should help to tide you over between issues of **Shark Bytes**. Look for the first issue of **Shark Nibbles** to be available at the **Shark Bytes** website on January 15, 2005.

The last change involves some technology. Along with the bookmarks in this issue, I've added links to the table of contents—to go directly to an article just click on its title! When you're done, just click on the article's title to be instantly returned to the table of contents. I hope this helps those of you who read the 'zine on your computer rather than choosing to print it out like all the normal Savages do!

I'd also like to take this opportunity to extend a "welcome to the team" and "job well-done" to Rod Phillips. In case you didn't know, Rod stepped up and volunteered to fill Paul Kasper's shoes as editor when Paul had to leave because of personal obligations. Rod did an awesome job on Issue #2 and he kicked butt on this issue as well—he and I pretty much filled this issue in five weeks. No small feat considering that over 20 different authors submitted pieces for this issue—there are more than 40 articles that fill well over 100 pages! He's been a godsend and I'm looking forward to working with him on many, many more issues.

As a final note, if there are any other changes you'd like to see implemented, or if you have any ideas for the new website, be sure to send an email to editor@sharkbytes.info and let me know what's on your mind. Remember, Rod and I can't improve **Shark Bytes** if you don't let us know what you want! Until next issue... keep it Savage!

Bill Littlefield, the "Editor" ;)

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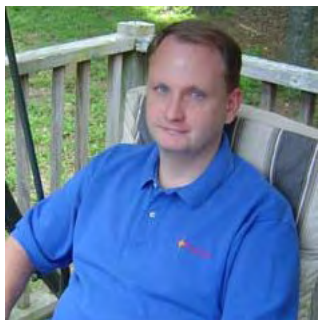
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The History of Savage Worlds According to Shane, Part 2: Savage Settings



Now we had a system in place. But what do you do with it? Should we start a new juggernaut-like line, ala *Deadlands* or *Weird Wars*? We felt the D20 boom was causing a shift in the marketplace to “front list” games. This feeling later proved to be exactly on the money, and you don’t see many games besides *Dungeons & Dragons* putting out complete lines with loads of sourcebooks anymore. Most companies now focus on a few settings with limited support, hoping to maximize their profits in a pond that just got far too many fishers and few more fish.

I know that’s a dry and business-like answer, but you can’t put out games for free unless you’ve got a really good trust fund. (And yes, there is at least one company who has had that luxury.)

On the creative side, I certainly had a lot of different ideas for campaign worlds, and I knew some of the incredibly talented people I’d met in my 10 years in the industry did as well. But you can’t turn each one into a *Deadlands*. In the first place you just never know which ones will catch, and in the second,

many of them are incredibly cool but may work far better as limited campaigns than as extended lines that never end. On a personal note, I also wanted to stretch my wings a bit. Things like *50 Fathoms* and *Evernight* were boring a hole in my brain and my demonic muses just wouldn’t shut up about them. Going to a new format where we concentrated our efforts seemed smart both from a business and a creative point of view.

I also really wanted us to stay away from the usual format of *Savage Worlds: Space*, *Savage Worlds: Pulp*, *Savage Worlds: Fantasy*, and so on. We’ve thought about “toolkit” books for those genres, and may well do them at some point, but for the most part we really wanted to concentrate on settings with a solid hook. That’s why Clint Black’s *Necessary Evil* is a perfect example. It’s not *Savage Worlds: Supers*—it’s a world where the heroes have been defeated and the villains must step up and save the world! That’s a fantastic idea, and more importantly, gives you far more than a “powers system” for *Savage Worlds*—it gives you a complete campaign ready to run “right out of the box.”

Which brings me to the meat of the book: What kinds of stories did we want to tell? Was there a way to bring the “Fast, Furious, Fun” mantra to campaign design and scripting as well as the rules? What would make our settings different from the hundreds of other settings that were flooding the shelves?

Evernight was our first experiment. I knew I wanted a limited experience—something you could actually start, really enjoy, and then actually finish. We also wanted something that was very easy for the GM to run. Something that allowed him to pop open the book a few minutes before the game and have everything he needed to run that night’s session. We know our audience doesn’t have lots of time to sit around plotting and writing up characters, so we wanted to take care of that work ahead of time. And if he wants to add more, there’s plenty of room for him to do so.

Scripting the entire campaign was a very good exercise in game design and made for a great introductory experience to the rules. Of course the problem for some—and I do emphasize some because one person on a public forum who just hates the idea of a scripted campaign easily drowns out the thousands who loved it—were frustrated that it was by its very nature a linear story. That’s a criticism as old as *Dungeons & Dragons*®, and one we’ve dealt with many times in the past. The truth is that most published adventures just have to be linear. We have to know which locations you’re going to so we can write them up, and we have to have at least a basic idea of why you’re going there so we can script some cool and memorable events for the party.

So after *Evernight*, we sat back and brainstormed a bit. Was there a way to have the cool locations and known events without forcing you down a particular path? After a lot of brainstorming, we finally came up with the “Plot Point” system. That gave us the ability to spotlight certain places and events, but allows the GM to

put them when and where he’s ready for them. And in between, the world is wide-open to the player’s whims and desires. We tested it first in *50 Fathoms*, and I think succeeded incredibly well given the overwhelmingly positive reviews we received that mentioned that very fact.

The trick then was how to apply the same Plot Point system to other campaigns. It’s fairly straight-forward in a pirate setting like *50 Fathoms* or Dave Blewer’s upcoming *Sundered Skies*. But how do you do it in *Necessary Evil*? What about in a modern horror campaign? *Deadlands*? The answer to that is that you have to tailor the Plot Point system for each campaign. What works in *Sticks & Stones* just won’t apply to *Slipstream*. That means each Plot Point campaign is a real challenge—a fun one!—but one that requires the designer of each book to really examine what the players of his game are likely to do, where they’re likely to end up, what the major backstory is he wants to tell, and how the characters are most likely to interact with it.

So far, settings I’ve actually run or playtested, like *Rippers*, *Red Rising*, and *Slipstream* have pulled it off without a hitch. I hope you’ll think so, too. Our goal is to give you a kit that you can open and run incredible and memorable adventures without tons of preparation. There are a lot of things competing for your time these days—with video games, DVDs, families, and life in general—so we want your *Savage Worlds* experience to be nothing but fun. Not a grueling exercise in character creation, rules lawyering, and struggling to come up with interesting adventures. And when you do have that killer idea for a scenario in the middle of your campaign, it’s wide open and set up from scratch for you to insert it when and where you desire.

That’s all for now; I’ve got a campaign to run! Look for Part Three of *Smilin’ Jack Speaks* in a future issue of **Shark Bytes**. Until then, Keep it Savage!



SKY CAPTAIN AND THE WORLD OF TOMORROW!™

A Savage Adventure Outline for Recreating the Movie, by William Reger

All quotes are from the novelization by Kevin J. Anderson, based on the motion picture screenplay by Kerry Conran. **Spoiler Alert:** Those of you who have not yet seen the movie might want to avoid reading the descriptive text following each Episode heading!

Sky Captain and the World of Tomorrow and all character names and likenesses are ™ and © 2003-2004 by Paramount Pictures. All rights reserved. This article represents no challenge to this copyright, and is intended for personal, private, noncommercial use only.

The Cast of Characters



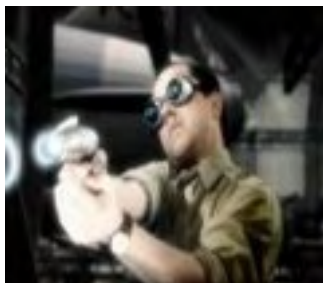
POLLY PERKINS (Ace Reporter) (Seasoned Wild Card: 35XP)
Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Climb d4, Drive d6, Fighting d6, Guts d8, Healing d6, Investigation d8, Persuasion d8, Shooting d6, Taunt d6.
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5; **Charisma:** +4
Hindrances: Accident Prone, Curious, Quirk (overly attached to camera).
Edges: Attractive, Charming.
Gear: Camera, pistol, purse.



SKY CAPTAIN JOE SULLIVAN (Daredevil Pilot) (Seasoned Wild Card: 35XP)
Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d6
Skills: Climb d6, Drive d6, Fighting d8, Guts d8, Persuasion d6, Pilot d8, Shooting d8.
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6(7); **Charisma:** +2
Hindrances: Heroic, Loyal, Overconfident.
Edges: Ace, Acrobatics, Charming.
Gear: Pistol, machete, leather jacket (+1 Armor to torso).



FRANCESCA "FRANKIE" COOK (Ace Pilot) (Novice Wild Card: 15XP)
Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d8, Knowledge (Royal Navy) d8, Pilot d10, Shooting d8.
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6(7); **Charisma:** +2; **Bennies:** 4
Hindrances: Bad Eyes (Minor: Blind in one eye—wears patch), Heroic, Loyal.
Edges: Ace, Attractive, Lucky.
Gear: Pistol, form-fitting leather flying uniform (+1 Armor to torso, arms and legs).



DEX DEARBORN (Weird Scientist) (Seasoned Wild Card: 35XP)
Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d10, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d6, Knowledge (Science) d6, Repair d8, Shooting d6.
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5; **Charisma:** +0
Hindrances: Clueless, Quirk (uses pulp novels as science), Quirk (When focusing on a problem, ignores events around him).
Edges: AB: Weird Science, MacGyver, Power Points: 20, Powers: *bolt*, *armor*, and *fly*.
Gear: Tool pouch, Sonic Atomizer (Range 3/6/12; Damage 3d6; Notes: Reduces Armor by the amount of damage done.).

Episode 1: “Mechanical Monsters!”

Wherein the enemy, a mad German scientist named Totenkopf, is revealed after he kidnaps a fleeing scientist and sends a wave of Giant Robots into New York City to steal the city’s power plant for some sinister purpose. Ace Reporter Polly Perkins and Sky Captain Joe Sullivan are introduced.

GIANT ROBOT

“These robot monsters had arms and legs thicker than the girders of skyscrapers. Round, swiveling joints marked elbows and knees while each disk-like hand bore three curved metal claws. The square torsos were studded with rivets as large as manhole covers and the chest bore a sinister emblem of an iron-winged skull. The heads were giant welding helmets with a single antenna on the right side and a broad glowing glass that served as the monstrous robot’s cyclopean eye.”

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d4*, Spirit d4*, Strength d12+9, Vigor d12+9

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d6, Piloting d6, Shooting d4.

Pace: 5, Fly 10/200; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 32(47)

Special Abilities:

Gargantuan: Size +9; +4 to be hit; Heavy Armor; all attacks are treated as Heavy weapons.

Heat Ray: Range 25/50/100; Damage 5d10; ROF 1; AP 75; Flammable materials ignited on a roll of 1-3 on 1d6.

Claw: Str+3 damage.

Fearless

Fear -2

Construct

Vulnerable: Joints (destroyed on a raise) are not armored but are at a +0 net to-hit (+4 gargantuan but -4 for Called Shot). With the loss of a leg, the creature collapses and is destroyed unless it makes a successful Agility roll. Loss of an arm limits fighting ability (-2 Fighting).

Vulnerable: Eye can be blasted with a Called Shot (net +0, as above) and prevents any further Shooting.

**The Giant Robots are remote controlled. These attributes are provided for responding to un-programmed events.*

CITY DEFENDERS

The forces defending the city consist of late-WW I to early-WW II tanks, police with Thompson submachine guns, soldiers with anti-tank guns, WW I-era rifles, and tripod Machine guns. The tanks have 20mm to 37mm cannons (use the 20-25mm for late-WW I, 30 mm for early-WW II) and are reasonably slow (Acceleration/Top Speed in the 4/12 range) with Heavy Armor. All cannons have an ROF of 1 rather than 3 and are Heavy Weapons. The machineguns are M1919’s. Barricades of 1930s cars and military trucks are hastily set up to give the defenders some cover. The populace retreats to underground air raid shelters. And let’s not forget the special P-40’s of the Flying Legion!

FLYING LEGION P-40 WARHAWKS

ACC/Top Speed: 20/180 (Air) and 15/150 (Underwater); **Climb:** 25; **Toughness:** 16(20); **Crew:** 1; **Passengers** 1;

Weapons:

- **20 mm Cannon** (6): Range 40/80/160; Damage 3d8; ROF 3 (3 guns per wing); Shots 600; AP 6; Heavy Weapon.
- **Sticky Bombs** (4): Damage 5d6; AP 10; Small Burst Template; Heavy Weapon.
- **Anchor Rocket** (1): Can secure the plane for a quick turn of up to 180°, which needs a Piloting roll with a raise to avoid crashing; Range 10/20/40; Damage 3d10; AP 10; Heavy Weapon.
- **Trip Rocket** (2): Can place a cable across a distance of 40 yards (20”); Range 10/20/40; AP 10.
- **Air/Sea Submersible:** capable of travel both in the air and underwater.
- **Torpedoes** (May replace sticky bombs as a special load): Underwater only; Range 20/40/80; Damage 4d10; AP: 6; Small Burst Template; Heavy Weapon.

Episode 2: “Winged Terror!”

Wherein the enemy first attempts to take the critical missing test tube vials held by Dr. Walter Jennings. Reporter Polly Perkins of the Chronicle convinces Weird Scientist Dex Dearborn to let her speak with Sky Captain and talk him into letting her join up with him, in exchange for information she had discovered earlier in Episode 1. The unnamed enemy woman agent (See Episode 5 for statistics) is thwarted in her efforts to find two key vials, and Polly finds them. Sky Captain Joe Sullivan discovers a briefcase full of blueprints and the two leave for Legion Headquarters. They arrive just as the robotic Flying Wings begin an attack on Legion Headquarters and New York City. At Legion Headquarters the robots capture Dex and heavily damage the HQ. They also take the cities power generators and then escape. Sky Captain (with Polly in the back seat) destroys several Flying Wings and demonstrates the underwater capability of the plane while helping Dex use the remote command signal to track the location of the Robots' generator station.

FLYING WING

“Perfectly streamlined, as if made of quicksilver, the graceful yet deadly flyers flapped long and narrow wings like mechanized pterodactyls. The enemy Flying Wings dove forward, blunt noses marred by clusters of 50mm cannons.”

Acc/Top Speed: 20/175; **Climb:** 30; **Toughness:** 20(26); **Crew:** 4 Crewbots. **Passengers:** up to 2. **Weapon:** 50mm quad guns (Range 50/100/200; Damage 4d8; ROF 4 (1 each); AP 10; Heavy Weapon).

CREW BOTS

“Flanking her were two seven-foot-tall walking robots. Each had a bullet-shaped head, a wasp-thin waist, and a pair of steel tentacles for arms.”

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6*, Spirit d6*, Strength d12, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d8, Piloting d8, Shooting d6.

Pace: 6, **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 12(17)

Special Abilities:

Tentacle: Str+2

Fearless

Construct

**The Crewbots are remote controlled. These attributes are provided for responding to un-programmed events.*

THE SKY LEGION

The Sky Legion has several observation Zeppelins (treat as an obstacle that could explode into flames if fired upon or crashed into) as well as several patrolling P-40s and quad 30mm Anti-aircraft gun emplacements (treat as Armor 16 turrets that can be attacked by the Flying Wings). Other ground forces are elite military soldiers armed only with rifles.

Dex has his Sonic Atomizer (Range 3/6/12; Damage 3d6; Notes: Melts through solid structures and metals, thus reducing any armor protection by the damage done. Takes a Weird Science roll for Dex to “shoot,” but others can use the weapon with a successful Smarts roll. The weapon has 20 Power Points and uses 3 Power Points per shot—thus the final shot will do only 2d6 points of damage rather than 3d6 points). If captured, Dex loses the weapon.

Episode 3: “Shadows of Tomorrow!”

Wherein the heroes journey to Nepal to search for the kidnapped Dex only to find mystery, betrayal and death!

When Sky Captain returns to the Legion base, he finds Dex's discarded Sonic Atomizer Gun and the scrap of a map indicating Nepal as the location of the transmitter. Polly and the Sky Captain journey to Nepal and meet Kaji, a Nepalese Sherpa and the guide for the next leg of the journey. With him are two Extra Sherpas who are less than friendly. The map targets an area known by the Sherpas as Shambhala, a holy and mysterious place. Sky Captain insists on going there and they arrive to find an abandoned mine—a very contaminated uranium mine! The two Sherpas trick Polly into following one of them and subsequently capture both her and Sky Captain in a room filled with explosives and an unreachable timed fuse.

After Polly surrenders the two vials, the two heroes are locked in, the fuse is lit, and the heroes are left to die in the impending explosion. They are rescued by Kaji and barely escape the trap. When they awake, they find themselves naked together in a bed in mythical Shangri-La. They discover that Totenkopf had been there some years earlier, enslaving the populace and forcing them to work the mine. Many died, and many more were used in weird experiments. The last survivor gives the Sky Captain a clue on Totenkopf's hidden base.

Meanwhile, the traitorous Sherpas have given the stolen vials to the Mysterious Woman, and been killed for their trouble. She heads back to Totenkopf's hidden base.

Episode 4: "The Hidden Island!"

Wherein the heroes finally track the evil Doctor to his lair while a countdown to doomsday starts! Sky Captain finally figures out the location of the Doctor's lair, an uncharted island in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. Contacting an old "friend", Captain Francesca "Frankie" Cook, Sky Captain lands to refuel and get help on her flying mobile airstrip. While initially reluctant to help Sky Captain, Frankie acquiesces when she learns it is an effort to rescue Dex (the original inventor of the flying fortress airstrips). As the heroes examine a map drawn by sonar imaging of the hidden island, the sky fortress is attacked by underwater robot "crabs" firing rockets at the intruding air base. Frankie makes a decision to lead her crack squad of Mantis Aircraft into battle next to Sky Captain's refueled P-40. The ensuing battle of air/sea fighters versus the Robot Crab walkers allows the Sky Captain to sneak onto the island via an undersea river. He and Polly emerge in a swampy area near the center of the island, the suspected location of Totenkopf's lair.

The jungle-covered island is filled with the results of Totenkopf's experiments: dinosaurs! Heading inland toward the dormant volcano at the island's center, Polly and the Sky Captain must flee from a prehistoric monstrous bird while crossing a ravine spanned by a giant tree. Once across they discover Totenkopf's lair, guarded by some kind of monstrous canine. They must sneak in through a side drainage vent. Once inside the fortress, they discover Totenkopf has turned the empty volcano into a launching bay for his massive rocket ship/ark! The heroes are discovered and captured by flying worker robots lead by the Mysterious Woman.

GIANT ROBOT CRAB

"The sea-bottom walkers plodded along like giant crabs, each with four massive segmented legs. Then the crab machines' angular carapaces opened and, with a gush of foam and flame, blunt rockets emerged, churning up to the target in the sky."

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d4*, Spirit d4*, Strength d12+8, Vigor d12+8

Skills: Boating d6, Fighting d6, Notice d6, Shooting d4.

Pace: 5; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 30(44)

Special Abilities:

Gargantuan: Size +8; +4 to be hit; Heavy Armor; all attacks are treated as Heavy Weapons.

AA Rocket Packs: Range 75/150/300; Damage 5d8; ROF 4; AP 45; Heavy Weapon.

Homing Torpedoes (x2): Range 150/300/600; Damage 5d10; ROF 1; AP 20; Medium Burst Template; Heavy Weapon.

Fearless

Fear -2

Construct

Amphibious: Pace underwater is equal to Pace on land.

*The Robot Crabs are remote controlled. These attributes are provided for responding to un-programmed events.

MANTIS AIR/SEA PLANES

Acc/Top Speed: 15/150; **Climb:** 15; **Swim:** 10/100; **Toughness:** 15(19), **Crew:** 1*. **Special:** Amphibious (Air or Sea) capability. **Weapons:**

- **20 mm Cannon** (2): Range 40/80/160; Damage 3d8; ROF 3 (3 guns per wing); Shots 60; AP 4 (Air only).
- **Torpedoes** (4): Range 100/200/400; Damage 4d8; Small Burst Template; AP 10; Heavy Weapon.

* Mantis Royal Navy Pilots: All female; Agility, Shooting, Piloting, and Boating are d8; everything else is d6.

MONSTROUS BIRD (Wild Card)

"The giant flying creature dive-bombed them from above. The monster bird tore at the forest overhead, shrieking in frustration. A spiny feather as long as Polly's forearm spun to the ground."

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d10, Strength d12+2, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d8, Notice d10

Pace: 4 (Fly 20; Acceleration: 4); **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 9

Special Abilities:

Claws/Beak: Str+2

Swoop: If the bird can fly at least 10" in a straight line before attacking, it does Str+4 damage with its claws.

Grab: With a raise on its Fighting roll (when Swooping against a man-sized or smaller target), it can snatch up the victim.

Slow: On the ground, monstrous birds hop about at a Pace of 4, and can't run.

Sharp Eyes: These creatures get a +4 to all Notice rolls.

Size +2

MONSTROUS CANINE (Wild Card)

"...(The) skeleton of a giant creature loomed over them. Its yellowed bones were the size of logs, and curved fangs from a long skull implied how ferocious the thing must have been in life. ...a second chain lead to a still-living specimen."

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d10 (A), Strength d12+5, Vigor d12

Skills: Fighting d10, Guts d12, Intimidation d12, Notice d8.

Pace: 6, **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 13

Special Abilities:

Bite: Str+4

Claws: Str+3

Fear

Size +5

FLYING WORKER ROBOTS

"Robots in jet packs buzzed like insects around the structure."

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6*, Spirit d6*, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d8, Pilot d8, Shooting d6.

Pace: 6 (Fly 12; Acceleration: 4); **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 10(13)

Special Abilities:

Claw: Str+3

Fearless

Construct

**The Flying Worker Robots are remote controlled. These attributes are provided for responding to un-programmed events.*

Episode 5: "The Mysterious Doctor Totenkopf!"

Rescued from a pulverizer by Dex, the heroes are introduced to the three remaining scientists of Unit Eleven: Doctors Kessler, Lang and Vargas, who are now much older. They are warned that Totenkopf is preparing to launch his rocket ship, whose experimental atomic engines will incinerate the Earth if the third stage is ignited! The scientists lead the heroes to Totenkopf's lair where the Sky Captain uses Dex's Sonic Atomizer to defeat the two sentinel robots. One of the scientists rushes to open the doors, only to trigger a trap that flash-fries the unlucky scholar. This triggers a programmed warning to everyone not to bother the doctor. Dex disables the trap by pulling the wires in the mechanism. Inside, the heroes discover the "real" Doctor Totenkopf!

SENTINEL ROBOTS

"Two menacing robots, twice the height of a man, guarded the forbidding doorway just in front of some conical and exotic transformers, resembling giant Tesla coils, on either side of the doorway."

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6*, Spirit d6*, Strength d12+2, Vigor d12

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d6

Pace: 5, **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 14(18)

Special Abilities:

Claws: Str+3

Size +2

Slow

Fearless

Construct

**The Sentinel Robots are remote controlled. These attributes are provided for responding to un-programmed events.*

THE MYSTERIOUS WOMAN (Wild Card Robot)

"With a vicious tug on the fabric sleeve, he spun the stranger around and found himself face-to-face with a stunning woman. Her face was perfect, her lips dark ruby red. Her eyes were covered by large round glasses with opaque lenses."

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d12, Spirit d8, Strength d12+1, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d12, Lockpicking d10, Notice d12, Stealth d10, Throwing d10.

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 8 (9 with staff); **Toughness:** 10(13)

Edges: Fleet-footed, Quick.

Special Abilities:

Fearless

Construct

Gear: Electro-shock Quarterstaff (Str+d6), Low Light Vision Goggles.

THE MYSTERIOUS WOMAN (Wild Card Cyborg)

"With a vicious tug on the fabric sleeve, he spun the stranger around and found himself face-to-face with a stunning woman. Her face was perfect, her lips dark ruby red. Her eyes were covered by large round glasses with opaque lenses."

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d12, Spirit d10, Strength d12, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d12, Guts d10, Lockpicking d10, Notice d12, Stealth d10, Throwing d10.

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 8 (9 with staff); **Toughness:** 9(11)

Hindrances: Delusional (Machines are superior), Loyal, Mute (vocal cords lost, transmits orders to machines electronically), Outsider (more machine than human).

Edges: Fleet-footed, Quick, Sweep.

Gear: Electro-shock Quarterstaff (Str+d6), Low Light Vision Goggles. Armored body parts (+2 Armor).

THE MYSTERIOUS WOMAN (Wild Card Cyborg)

"With a vicious tug on the fabric sleeve, he spun the stranger around and found himself face-to-face with a stunning woman. Her face was perfect, her lips dark ruby red. Her eyes were covered by large round glasses with opaque lenses."

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d12, Spirit d10, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d12, Guts d10, Intimidation d8, Lockpicking d10, Notice d12, Persuasion d8, Stealth d10, Throwing d10.

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 8 (9 with staff); **Toughness:** 8(9) **Charisma:** +2 or -2 (if Bloodthirsty nature known)

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty (Unless under orders by the Doctor she will not take prisoners), Delusional (Madly in Love with Doctor), Loyal.

Edges: Attractive, Fleet-footed, Quick, Sweep.

Gear: Electro-shock Quarterstaff (Str+d6), Low Light Vision Goggles. Form Fitting Leather suit (+1 Armor).

DOCTOR TOTENKOPF: ALIVE! (Wild Card)

The young man before you could not be the legendary elder Doctor, but he is! The mysterious vials have restored his health, but not his sanity!

"You're too late!" he gloats. "My paradise awaits me, and none of you flawed creatures has a place in my future World of Tomorrow!" With that, he activates his teleporting belt device tied into the bridge of his ship, leaving behind the plans of his vessel in his haste to escape the heroes.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d12, Spirit d10, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d12, Knowledge (Sciences) d12, Notice d8, Repair d12, Shooting d8, Taunt d8, Weird Science d12.

Pace: 6, **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6; **Charisma:** +0

Edges: AB (Weird Science), Creations (allows Weird Science devices to work until damaged), Extra Power Points (x2), Level Headed, Powers: *armor, barrier, blast, bolt, burst, environmental protection, fly, puppet, teleport, mechanical zombie.*

Hindrances: Delusional (major), Overconfident.

DOCTOR TOTENKOPF: DEAD!

The Doctor has been dead these past ten years. He left a note saying that he is sorry for what he's done; not that this helps the heroes any! The notes on the layout of the ship do help, though.

DOCTOR TOTENKOPF: CYBORG! (Wild Card)

The creature before you is more machine than man. The skull-like visage is split in a permanent grin.

"You have arrived too late. I now return to my ship and leave you to fry in the same firestorm that will incinerate this polluted earth. My world will be the perfect mixture of nature and machine. Mankind will not pollute my World of Tomorrow!" With that, he leaps out the window and jets up to the command helm of his ship, leaving behind the plans of the ship in his haste to avoid the heroes.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d10, Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d10, Knowledge (Sciences) d12, Notice d8, Repair d12, Shooting d8, Taunt d8, Weird Science d12.

Pace: 6, **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 9(11); **Charisma:** -2

Edges: AB (Weird Science), Creations (allows Weird Science devices to work until damaged), Extra Power Points (x2), Level Headed, Powers: *barrier, bolt, burst, environmental protection, fly, puppet, mechanical zombie.*

Hindrances: Delusional (major), Overconfident, Outsider (Cyborg).

Special Abilities:

Fearless

Armor +2 due to many metal replacements.

Construct

DOCTOR TOTENKOPF: THE LIVING SHIP!

The good Doctor has left this world behind, but had his mind transferred into the ship's main computer! The vials will allow him to recreate his own human form as well as others, both male and female, in his image once his ship finds the paradise he feels he is owed. This information, along with the layout of the ship, is in the study.

The Ship is a three stage rocket with the last stage being the atomic engines which will incinerate the earth if they fire. Above the rockets is the Ark section (animal storage area) with walkways consisting of little more than support structure beams (Agility Checks needed to cross) and power sections in some of the walls. The Power sections have sensors that allow the Robot mind to send flying robots or the Mysterious Woman (if still functional) to prevent tampering. There is also an emergency abort control hidden on this level used for rapid deployment of the animals and creatures in the ark section. Above the Ark Section is the Bridge with robotic controls for all sections of the ship. This is where the main computer controlling the ship resides.

Now all the heroes have to do is get onto the ship by getting past the Mysterious Woman, get to the main power relays, and sabotage the ship before it reaches the third stage... all while avoiding the mad Doctor. Hey, this is *pulp* after all!



Time Management Tips for Busy GM's

Making the most of your roleplaying time in five easy steps, by Johnn Four

One of my biggest challenges as a game master today is time management. There's just too much to do in my professional and personal life to devote as much time as I really want towards my #1 hobby: roleplaying. Wizards of the Coast released the following information, as part of an overall gaming industry report. It gives the top reasons why gamers stop gaming. The top three reasons caught my attention as early warnings about time management: (1) Got too busy with other things: 79%, (2) Too few people to play with: 63%, and (3) Not enough time to play: 55%. Although Wizards did not comment on reason #2, I believe part of the reason there are too few people to play with is that potential players don't have enough time in which to play. So, I better accept the challenge that I need to do more gaming in less time and look for ways to keep my hobby thriving—because the reality is that life is only going to get busier!

Think about it.

I bet you can get in 30 minutes of really good session and story planning time each and every day without it costing you an extra minute! When you're doing something that safely allows your mind to wander, use that time to think about roleplaying: Transit, commuting, housework, standing in line (anywhere and everywhere), in the shower, brushing your teeth, or on your lunch break!

The secret is to have an agenda to focus on and complete. What do you need to plan, create or determine for your campaign and its next session? It takes practice to consistently focus your thoughts, but the reward is at least 3 bonus hours of planning a week—hours that you aren't using anyway and do not need to make room for in your busy life. Think about it.

Create “protected time” and guard it!

If you practice this one, you'll find that when you sit down at the keyboard or with paper and pen, the ideas and information will come streaming out in a highly distilled manner. What used to take you an hour to write after pauses, revisions and editing, can be streamed out in 15 minutes—all because it is well thought out in your head.

Figure out time during the week where you can concentrate entirely on roleplaying, protect that time, and then use it. No phone calls, email, TV, or chores. It's just you and roleplaying. Even an hour a week, consistently used, will get a lot done.

Focus on results.

I'm very guilty of spinning off on unproductive tangents while planning. During your thinking time and protected time, ask yourself what really needs to get done so that next session is exciting, compelling, and enjoyable for all. Do you really need to type out that chart, or will a bookmark for quick reference during play do just as well?

How about developing your backstory—the story which your players will take several sessions to uncover. Does it really need to be that detailed? Or can you spend a few minutes updating it each week and then move onto something else, like fleshing out a couple of upcoming encounters for maximum enjoyment?

The same goes for game setting information. Is it important to figure out the statistics for all the world's rulers right now? Perhaps you could create a small rumor list for next week's city session instead?

Delegate!

I'm guilty of not doing this well. But it really does help a busy game master if the players can lend a hand. Have someone take care of the pre-session details for you, such as playing time, playing location, menu, snacks and car pooling.

Also enlist the players to perform rules research during sessions so you can focus on other things. Depending upon your group, you may even have the opportunity of letting a player handle the monsters once in awhile—including their pre-game planning and tactics.

Use a campaign newsletter.

I covered campaign newsletters in detail within the “pages” of an early Roleplaying Tips Weekly Newsletter (Issue #7). They are a fantastic way to get more done in less time. Use a campaign newsletter to update world events; create needed campaign information such as NPCs, unique monsters, and setting information; organize your records and session information; organize your players; and communicate with your group about important story and campaign issues all in one fell swoop.



About the Author

Johnn Four is the editor of the immensely successful *Roleplaying Tips Weekly Newsletter*. He has graciously granted us permission to reprint tips from his archives, so look for regular articles from Johnn in future issues! Hopefully, you will find his stuff as useful as I have. For more information on this great resource you should take a look at Johnn's website: www.roleplayingtips.com.

51 URBAN “LEGENDS”

Believe or ignore them at your own risk...

The action in many Savage Worlds campaigns takes place in the modern day and age, whether those campaigns are spy thrillers, occult investigations, military missions, or battles against the Shadow. While modern times are not generally viewed as a magical or mythical era, it is nevertheless not without its own legends—urban legends to be precise. Urban legends are the mythology of our age. They are the tall tales and bits of misinformation that get spread by word of moth and via the Internet, becoming garbled and more outlandish with each telling. They are also a great resource for the Savage Worlds GM, or indeed anyone running a game set in the present day.

This article is based on the OGC product *101 Urban Legends* from Ronin Arts (see Section 15 of the OGL in this issue). It presents snippets of odd, implausible, and sometimes ridiculous modern folklore. If you can't figure out why I chose to present only 51 legends you need to brush up on your conspiracy theory lore!

The legends presented here are a mix of real world tall tales and inventions of the original author, James Maliszewski. I just tweaked them to be more useful when used with the *Savage Worlds* system. All the legends are presented in a few sentences; just enough to spark your imagination. You should use this as an opportunity to put your own spin on these legends. Have fun with them!

1. **Green potato chips are poisonous to children.** Their production is mandated by a long-forgotten social Darwinist corporate code dating from 1899. Anyone under 18 years of age that eats one must make a Vigor roll at –2 or become severely ill for d6 days.
2. **Fairies were once used to power light bulbs.** Any functional bulb produced before 1939 will contain a tiny Fey creature that will be released when the bulb is shattered and is bound to grant its rescuer one wish.
3. **Most TV newscasters are paraplegics.** This might explain why they avoid being seen in public...
4. **The US flags used in all FBI buildings has 52 stars.** The extra stars are for the manned space stations Hoover and Cowley in geo-synchronous orbits over the United States.
5. **Anime videos sold outside of Japan have subliminal messages hidden within their theme songs.** Anyone watching them must make a Spirit roll at –4 or lose all taste for tuna fish for two weeks.
6. **The Library of Congress contains a copy of every book printed in the United States in 1999—except one.** That book is *A Secret History of New Jersey*, which details the troglodyte civilization beneath the state. Nearly all the extant copies have been destroyed by agents of the troglodytes.
7. **Unintelligible Internet spam is generated by an artificial intelligence in Russia attempting to learn human language.** The AI, dubbed “Koba” by the Russians, is located in Minsk. It is part of a plan by diehard Communists to re-establish the USSR, with Koba as its undying leader.
8. **Chimpanzees would have been extinct long ago had they not been crossbred with humans in 1926.** Consequently, chimps are quickly evolving human intelligence and it is only a matter of time before they can speak and use technology.
9. **The appearance of all mannequins is based on unidentified bodies recovered throughout the world.** If a mannequin is ever made in the likeness of an imaginary person, it will eventually become animated and filled with a hatred for human beings. If this happens, treat the mannequin as a Zombie (per the *Savage Worlds* rules) without the Weakness (Head) ability.
10. **The world may not be flat, but it still has four corners and one of them is located at Ayer’s Rock in Australia.** Each corner is tied to a particular element. All effects related to that element are doubled when within 10 miles of the location.
11. **Only people who die through violence may enter the afterlife, all others are reincarnated.** Many terrorist groups realize this truth and act in order to ensure their ultimate reward.
12. **Beneath the Paris Metro and the London Tube exists a second and secret subway system.** This system was created during the Cold War and has since been abandoned. The system still exists however, and over the years many people—and creatures—have taken up residence in the dark and twisted tunnels.
13. **Elvis is most certainly dead.** But Jimi Hendrix, Jim Morrison, Janis Joplin, and Robert Johnston aren’t!
14. **The entire continent of South America, due to an engineering accident during the construction of the Panama Canal, is slowly sinking.**
15. **The state of Texas is actually larger on the inside than it is on the outside.** Travel times within its borders are 25% longer than they appear by looking on a map.
16. **Most diamonds are nothing more than expertly cut glass.** The majority of the world’s real diamonds have been fused together to create a giant lens to amplify the heat of the earth’s core so that the planet will not die.
17. **The currency of many nations contains a small image of the American flag.** The presence of this image indicates that ten or more Masons hold positions of high governmental authority within that nation.
18. **The British House of Commons was once used as an insane asylum.** As a result, the ghosts of former inmates haunt it and, from time to time, possess members of Parliament.
19. **In America, it is actually illegal to give anyone a free lunch—literally.** This law was enacted in order to discourage personal charity and thereby incite demand for a socialist revolution.

20. **William Shakespeare was a pseudonym of John Dee.** Each of his plays is actually a magical incantation or seed in written form, recognizable only to those with the proper arcane knowledge and skills.
21. **Fort Knox contains no gold.** In 1898, all of the nation's gold was given to the mysterious Fey in exchange for knowledge of when the world will end.
22. **Edgar Allen Poe is buried in an unmarked pauper's grave.** The grave purporting to be Poe's actually contains the body of Ulysses S Grant. Grant's own tomb, which contains the body of Abraham Lincoln, is the headquarters of the Paranormal Science and Investigative Agency. Lincoln's tomb contains the body of Elvis. Yes Virginia, Elvis IS dead...
23. **In addition to a guardian angel, everyone alive also possesses a tempter devil.** Unlike the angel, the devil frequently provides genuine assistance in the form of temporary trait boosts. Any player that spends a Benny for a re-roll may instead boost one trait by one die type for the remainder of the session. Each player may only do this once per session. Any long-term effects of frequent use are up to the GM...
24. **Field tests of anthropomorphic robots began in 1975, but were discontinued in 1984 when one of them was inadvertently elected to public office.** Its creators have attempted to "assassinate" it several times, but have thus far been unsuccessful.
25. **There are only a finite number of souls.** As the human population increases, souls must be divided to ensure that everyone gets at least a sliver of one. Only humans with complete souls are able to manifest arcane power.
26. **It's true, no one really knows why anyone would voluntarily choose to ingest Scrapple®...**
27. **No one born within the city limits of Nielko, Poland has ever died.** This is due to a powerful incantation placed there prior to the Mongol invasions of the 13th century.
28. **Abandoned refrigerators are gateways to other dimensions.**
29. **A cabal of cartographic magicians orchestrated the fall of Communism.** These mages are able to make changes in the real world by altering magically imbued maps.
30. **Cats are able to perceive the true form of demons.** They will hiss whenever confronted by a demon in altered form.
31. **Hitler's body was mummified by the Soviets after Berlin fell in World War 2.** It was recently sold on the Black Market to a businessman in Mexico seeking to establish a Fourth Reich in North America, with an undead Hitler as its leader.
32. **There is a fortuneteller in Padua, Italy who has correctly predicted the outcome of every World Series since 1949.** In exchange for arcane artifacts, she'll gladly share her knowledge.
33. **Since 2001, the sales of typewriters worldwide have been increasing.** The sales have been boosted by an apocalyptic cult called The Children of the New Dawn that believes computers are gateways to Hell and must be destroyed lest humanity be enslaved for eternity.
34. **Extended exposure to weightlessness greatly extends human life.** Most astronauts and cosmonauts eventually fake their own deaths to keep this information from becoming public knowledge.
35. **The Ark of the Covenant really does exist and it's located somewhere in Ethiopia.**
36. **No one knows how aspirin really works...**
37. **Internet browser software contains engineered security holes to allow the government to spy on people.**
38. **The Holy Grail is hidden somewhere in Saskatchewan, Canada.** The Grail was brought there by the Templars near the end of the 13th century and is now protected by an entire nation of Native Americans who have been trained in Templar lore and magic.
39. **Little Red Riding Hood is more than just a children's story.** It actually contains coded information on how to defeat werewolves. If you know where to look, that is.
40. **Redheaded people have special magical powers.** Any redheaded characters get the Power Points Edge for free during character generation.
41. **The National Cathedral in Washington, DC was financed by the Shriners in return for the construction of a temple to Ra in its crypt.** This was done to ensure that the sun god will always bless the United States with good fortune.
42. **Sherlock Homes was a real person and A.C. Doyle's stories are factual accounts of his adventures.**
43. **The official language of the United States is actually Enochian** (see *Stalking the Night Fantastic* in this issue of **Shark Bytes**). All federal government officials must be proficient (d8 or above) in the language in order to communicate with the angels that protect the nation in times of crisis.
44. **The hull of a recently salvaged Russian submarine was covered with what appear to be giant teeth marks.**
45. **There's a guy in Seattle who can catch dreams and distill them into a liquid narcotic.**
46. **The planets Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto do not exist.** Their existence was fabricated to throw off the charts of hack astrologers. Charts ignoring these planets are much more accurate.
47. **There never was any country called Transylvania.**
48. **Somewhere in the Congo is the Navel of the World, the place from which all life sprang.** Anyone who can locate it and decipher its secrets will be able to recreate life in their own image.
49. **The British Prime Minister has a cabinet-level advisor on the occult.** There is growing concern that the advisor is in fact a double agent. But for whom no one is quite sure.
50. **One in 100 million humans are born with crystal bones.** Their Toughness is reduced by 2; however, they get the Arcane Background: Psionics and Power Points Edges for free during character generation.
51. **Roleplaying games ARE satanic.** Anyone whose character achieves Legendary Rank gains the use of the *puppet* power...for real!

THE SAVAGE BATTLE DECK

Applying the Concept of the Adventure Deck to the Showdown! Rules, by Matthew Uzelac

OK, so we've all had a chance to play around with the Savage Worlds Adventure Deck. If you're like me (and you know you are) you've had a blast with it. The Adventure Deck really keeps things Fast, Furious, and Fun! Why, I wondered, couldn't this idea be applied to the Savage Worlds: Showdown competitive miniatures rules? Well, it could. I just had to get off my lazy butt and write it up. So I did, and the article that follows is the result.

The descriptions that follow detail the cards that should comprise your "Showdown Battle Deck". Each Battle Deck is an individual creation, including up to 52 cards in any combination. Feel free to vary the mix to suit the scenario and your group's style of play. You can have as many or as few of each card in the deck. The exact mix is up to the individual GM.

At the start of the session shuffle the deck. Each player draws a card and then passes the deck to his left. Each player gets one card for every unit he controls unless you mutually decide on some other ratio. If desired, Leadership Edges may grant additional cards—the choice is yours to make.

Playing a card may be done at any time, even if it's not your turn to act, and takes effect immediately. Playing a card interrupts any action for which dice have not already been rolled. Once played, the card is placed on the discard pile. Cards are not carried over between scenarios. You may use as many of your cards as you want during a scenario and may play as many as you want during any given turn; however, once you're out of cards, that's it until the next scenario!

Feel free to make your own cards using the following descriptions or download the *Unofficial Sharkbytes Battle Deck* from the **Shark Bytes** website. Thanks to Nevada Jim for creating the cards. Enjoy!

Foot Cavalry

The Sarge shouts "double time" and the whole squad answers "YES SERGEANT!"

This card triples a single unit's Pace as long as there is no enemy unit within 6" at any point during the movement.

Double Time

Move it, monkeys! Move it!

During the turn in which this card is played, this unit rolls 2d6 for their running die instead of the normal 1d6 when running.

Get some!

Alright, let's try this again... but don't use the rubber daggers.

During the turn in which this card is played, the unit may re-roll any failed Fighting rolls. Only one re-roll per Fighting roll is allowed.

I've got him in my sights.

"That's an impossible shot."

"For you, maybe."

All ranged weapons used by the unit this card is played on may double their effective ranges for the remainder of the turn.

I think I can, I think I can...

I'm not all that scared—really!

This card allows the unit to re-roll one failed Spirit roll.

Ki-Ya!

Take this; and this, and some of this, and maybe a little bit of this!

This card allows a unit to make twice the number of Fighting rolls it is normally allowed in the turn this card is played.

Can't stop us now!

Come on you dogs, let's take this hill!

For the rest of the game this unit gains a +2 bonus to all of their Spirit rolls.

Bad MoFos

It's only a bullet wound. Get up; pain is for the weak!

For the rest of the turn this unit gains +1 Toughness.

Super Bad MoFos

"Just tuck your guts back in, we have enemies to slay."

For the rest of the turn this unit gains +2 Toughness.

Dead-Eye

"Short controlled bursts."

For the rest of the turn all the unit's Shooting rolls are at +1.

Melee Monster

"Bring it! Bring it!"

For the rest of the turn all the unit's Fighting rolls are at +1.

I know the way!

"Well, we could get the climbing gear out and assault them from behind."

"How about we walk up these stairs that they have built."

"Or we could walk up these stairs that they have built."

When you play this card, the unit may ignore any movement penalties for the remainder of the turn.

Rough Terrain

"It's stuck."

"What do you mean, it's stuck?"

"It's stuck—stuck."

Play this card on an enemy vehicle or mounted unit. For the next 1d6 turns the vehicle/unit moves at half its normal Pace.

Confusion

"What do you mean go left? The plan says go right at the sign."

The target unit of this card may take no actions during the turn in which this card is played.

Battle Cry

"I'm the nightmare your mamas warned you about!"

The affected unit causes any enemy unit in sight to make a Fear check.

Inspired

"Follow me, men!"

This card doubles the result of a single Wild Card's Spirit roll. Only one roll during the turn in which this card is played is affected.

Where's the ammo?

"I'm the ammo bearer? I thought you were the ammo bearer!"

Halve the normal number of Shooting rolls allowed by the unit affected by this card for one turn.

Fog of War

"I can't see a gull-durn thing through this stinking smoke!"

For the next d4 turns weapon ranges for all units in the battle are halved.

The Superior General

"Now you know that I know, that you know, that I know you know. Ya' know?"

Use this card to cancel any other card currently in play. Discard both cards immediately.

Booby Trapped

"Careful men there could be—AAAAAAAAAAG!"

Each member of the affected unit suffers 2d4 damage.

Hey! The battle is this way!

"Come on, you can do it, you can do it! That's right. Now those are my big brave warriors."

Play this card on a unit that has been routed. The unit stops at the board edge but does not travel any further.

It's but a flesh wound!

"Just get me on my other foot, I've had worse than this."

This card negates a single wound suffered by a Wild Card.

Sneaky, Sneaky

"Sssshhh! They don't see us."

This card can only be played on a unit not already engaged in melee. The affected unit cannot be targeted by ranged weapons for the remainder of the turn.

Lucky Strike

"I got him! The tall one with the funny hat!"

Make a single attack (Fighting d12) against a Wild Card on the battlefield. This attack does not preclude the unit from making an additional attack and does not count as a regular action.

Go, go, go, go!

"On my mark, Garcia, take your platoon to the left. Anders, take yours to the right."

A single unit may discard their current initiative card and automatically interrupt another unit without having to roll to do so.

Medic!

"Here, take this and cut there. Hold your hand on it so his spleen doesn't slip out. And whatever you do, don't pass out."

All Shaken models in the affected unit immediately recover and may act normally.

Pinned Down

"I'm not going out there, they're shooting at us. A guy could get hurt or something."

The affected enemy unit may not move during its next turn.

And He Shall Strike Down With Great Fury

"He hit me once and knocked my soul off!"

All melee damage inflicted by the affected unit gains a +2 bonus for the remainder of the turn.

You Must Never Hesitate

"Alright... GO! No—stop, wait. Oh no—I mean go ahead...or don't go. Just sit there, I need a second."

The target unit must go last in the turn. If two units have this card played on them, then both units make Agility rolls and the unit with the lowest score goes last.

There's a hole in his armor, dear Liza, dear Liza...

"Shoot him right there."

The target unit gains +1 AP to all attacks (Shooting, Throwing or Fighting) during the turn in which this card is played.

The Quarterback Sneak

"That's impossible! She was in Canton just yesterday. How could she be here attacking our men!"

Play this card at the beginning of the turn to move a single friendly Wild Card up to d6" away from their current location.

Surprise, Surprise, Surprise

"Boo!"

Play this card on a unit that is about to enter melee combat—for the first round of combat this unit has "The Drop" on their opponent.

Strategic Pause

"No wait—I have a better idea."

The player picks up all the discarded Battle Deck cards, puts them back into the deck, reshuffles, then draws another card.

Newbie with a Compass

"The map says that we are right here, near the ancient village."

"Um, if this is an ancient village why is there a soda machine over there?"

"It must be an ancient soda machine."

Play this card on an enemy unit at the beginning of its action to make it go for a wild ride. Roll a d12 and read like a clock with the "12" facing the nearest enemy. Move the target unit it's full Pace, in the direction the dice roll indicated.

Change of Plans

"But I want to lead the great and glorious charge. Nate got to lead the great and glorious charge last week. It's not fair!"

Play this card to switch initiative cards between any two units on the battlefield.

I Have Your Number

"Gotcha!"

For the next three turns the enemy Wild Card this card is played on suffers a -2 modifier to all of their actions.

Make Haste

"Get moving, but now!"

Play this card at the beginning of the turn. The target friendly unit discards whatever action card it had been dealt and acts before any other unit this turn regardless of its action card.

Riddle me this...

Twenty posers to make your players think of things other than combat.

Riddles are a common feature of roleplaying games as well as being a staple in works of mythology and popular fiction. You all remember the scene from The Hobbit where Gollum and Bilbo engage in a test of wits, don't you? Well, the Norse god Odin, like Bilbo, won such a contest by the questionable tactic of asking a question to which only he could know the answer. Now most of us agree that throwing a poser or two at your players is a decent enough way of breaking up the monotony between slaying bad guys; however, coming up with just the right riddle is often more difficult than it sounds. These twenty riddles, taken from Fantasy Riddles: A Gamer's Resource, an OGC publication from Creation's Edge, should be enough to get you started.

The Riddles

1. He who makes it has no need of it, and he who uses it can neither see nor feel it.
2. It is said that some things are improved by death. Tell me, what stinks while alive, but dead smells good?
3. I know a word of letters three. Add two, and fewer there will be.
4. Always hungry, I must ever be fed. The finger I lick will soon turn red.
5. If a man carried my burden, it would break his back. I'm not wealthy, but leave silver in my track.
6. My life can be measured in hours. I serve by being devoured. Thin, I am quick. Fat, I am slow.
7. Glittering points that downward thrust. Sparkling spears that never rust.
8. You heard me before, then again. Now I die until called again.
9. Gentle enough to soothe the skin. Light enough to caress the sky. Hard enough to crack rocks.
10. When you look in my face I will look in your eye... and I never lie.
11. I build up castles. I tear down mountains. I make some men blind, yet help others to see.
12. Ripped from my mother's womb, beaten and burned, I become a blood-thirsty slayer.
13. Forward I am heavy, yet backwards I am not. The answer's revealed, if properly sought.
14. Bright as diamonds, loud as thunder. Never still. A thing of wonder.
15. At night they come out without being fetched. By day they are lost without being stolen.
16. The beginning of eternity, the end of time and space. The beginning of every end and the end of every place.
17. I went into the woods and got it. I sat down to seek it. I brought it home with me because I could not find it.
18. I am the heart that does not beat. If cut, I bleed without blood. I can float without fins, and I sing without a mouth.
19. I am as light as a feather, yet no man can hold me for very long.
20. I have rivers without water, forests without trees, mountains without rocks, and towns without houses.

The Answers

1. A coffin
2. A pig
3. The word "few"
4. A flame
5. A snail
6. A candle
7. An icicle
8. An echo
9. Water
10. A mirror
11. Sand
12. Iron
13. The word "ton"
14. A river or waterfall
15. The stars
16. The letter "e"
17. A splinter
18. Wood
19. Your breath
20. A map

Character Questionnaires

Going from random numbers to complete characters, by Heather Grove



In issue #65 of the *Roleplaying Tips* newsletter, Johnn Four asked people to send him examples and URLs of character questionnaires. This got me thinking. I'd worked on NPC questionnaires before, but what about PC questionnaires?

I sat down to write to him, and thought of the following: Character questions come in two categories: *practical questions* (PQs), and *inspirational questions* (IQs).

PQs are the ones that you should answer in advance to keep the game going at a decent pace. PQs don't change (much!) from campaign to campaign.

Some of the basic PQs:

- What is your character's name?
- What does he do for a living?
- What does he do in his free time?
- How does he support himself?
- How wealthy is he?
- Who does he know, and how well?
- Where does he live?
- What does he own?
- Does he have family?
- Does he have friends or enemies?

IQs make you think about unexpected areas of your character's life, and give you ideas or insight into your character. They're often related to the character's history, and can be pretty random. IQs vary from person to person: what inspires one person bores another. My best suggestion would be to answer at least two IQs that inspire you (ones that make you go "Hey! That gives me an idea..."), and two that don't. The reason for the latter is that sometimes it's the questions that seem totally uninteresting that lead to the most unexpected revelations. If you're having trouble getting into your character or getting inspired at all, then start with the questions that seem uninteresting first. Answer several until something yields an answer that strikes a chord with you.

THE QUESTIONS

Since PQs can also function as IQs, I'm going to put both together. I'll try to break it up by subject area, however. I'm putting a whole lot of random stuff in here for exactly the reasons listed above: You don't want to actually answer a gazillion questions, but it's good to have a variety from which to choose. If you have to answer the exact same questions for every character you make, it gets a little boring. So pick one to five that sound interesting, and see what they do for you! Happy character creation...

People

- Who are your character's friends? Most people have someone they chat with, hang out with, and so on. Who does your PC go out drinking with? Who does she have coffee with? Who does she chat with while waiting in line at the grocery store? Do the neighbors invite her to dinner? Does she go hiking or biking with a club?
- How close is she to her friends? How well do they know her? Do they know her hopes and fears? Do they know that she goes out late every night and sometimes doesn't come back for days? Will they notice if she disappears or comes home with bruises?
- Is she married? Does your character have a husband, a wife, a boyfriend, a girlfriend, a fiancé, a "significant other," a lover, or several of the above?
- Is she protecting someone? A child? A relative? A friend? Why does she see herself as their protector?

- Who does she live with? Does she still live with her family? What about housemates or roommates? Are these people her friends, or do they hate each other?
- Who was her first love? Did it work out? Why or why not? Do they still know each other?
- Who does she work with? Is she friends with her co-workers? Bitter rivals? Does she hate her lazy boss, or have a crush on her handsome secretary?
- Who is her best friend? Why? What secrets have they shared? What have they gone through together?
- Who is her worst enemy? Why?
- Who is her confidante? Who does she talk to when she's scared? Who does she tell when she's in trouble?
- Who would bail her out if she were arrested?
- Who did she give birthday presents to last year? What did she give them?
- Is she a disappointment to anyone? In what way?

Family

- Does he get along with them? Is it a close family, or do they only see each other at the holidays? Are any of them not on speaking terms with each other? Does he ignore them?
- What do they know about him?
- Is it a small family, or an extended family with lots of cousins and aunts and uncles?
- Are there any "family secrets?"
- Who is his favorite relative?
- Who is his least favorite relative?
- Does he have any children?

Places

- Where does your character hang out?
- Does she go club-hopping?
- Does she pick up people at "singles bars"?
- Does she see movies, or go dancing? Does she play pool or go bowling? Does she read at the library or go ice-skating?
- How about the video arcade, the mall, a local college campus, or the park?
- Where does she feel safe? Why?
- What sort of place spooks her? Why?
- Is there any place that she refuses to go? Why? What happened there?
- What is her workplace like? Does she like it? Does her office reflect her personality?
- What is her favorite restaurant? Does she go often enough for them to recognize her? Does she have a favorite table?

Hobbies and Habits

- What are your character's hobbies? Where did he pick up his hobbies? Who taught them to him? Why are they important to him?
- What sorts of books does he read? What magazines or newspapers does he read? Does he prefer SF, fantasy, horror, historical, romance, mystery, general fiction or current events?
- How does he read? Does he take books out from the library, or buy whole cases of them? How does he pick which book to buy next? Does he have a favorite reviewer? What book does he read over and over? Where does he read?
- Does he do the crossword puzzle? In pencil or pen?
- Does he read the paper every morning? Which section does he read first?
- What movies does he watch? What was the last movie he saw? Did he like it, and why? Who's his favorite movie star?
- Does he watch television? What's his favorite show? What show does he hate? What's his favorite channel, and why? Who's his favorite TV star?
- What music does he like? Does he have a large music library? A small one? Does he prefer the radio, CDs, reel-to-reel tapes, or mp3s?
- Does he wear a walkman? Does he listen to the same album over and over, or does he hate it when people do that?
- What does he do for exercise? Does he work out at the gym? Does he take long walks, or run marathons? Is he a couch potato?
- What does he do when the weather's bad?

Fears and Dreams



- What did your character want to be when she grew up? Did she realize that dream? If not, why not? Does she still regret that she never made it? Does she still have a chance to get there?
- What nightmares does she have? When she wakes up screaming in the middle of the night, what did she dream?
- What makes her cry? Is it a perfect flower? A song that reminds her of something? The memory of her father?
- What makes her laugh?
- What does she wish she could do that she can't? Is there a talent she wishes she had? Is it something she doesn't have the money for? Is it something her species isn't capable of? How badly does she want it? What would she do to get it?
- What is her secret dream? What one goal, ambition, or desire does she keep hidden from everyone? Is it small or large? Personal or global? Realistic or unrealistic? Is she actually trying to accomplish it (and how?), or does she consider it untenable?
- What is her worst fear? What terrifies her? What does she dread? Is it something terribly personal, or a generic phobia? How did she acquire this fear? Is she ashamed of it?
- If she could be any famous person, who would it be and why?
- If she could live in any historical period, which would it be?
- If she could change the world in only one way, what would it be?
- If she knew she would die tomorrow, what would she do today?

Past History

- Where did your character go to school? This is grade school, high school, college, home schooling, or whatever. What did he study? Did he particularly love or hate any of his teachers? Was he picked-on or bullied? Was he a part of the "in" crowd?
- What jobs has he had? What does he do for a living now? What part-time or summer jobs did he have while at school? Does he have a "career", or does he have a "job?" How many hours does he work? How much money does he make? Has he particularly loved or hated any of his old jobs? Why?
- What stupid things did he do when she was younger? Did he go through a rebellious phase? Did he keep secrets from her peers or parents? Did he steal things? Did he hurt someone?
- What hurt will he never forgive? What awful thing did someone do to him, and why can't he forgive them? Is it something small, such as an off-handed hurtful comment his father made? Is it something large, like physical abuse?
- What was his favorite childhood toy? Does he still have it? If not, what happened to it? What else did he play with?

Home

- Where does your character live? An apartment or house? Rent or own? How close are the neighbors? What color is the house? What sort of repair (or disrepair) is it in? Does she have a lawn? An attic or basement? A guest room?
- How has she decorated it? Used furniture from relatives? Random stuff from an office supply store, or mismatched items from your average corner furniture store? Designer items or antiques? Could her place be described as elegant? Ratty? Jumbled? Spartan? Does it have a noticeably ethnic look? What colors prevail?
- What are the walls like? Painted or wallpapered? Color? Posterred over? Artsy photos? Frilly curtains on the windows, Venetian blinds, or pull-shades?
- Is the house clean? Does the house sparkle? Does it smell like cleansers? How big are the dust-bunnies? Is the bathtub rusty? Are the walls mildewed? Does she clean it herself? If not, who does? Are there piles of books and papers everywhere? Is everything neat and organized? Are there spiders in every corner?
- What does her bedroom look like? Is it crowded with boxes? Is it sparkling clean? Is it frilly or spartan, somber or light?

The Personal Details

- What's your character's sexuality? How certain is he of it?
- What does he do to relax? Does he watch a movie, read a book, go jogging, surf the web, juggle?
- Does he have a pet? A fierce guard-dog? A tiny kitten? Goldfish? Rabbits, or birds? A boa constrictor? Mice? A large spider? A monster? A horse?
- What does he eat? Gourmet or takeout? Home-cooked food or instant microwaveable dinners? Does he eat more when he's upset? Is he vegetarian or vegan? Does he have odd dietary restrictions?
- Where does he vacation, and how often? Does he go skiing every winter in Vermont? Does he go to quiet yoga retreats twice a year in Massachusetts? What about beaches?
- What does he wear? What styles and colors is he partial to? What's his favorite piece of clothing, and why?
- What is his favorite color? Why?
- What does he do for Christmas or other relevant holiday? What presents did he get last year?
- What does he do for her birthday?
- Does he save money, or spend it like water? What is he saving toward?
- What's his favorite weather? Hot sunny days? Blizzards? A warm rain? What's his favorite climate or time of day?

The Physical Details

- Does your character have birthmarks or scars? How did she get them, and what do they mean? How about disfigurements or handicaps?
- Does she get sick? How often? What does she tend to come down with, and how does she handle it? Does she have any long-term ailments? Tendonitis? Migraines? Allergies? In what ways do they limit her activities?
- What sort of build does she have? Is she overweight? Underweight? Muscled? Wiry? Dumpy? Pudgy? Angular? Why? Does she resemble her parents or grandparents? What about her siblings?
- Does she take any drugs or medications? Why?
- Has she ever been in a hospital? Why? What happened? How would she feel about going back?

Possessions

- Does your character use a computer? Is it connected to the net? Does he understand encryption and firewalls? What information does he keep on her computer? Is it the latest model with all the frills, or an old piece of junk that takes ten minutes to boot up?
- Does he keep a journal? What sorts of things does he write in it? How often? Where does he keep it?
- A calendar or address book?
- Photo albums? Who does he keep pictures of? Does he show them to anyone?
- Jewelry? Inherited or bought? Worn or kept in a drawer?
- What one item would he risk his life to protect and keep safe? What one item does he wish he didn't have, but feels he must keep anyway? Why?
- How well-furnished is his kitchen? A few rusted old pots and pans, or all the latest expensive kitchenware? Does he know how to use it?
- What does he keep in her pockets?

Moods and Reactions

- What is your character like when she's drunk? Mellow? Melancholy? Friendly and fun? Laughs too much? Hits on everyone?
- What is she like when she's grieving or mourning? Is she private with her grief? Quiet and stony? Crying loudly? In need of friends?
- What is she like when she's moody or despondent? Is she self-pitying, irritable, or sad?
- What is she like when she's celebrating? Does she have a quiet celebration at home, or does she gather her friends together for a big bash?

SUPER ADVENTURE SEEDS

21 Adventure Seeds for Use in any Savage Supers Campaign

The Man Behind the Mask

Before his mysterious disappearance, a major villain reveals that he has been masquerading as a superhero the player characters have trusted for quite some time. The characters are initially unsure at what point the villain replaced the hero they trusted, as well as how much “secret” information the villain may have learned in the interim. It is also possible that the hero never existed at all, but was simply a cover identity for the villain the whole time.

The Official Seal of Approval

An official government body sanctions the character’s super team. The sanctioning organization assigns a normal human administrative liaison to the team who insists on accompanying the team on all missions. The liaison routinely has to be protected from harm or rescued from the clutches of certain doom on nearly every mission, forcing the team to be extra cautious or to “pull their punches” on many occasions, as there is now always at least one “innocent bystander” in the way.

Out of Retirement

Older versions of the team’s heroes appear at a critical moment in an adventure and fight alongside the team’s enemy, helping him to escape. These are actually future versions of the same characters that have traveled to the past in order to prevent something from happening (or to ensure something does) that will have a profound effect on the future history of the world.

A Foul Wind

An oceanic salvage team brings a crashed alien ship to the surface, and strange substances within the ship begin mutating first the salvagers, then the populace of the Hawaiian resort down wind. The heroes need to contain the situation before it gets out of control.

Welcome to the Club

A hero encounters an opponent he is unfamiliar with, but who seems to be well aware of the hero’s powers, skills, and limitations. If the hero manages to outsmart and defeat this mysterious opponent, the opponent is revealed to be another hero in disguise. He informs the hero that he has passed a qualifying test for an established super team and is extended an offer of membership.

If you can do it, so can I

A cult that grew out of a sci-fi fan club has kidnapped several geneticists and begun systematic thefts of genetic engineering equipment and volatile chemicals. Their goal is to transform themselves into superheroes, despite their obvious start on the path towards super villainy.

An Offer They Can’t Refuse

The War on Terror breeds strange bedfellows. The President signs an Executive Order offering a general amnesty for virtually all super villains provided they sign a loyalty oath to the government and begin operating as super soldiers. Putting even more pressure on reluctant super villains is the fact that if they don’t accept the amnesty, they know they will quickly be hunted by former comrades who decided to sign up.

A Compromising Situation

A Golden Age super villain, long believed dead, turns out to be the mysterious benefactor backing the superhero team. The team may now question the purpose of their past missions as they may have been secretly furthering the villain’s cause. This may also mean their headquarters can no longer be considered free from bugs or monitoring equipment. Any communication devices used by the heroes may also have been subject to monitoring. Their secret identities may have been compromised as well.

Does This Cape Make Me Look Fat?

As a promotional gimmick, a world-renowned fashion designer offers all of the world’s superheroes (and even the more stylish and darkly popular villains) free costume makeovers. The whole look of the metahuman community changes quickly, as even the most iconic heroes decide the time’s come to revamp their often-dated looks. This could provide a bit of comic relief for the players.

Passing the Torch

The Liberator is an unusual super villain. He’s never worked for revenge, money, or power. He’s just a man with a cause he’s followed outside the boundaries of the law. As super villains go, in fact, he’s not that bad: strictly honorable, accepts surrenders, minimizes collateral damage, and tries to avoid hurting civilians. Now he’s flying towards the heroes headquarters carrying a white flag and offering an exchange: if the team of heroes will throw their reputations and powers into helping his cause succeed legally, he’ll surrender and stand trial for his crimes. The Liberator is quite honest and truthful in his intentions, and the heroes should know he can probably be trusted. That said, he’s not willing to be killed out of hand and is ready for a fight if his bargain is not accepted. He’ll return fire if fired upon by anyone: the heroes, police who don’t recognize the flag of truce, other superhero teams who haven’t gotten the message, and opponents of his cause.

Vacationus Interruptus

Despite being extremely cold-blooded, a reptilian mutant (possibly another character or friend of the characters) has decided on the perfect vacation from crime fighting: a ski trip to Vail, Colorado. Just keeping the foolhardy, but determined, reptile alive in the extreme cold is a challenge, and the layers upon layers of clothing the reptile is swaddled in seem initially hilarious. But nobody's laughing when some super powered leg breakers show up in town hoping to steal from the filthy rich ski crowd.

Something Around Here Stinks

A pheromone-controlling metahuman has been making the rounds of the club scene, where his services are in demand as the new "It" sex drug. The right pheromones can lower inhibitions, increase pleasure and virility, block conception, even temporarily alter sexual orientation for a particularly wild night. Chaotic fun gives way to horror when the pheromone manipulator is kidnapped and perhaps even dissected by a right-wing extremist who wants to use the super's unique biology as a "cure" for homosexuality.

Mommy, Where do Henchmen Come From?

Where do super villains find their hordes of willing henchmen? Investigation into this mystery reveals one of the great secrets of the Cold War: a race of genetically engineered, mindless super soldiers created to fight the Communist menace who, when left unused, are stored in suspended animation. At the dawn of the current heroic age, some villains found the soldiers' container units. Programming the drone army to obey simple commands, the villains have made billions hiring them out as cannon fodder to criminals and terrorists. And the best part is the government can't officially prosecute the villains without revealing the existence of this forbidden eugenics program.

Live Fire Exercise

The US Army has opened a dimensional portal into Valhalla, the Norse land of the dead. What better place, the Pentagon reasons, to conduct live fire training exercises than a mystic realm where warriors killed in battle are resurrected every sunset?

Beneath the Radar

A newly emerged metahuman begins ignoring local laws—shoplifting anything he wants, refusing to pay taxes or even to stop for traffic cops—minor offenses. He's confident that the local cops can't stop him, and big time superheroes aren't interested in small-fry like him. How far does this go?

Ennui

An obsessed, genius level scientist has invented a telepathic virus that renders the infected incapable of violence or ill will. Within days side effects become apparent—all trace of emotion or drive vanishes over time along with violence. The characters must fight their growing ennui and discover a cure...all without raising a fist in anger.

Supers in Space

A lifepod from the International Space Station makes an emergency landing in the Great Lakes during winter. Though the crash and extreme cold are probably fatal to the astronauts aboard, the pod's black box recorder survives. The images recorded would give anyone pause; the ISS fell to a relentless hoard of small-time super villains. All bear new equipment that allows them to survive and maneuver in space, and all use their powers in frighteningly effective new ways. Who trained and equipped these one time underachieving thugs, and what do they want with the captured ISS?

This is Some Good S...

A genetically engineered strain of marijuana is out on the street. An unfortunate side effect, or fortunate, depending on how you look at it, of the drug is that it grants users short-lived, minor superpowers.

Catch Me if You Can

A B&E expert and self described "building hacker" calling himself Kid Crypto gets his kicks by breaking into the most heavily fortified buildings on the planet. The characters have just received a challenge from the Kid, warning them their secret lair is next.

My Biological Clock is Ticking!

The most beautiful, respected, powerful super heroine in the world wants to have a baby, but not a husband. While she's seeking genetically superior seed, the tabloids are having a field day.

Rocky Mountain Riot

A prison riot has taken place at the largest supers prison in the United States, and the President himself has requested the characters go in and quell the uprising. From what the government knows at this time, there was a power spike in the electrical grid sometime shortly after midnight, which caused some of the maximum-security containment cells to flicker on and off. This allowed one of the more powerful villains to use his energy powers to overload the containment field and blow the grid all together. Once he was free, he quickly used his powers to free some of his cohorts, who took over the entire prison in a matter of minutes. At this point, the villains have freed most of the supers in the prison and are demanding the release of other supers at the nation's three other maximum-security prisons. The prison in question is located high in the Rocky Mountains. The only way to reach the prison is by gondola, helicopter, or by foot. The supers have taken the entire guard staff hostage, about 40 men and women, and are saying that they will kill one person every hour until their demands are met. The supers have given the U.S. government 48 hours to comply with their demands. While most of the supers at the prison are low-level thugs who would probably not kill an innocent person, several are powerful, ruthless villains who would have no qualms about killing the hostages.

CRYONICS

FREEZING AND STORING YOUR CHARACTERS FOR A RAINY DAY...

Cryonics—the process of freezing and storing the body of a recently deceased person to prevent tissue decomposition so that at some future time the person might be brought "back to life" upon development of new medical cures. This concept is a staple of science fiction and future speculation; however, it's something that is not often seen in most roleplaying games. The reason is simple... what kind of roleplaying and adventuring can go on while a character is frozen? Nevertheless, cryonics can have its uses, and that's what this article, based on OGC found in Future: Starship 4—The Livingstone, published by Ronin Arts, is all about.

CRYONICS AS A CAMPAIGN TOOL

Cryonics is very effective as a campaign tool for the GM who wants to move the character's adventuring from one time period (the present) to another (the future). Why? Perhaps while defeating their arch-nemesis, an evil dictator bent on unleashing an incurable virus upon the world, the characters are all infected by said virus. Realizing that they only have a little time to live and with no hope of a cure, the characters voluntarily enter a cryonic state and are awakened at some point in the future.

In addition to cryonics being used to freeze and store the bodies of the diseased and dying for a future time when their afflictions might be cured, cryonics is expected to see use in space travel. At least during the early years of Man's journeys into the final frontier, when it takes years just to reach the edge of our solar system, crews of spaceships would enter a cryonic state in order to survive the long journey to their destination. They would remain in that cryonic state until reaching their destination or until encountering a crisis of some sort (and we've all seen that movie).

Of course, being in a cryonic state for decades or even centuries leads to the fact that the world outside has probably changed quite a bit. The travelers could find upon awakening the empty planet they were sent to explore is already a thriving colony, thanks to the development of technologies that weren't even dreamt of when they entered their "cold sleep". This concept ties in nicely with the idea of moving characters from one time to another, with the characters as the travelers that awaken to find vast changes in the world they once knew (and maybe that arch-nemesis they defeated was also frozen or perhaps his descendants now rule society with an iron fist). There are of course many more possibilities, from finding that an alien race has subjugated the character's home world to being the last survivors of their species. Such particulars are left to the imagination of the individual GM.

CRYONICS AS A MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION

While cryonics allows the transportation of a severely injured character until they can receive proper medical treatment, it is also a useful means of transporting potentially troublesome or lethal cargo. Criminals, aliens, mutations, clones, and deadly viruses and diseases (did I mention kidnapped characters?) are just a few of the things that may be placed in a cryonic state in order to be transported from Point A to Point B with a minimum of fuss. Naturally, something always seems to happen to such cargo; it inevitably awakens (or is released) early and begins to wreak havoc (and we've all seen that movie as well).

QUICK AND DIRTY CRYONICS

Obviously, the era in which your game is set will determine whether or not the science of cryonics is in its infancy or is recognized and accepted as a legitimate scientific field of endeavor. In the interests of keeping everything in line with the *Savage Worlds* tagline of "Fast, Furious, Fun", I'll break things down into three distinct periods: Early, Middle, and Late. These periods correspond roughly to the current technology of our own earth (to perhaps a few decades into the future), about 500 years in the future, and more than 3000 years in the future, respectively. Feel free to adjust these time frames to suit your own campaign.

The Early Stages: In the early stages of cryonics, placing a character into and out of a cryonic state requires both a trained cryonic specialist and the proper equipment. The process is very costly and generally only available to government personnel and those associated with the upper echelons of wealthy private corporations. The entrance and exit procedures both require 1+d4 hours to complete. Two rolls are required to successfully enter a cryonic state. First, the cryonic specialist must make a Knowledge (Cryonics) roll. The character being placed in a cryonic state must then make a Vigor roll, applying a modifier of +1 for every raise obtained by the specialist. If the specialist fails his roll, apply

a modifier of -2. If he botches it (i.e., rolls snake eyes) the penalty is increased to -4! Make a note of the success (as well as noting any raises obtained) or failure (either a normal failure or a botched result) of the character's Vigor roll.

At this stage of cryonic technology, entering a cryonic state is easy. No matter what the character or the specialist rolled, the character is put into "frozen storage". Getting out is the hard part! Successful resuscitation depends on the skill of the technician, the health of the individual being frozen, and the skill with which the character was put into the cryonic state in the first place (see, that's why I told you to keep track of the result of the character's Vigor roll). When you're ready to thaw your character out, both the cryonic specialist and the character need to roll the dice and cross their fingers! The cryonic specialist goes first. Once again, he makes a Knowledge (Cryonics) roll. He adds a +1 bonus for every raise the character obtained on his initial Vigor roll. If the character failed his Vigor roll, a penalty of -2 is applied. If he botched it, the penalty is -4. The character then makes a Vigor roll and applies the same penalties mentioned above (+1 for each raise, -2 on a failure, and -4 on a botched attempt). If the character passes his Vigor roll he is successfully revived; otherwise, he rolls on the Cryonic Failure Table below (applying a +4 modifier if he botched the Vigor roll). In either case, he is Incapacitated for d12 hours and must remain under constant medical supervision. At the end of this period, assuming of course he didn't die during resuscitation, he may return to play.

The Middle Stages: At this stage in its development, cryonics is a recognized science. Although still considered risky, chances for survival have greatly improved. Use the same procedure as above, but all bonuses are doubled and all penalties are halved. Recovery time is reduced to d6 hours. Costs are still prohibitive, but wealthy private citizens are now also able to enjoy the benefits of the technology. Entrance and exit times are also halved.

The Late Stages: During this period, cryonics is a recognized, accepted, and stable field of scientific endeavor. Cryonics is routinely employed in space travel and although costs are still high, the ability to enter a cryonic state is available to the general public. There is no penalty for ordinary failure—only on a botched roll does something serious occur. Bonuses are still doubled and penalties are still halved as in the "middle stages", above. In addition, automated machines now take the place of human technicians in many cases. Entrance and exit times are further reduced to one hour apiece.

THE CRYONIC FAILURE TABLE

If a character rolls a normal failure (Early and Middle Stages) or snake eyes (any stage) on his Vigor roll during resuscitation you must roll 2d6 and consult the table below. It should go without saying that a character picking up a Hindrance as a result of cryonic failure does not gain any bonus points in doing so, but I'll say it anyway!

- 1 No effect other than increasing the normal recovery time by d6 hours.
- 2 Individual suffers serious scarring and disfigurement. He now has the Ugly Hindrance.
- 3 Individual picks up a psychological Hindrance of the GM's choice.
- 4 Individual suffers brain trauma. His Smarts attribute is immediately reduced by one die type. It may be raised back in the normal manner through experience.
- 5 Individual suffers muscular trauma. His Strength attribute is immediately reduced by one die type. It may be raised back in the normal manner through experience.
- 6 Individual suffers nerve trauma. His Agility attribute is immediately reduced by one die type. It may be raised back in the normal manner through experience.
- 7 Individual suffers great physical trauma. His Vigor attribute is immediately reduced by one die type. It may be raised back in the normal manner through experience.
- 8 The individual is deaf (Roll d100: 01-25 left ear, 26-50 right ear, 51-00 both ears) and picks up either the minor or major version of the Hard of Hearing Hindrance as appropriate.
- 9 The individual suffers nerve damage and loses the use of one limb (Roll d100: 01-25 left arm, 26-50 right arm, 51-75 left leg, 76-00 right leg). The character picks up either the One Arm or One Leg Hindrance as appropriate.
- 10 The individual is blind (Roll d100: 01-25 left eye, 26-50 right eye, 51-00 both eyes) and picks up either the Blind or One Eye Hindrance as appropriate.
- 11 The individual suffers severe systemic trauma and shock—make a Vigor roll or die!
- 12 Now you know what a Popsicle feels like. Well, you would if it weren't for the fact that you're quite dead!

Creatures of Eastern Europe

Four Fantastical Eastern European Creatures, by Piotr Korys

In this article, Piotr details four fantastical creatures native to his neck of the woods—Eastern Europe. The Leshy, Krasnal, Utopiec, and Rusalka are easily slotted into any fantasy or horror adventure with a distinctly Eastern European flavor. This is Piotr's second submission to **Shark Bytes**. His first appeared in **Shark Bytes #2**.

LESHY

Leshies are Nature Spirits that serve as guardians and protectors of the forest. They are solitary in nature and live within a defined territory which they jealously guard.

They usually appear as long-bearded men with big, bushy eyebrows and deep green eyes. Their legs are like those of a stag. Some of the more ancient Leshy are even crowned with antlers.

Leshies are masterful shapechangers—their preferred forms being either a stag or a boar. They may change their form at will (as a standard action), and when in their altered forms are indistinguishable from “normal” animals except for their deep green eyes. Leshy are also able to change their appearance to match the foliage surrounding them (Notice at –4).

As guardians of the forest, they hate people who destroy “Mother Nature” or, as they say, “People who collaborate with demons.” They aren’t evil, but if they are attacked or their forests despoiled, Leshies will use any means possible to destroy those responsible.

Leshies will help good people with connections to nature. They also will offer help to lost travelers or people who are battling evil spirits. Oh, one more thing—Leshies love to drink. They prefer strong Russian or Polish vodka, and they can be “persuaded” to do anything in exchange for a few bottles!

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6 Spirit d6, Strength d12, Vigor d10
Skills: Fighting d12, Intimidation d12, Notice d10, Stealth d12
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 10
Special Abilities:
Fearless
Shapechanging: Use boar or stag statistics.

KRASNAL

Krasnale (plural) are peaceful house spirits. They take care of the house in which they reside in return for a small share of food and milk. They are rarely seen, but often heard. Krasnale resemble small, graceful men and women. The younger ones are often covered in brown hair.

They can be found throughout Europe, but go by different names depending on their locale: In Eire they are called brownies. Poles call them krasnale, and in Prussia they are known as zwergs.

A Krasnal commonly lives under the stove or in the cellar. Although peaceful by nature, they can sometimes be aggressive, even malicious, especially if the family fails to provide food and milk in return for their services. Even then, they won’t attack, but will resort to pranks such as urinating in milk, beer or waterwells, and destroying saddle-girth and such.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d4, Strength d4, Vigor d6
Skills: Climb d10, Fighting d4, Lockpicking d10, Notice d10, Stealth d12
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 4
Special Abilities:
Size: (–1 Toughness, –4 to hit, –4 on Notice rolls to spot)

UTOPIEC (Wild Card)

The utopiec is a water abomination and is very vicious. Utopce (plural) may arise from the black souls of drowned persons, but only those who had evil in their hearts. They are capable of shape-shifting, but usually appear as bloated men with mossy, dripping hair, and green skin; however, they sometimes manifest as monsters with human bodies and the heads of frogs or fish.

Their favorite means of attack is to snatch victims from the surface and plunge into the depths with them. People killed this way may rise themselves as a Utopiec. From time to time, a Utopiec will transform a woman killed in this manner into a Rusalka (below).

Utopce may dwell within any body of water large enough to drown someone. They live in underwater grottoes, with one or more Rusalka as a servant and wife. However, this is not a frequent occurrence, namely because Utopce consider flesh, especially human flesh, to be a delicacy. Utopce are almost impossible to kill, and can be permanently destroyed only by removing them from the water for at least ten minutes.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d12 Vigor d6
Skills: Fighting d12, Intimidation d12, Swimming d8, Notice d10, Stealth d12
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 12
Special Abilities:
Swimming: Pace 20
Fearless
Fire Resistance: +4 Toughness against fire-based attacks.
Weakness: Destroyed when without water for 10 minutes.

RUSALKA

Rusalkas are undead abominations vaguely resembling Nosferatu, created by an Utopiec to fulfill the role of a servant and a lover. They were young women once (Utopce have a craving for young and beautiful women), but in their undead state cannot remember anything of their former life. They are willing slaves to the Utopce. They look very much alive except that their hair changes to green in colour and resembles water plants. By the way, their hair is their only clothing.

Rusalkas help the Utopce to catch men—they are used as a “decoy” to lure victims toward a deadly trap. Let’s face it, in the world of RPGs, there is no sane man who can resist a young beautiful naked woman. When such a fool joins a Rusalka in the water, the creature attacks with concealed claws and very long fangs. After killing their prey, they share it with the Utopiec.

Unlike Utopce, a Rusalka can live without water, so from time to time, they are sent ashore to find victims and lure them to the water.

Use the “Sog Zombie” from *Savage Tales #4: Rise, Alabama!*, but add the Attractive Edge while in their “hunting” form.

Using Description to Enhance the Roleplaying Experience

By Vicki Potter of Tabletop Adventures



A key factor in any roleplaying game is the “willing suspension of disbelief.” This is what allows players to envision themselves as heroes doing great deeds, rather than students or business people gathered around a table with their friends. Anything that can help with this “suspension of disbelief” adds to the roleplaying experience.

People do many different things to try to enhance this suspension. Sometimes people may dress in a sort of costume, which can be representative (for example, a person wearing a shirt with long, loose sleeves when playing a magic-user) or more literal, such as a player wearing a long robe and carrying a thin stick to wave whenever a wand is called into play. Many groups use music as a background, to help set a mood and block out the sounds of everyday life. Dimming the lights and adding candles to a room could also suggest a medieval, fantasy, or horror feel. All of these possibilities boost the imagination through the use of the body’s senses.

Another way to go about it is to simulate the use of the senses through the imagination. By describing what is seen, smelled, heard, touched, or even tasted in a scenario, a Game Master can help move his or her players, in their minds, away from the mundane world and into some other world altogether. Individuals usually each have one or two senses which are stronger than the others, or “dominant.” Sometimes a person’s speech patterns may give a clue to his dominant sense. For example, someone who says, “I see what you’re saying,” probably has seeing as her dominant sense. On the other hand, “I hear you” might indicate that hearing

dominates. Using “That stinks!” to describe a bad situation could be the choice of a person with a dominant sense of smell.

Because people are different, it’s important for GMs to use descriptions that appeal to every sense. That would help stimulate the imaginations of all the players in a game, regardless of their respective dominant sense. Like the players, GMs also have a dominant sense, and it’s easy to give descriptions that include only the senses important to them. A really good description should emphasize two or more senses, but a variety is what is important.

In fantasy RPGs, the “dungeon” is the classic adventure location. Many GMs really enjoy drawing up complex maps and filling the dungeon with dangerous creatures, but their imaginations falter when it comes to describing the areas where there are no encounters.

It's hard to explain how there could be a monster living in every room. Magic might make it possible, but it threatens the suspension of disbelief. What, then, is to be said about the rooms that are empty?

Player: "Do we see anything in the room?"
GM: "No, it's empty."
Player: "There's nothing in there at all?"
GM: "Well, there's some dust on the floor."
Player: "Dust! Are there any footprints in it?"
GM: "No! It's just dust!"

How much better instead to fill the emptiness with a little creativity! Some descriptions could be geared to people who like to visualize the setting surrounding their characters.

"At an intersection of corridors, your flickering light reveals a charcoal mark upon the wall. It appears to have been made by either a stick plucked from a fire or from the burned-out stub of a torch. The smeared mark is about five feet from the floor and forms an arrow that points back the way that you have come. There is no indication as to who could have made it."

"You come across a backpack that appears to have been ripped open by a clawed hand and teeth. Its worthless contents have been scattered around, torn, and trampled. There are scraps of cloth, a broken flask and some straps of leather but nothing of value. There is also nothing to indicate who the former owner was nor whom (or what) the vandal may have been."

Other descriptions could set the scene with sound:

"The moss is deep, and growth covers walls and floor. Your voices all sound deadened and seem to fall lifeless and still just a few feet away from you." "You hear a sound like sobbing and whimpering echoing through the corridor. It is distant and the source is unclear."

This description could suggest mystery to the person who favors the sense of smell:

"A hint of an odor teases your senses. It is a rich, slightly sweet smell, possibly incense. Just a whiff comes to you, and then the scent disappears."

Be alert for occasions when a description could appeal to more than one sense.

"You have entered what was once a finely decorated room. A faded tapestry depicting a woodland scene is now frayed but hints at former luxury as do the desk, chair, and table. Dim light reflects off the very tarnished silver and brass fittings. A slightly sweet smell of decay permeates the room."

"The air is damp and cool and the smell of mold torments your nostrils. The light casts deep shadows and you peer ahead into the darkness beyond. The shadows are unyielding of their secrets and as you strain to listen, all you can hear is the creak of leather and clink of mail as your comrades shift their weights. Everything else is very still."

Opportunities for description can be found in any setting, not just fantastic dungeons. How many adventurers have wandered through a town or city and asked, "So, what do we see as we walk down the street?" This is the perfect place for a description of sensations that can engage the players' imaginations and pull them out of their mundane existence into a world of heroism and fantasy! Just a few choice words can be enough to stimulate the imaginations of players and Game Masters alike.

About the Author

Vicki Potter writes and edits material for [Tabletop Adventures](http://www.TabletopAdventures.com), which publishes the "Harried Game Master" line of products. TTA is producing PDF books with brief, colorful descriptions to assist Game Masters who, for whatever reason, find themselves short on time or creativity. The first was [Bits of Darkness: Dungeons](#) (quoted above and reviewed in this issue of **Shark Bytes**), that describes things experienced in a fantasy dungeon setting. Coming in December 2004, *Bits of Darkness: Caverns* will detail some of the wonders and horrors of underground exploration. In 2005, *Shards of the City* will explore the medieval fantasy urban street-scene, with sensations galore for the wandering adventurer. Visit TTA online at www.TabletopAdventures.com.

Stalking the Night Fantastic

Welcome to the first installment of *Stalking the Night Fantastic*, a regular column wherein I, your humble editor, reveal to you the secrets of my own *Savage* Bureau 13 campaign. In the last issue of **Shark Bytes**, I presented the majority of the background information necessary for a GM to get a *Savage* Bureau 13 campaign up and running. The purpose of this column is to expand on that information and provide details and insights into my own campaign. Feel free to use or change anything you find herein—just because it is so in my campaign doesn't necessarily mean it needs to be the same in yours!

Let's get things started then with a triple whammy: First, I'll divulge how I handle language skills and arcane languages in my game, and then I'll give you a few pieces of *Bureau Tech* to make available to your agents. All of this material is based on OGC content from products released by Ronin Arts (check out Section 15 of the OGL for specific credits). Enjoy, and don't forget to look over your shoulder when walking alone late at night!

Optional Languages Rules

If you're like me you like to keep your gaming as simple as possible. Lots of things that are fully detailed in "other" RPGs (as if any of them are necessary now that *Savage Worlds* has been released) can simply be ignored or handled "on the fly". In my opinion, languages—or more specifically, the reading, writing, and speaking of languages other than one's native tongue—is one such area. Unfortunately, my players happen to think otherwise, so in an effort to assuage them, here's how I handle things at my table:

All characters can read, write, and speak their native tongue with absolute fluency. Just write it off as "Knowledge (*Native Tongue*) d12 in case it ever becomes necessary to make a die roll. In addition, each character can learn one additional language for every Smarts die type above d4 (i.e., one additional language at d6, two at d8, three at d10, and four at d12). If they happen to have a Smarts above d12, they get another language for every +1 above d12.

All of these additional languages are initially learned at d4 and may be raised just like any other skill. There's really no point to raising a language skill above d12 as that represents a native speaker with total fluency, but it wouldn't hurt things if you allowed it in your games. Just don't try it at my table!

Most, but not all, languages have a written component. If one of your player characters chooses a language that has only an oral component he doesn't get a discount on skill points. I only mention this because, when all is said and done, all players are evil little munchkins at heart!

So how does all this fit together? Heck if I know! I just roll with the punches using the range of die types as a rough guide for fluency: d4 equals basic vocabulary and halting or broken speech while d12 represents absolute mastery of the language and all its nuances. Interactions between characters trying to communicate are all based on simple opposed die rolls with modifiers granted as appropriate. It should be noted that a character can always "dumb down" his speech in attempt to communicate with characters that are, shall we say, less eloquent.

Arcane Languages

By now you're probably wondering what all this has to do with arcane languages. Well, using the rules above, I treat arcane languages as languages that can never be considered a native tongue, and that cost twice the normal amount of skill points to learn (unless of course one of your agents is a native Atlantean, but that's a whole different article in itself). You also can't try to decipher arcane languages unless you have skill with the language or have some other skill, such as Knowledge (ancient history), that the GM rules would allow you to attempt such a task. Even then, I'd apply a hefty penalty to any attempts to do so.

Here are a few of the arcane languages your agents may encounter. Feel free to add to the list as you deem necessary:

- **Adamic:** This is the first language of Man, spoken by all of humanity until the fall of the Tower of Babel. Only the oldest creatures and texts will use Adamic, but it is a source of powerful magic.
- **Enochian:** This is the language of the angels, first learned by the Biblical prophet Enoch after whom it is named. Many of the great arcane works of the 18th and 19th centuries are penned in Enochian.
- **Lemurian:** This was the language spoken on the lost continent of Lemuria, at least before the Great Cataclysm caused it to sink into the depths of the Indian Ocean.
- **Senzar:** The language of lost Atlantis. Knowledge of this tongue is essential to anyone wishing to unlock the ancient secrets of Atlantean technology.
- **Stygian:** A diabolical tongue, spoken in the ancient days when the kingdom of Stygia was at its height. Black magic, 'nuff said!
- **Vra'hal:** The language of the alien Grays can be spoken, but no Gray has done so in millennia, preferring to use telepathy instead. Due to its alien nature, learning this language costs three times the normal amount of skill points!

The following are a few of the devices that are available to Bureau agents within my *Savaged Bureau 13* campaign. Of course, their availability is up to the GM; however, all of them should be considered to be special requisition items (i.e., "Fill out form A2 in triplicate, submit to your supervisor for approval, and then return to us with a completed A-3D-2 form, also in triplicate..."). The terms in parentheses are how most of my agents refer to the devices.

Boost Pills (Broad Band Viagra)

These small gel-caps come in blister packs of five differently colored pills. Each pill boosts a different attribute: yellow for Agility, blue for Smarts, green for Spirit, red for Strength, and purple for Vigor. Taking a pill counts as a free action so long as the pill was in the agent's hand at the start of his turn; otherwise, retrieving and swallowing a pill counts as a regular action. Only one pill can be active at any one time; if another is taken while a previous one is active, the new pill overrides the old. Each pill lasts for one minute and boosts the affected attribute by one die type.

(Karma) Chameleon Suit

This 100% all-natural silk bodysuit takes on the appearance and visual texture of the nearby surroundings. It may be worn underneath normal clothing; however, in order to be effective, such clothes must first be removed. The suit is susceptible to damage in the same manner as described for the Can't Touch This Coat, below. When worn, all Notice checks made to visually spot the character suffer a penalty of -4.

Displacement (Can't Touch This) Coat

This unassuming wool blazer is actually a powerful displacement device that when activated grants the wearer protection from incoming attacks. Activating the blazer's power is accomplished by pressing any of the buttons on the item's cuffs and counts as a regular action. When activated, the "Can't Touch This" Coat warps the visual field around its wearer and causes the perceived location of the character to be about 2 feet from its actual location. In game terms, this translates into a penalty of -2 being imposed on any incoming attacks directed at the character. The visual disturbance also affects the character wearing the coat! During any session, the first time the coat is activated, the wearer suffers a penalty of -2 to all actions while the coat is activated. Thereafter, the character adjusts to the coat's effect and is no longer penalized.

The item's effects last for one minute before the coat shuts itself off (prolonged exposure to the visual warping effect has a detrimental effect on one's eyesight and tends to result in severe headaches). The coat is also very susceptible to damage. Anytime the character suffers damage (i.e., a wound), roll a d6 and add +1 for each wound suffered beyond the first. If the total is 6 or more, the coat is damaged and ceases to function. Keep track of the wounds a character suffers while wearing the coat. They are cumulative for determining damage to the coat!

Nightvision (Film Noir) Lenses

These unassuming sunglasses allow the wearer to see up to 20 yards (10") in complete darkness, albeit only in black

and white. In game terms, they allow the wearer to ignore all penalties due to poor illumination within their area of effect. Any called shot to the head has a 50% chance of knocking the glasses off—unless, of course, they just happen to be wearing a "nerd strap" or some other such device...

Remote Sensor Device (Eye Spy)

This unique device is hidden within what appears to be a normal laptop computer to all outward appearances. However, when a specific combination of keystrokes is used, the touchpad flips up revealing a small sphere, no larger than a marble. Once activated, the sphere begins to float just above the keyboard and whatever is in the 180° field of vision to its front is viewable on the computer's monitor. The sphere has a Pace of 6 and an effective range of 500 feet (83"). The user may control its movement by using the computer's arrow keys. The device is equipped with several different viewing modes: normal, Nightvision, and Infravision. Switching between modes is accomplished through keystrokes as a free action.

Universal Door Opener (Knock Knock)

This small crystal key instantly opens stuck, barred, locked (mechanical or electronic), or otherwise secured doors, boxes, chests, etc. with a key-operated lock. Once opened, the lock does not re-lock itself on its own. Using this device counts as a "full round" action (no movement allowed). It may be used as a regular action; however, in doing so, the agent may damage the device. Roll a d6. On a result of 6 the agent, in his haste, breaks the key off in the lock and renders the device useless without opening the lock. They'll need to fill out a DE400 (Damaged Equipment) form and submit it through the proper channels. Expect to have your pay garnished!



...V'SORI VISION

A Necessary Evil Sabotage Mission, by Mark Aylor

In Westpoint, close to the border of Prospect Point, a factory is being refit to build the latest product of the V'sori scientists—a visor capable of detecting not only supers but latent supers. The initial production run is just starting. As it gears up and they figure out how to alter the visors to work for other races, they will be produced for Fins, SOCorp, and finally Drones. It will become very dangerous to be a super (hero or villain) on Earth when this happens. Either way, the factory, or at least the workings of it, must be destroyed before the visors roll out. Dr. Destruction would like to get his hands on one of the visors. If it can be modified to work for humans or used by an Atlantean it could be a valuable recruiting tool.

A CALL TO ARMS

Dr. Destruction contacts the players when they select this mission:

"The V'sori have something up their sleeves and it isn't good. They recently raided one of our most dependable cells, and two others are working to extricate them.

"Another cell contacted me about a new device the V'sori are preparing to produce. I do not have any details other than the location of the factory they are refitting to manufacture it. Whatever it is, it allows the V'sori to detect those with super powers. You must put this factory out of action before they start producing these devices. If at all possible, bring one back so we can analyze it."

PROJECT: ALL SEEING EYE

The raid on the Omega cell was the direct result of a test of "Project: All Seeing Eye", the development of a visor that allows the V'sori to "see" active or latent supers. It is the brainchild of the V'sori scientist Bromak. Bromak is carrying a grudge in more ways than one. His past projects have failed, been sabotaged, taken over by other scientists, or cancelled due to one Shocklord or another politicking against his ideas. This time he has the chance to succeed and he vows he will not fail.

Bromak also bears a deep grudge against Omega. He was badly injured when an Omega raid destroyed the lab he was working in almost two years ago. He started working on Project: All Seeing Eye shortly after recovering from those injuries. In his spare time, he worked out to improve his chances the next time an Omega raid tried to destroy one of his projects. Bromak used a prototype visor to find a member of the Omega cell "Dread Calling". Bromak followed him to the cell's hideout and called in a Fin strike team. Dread Calling was caught completely off guard and all its members were captured or killed.

Knowing an Omega raid on the factory is likely, Bromak has set various traps for unsuspecting villains trying to break in and sabotage it. Silent alarms are rigged around the entire fenced-in perimeter and in the building to notify Bromak the moment any unauthorized person enters the area. The following list of

precautions is far from all-inclusive. Feel free to add any other evil ideas you come up with along the way:

- **Drones:** 12-20 Drones are also protecting the factory. They converge on the villains once it becomes obvious the traps do not deter them. The Drones will attempt to ambush the characters when they enter the building itself.
- **Laser Cannon Mounts** (Range 30/60/120; Damage: 3d6; ROF 3; HW, AP4, Toughness: 20(10); Shooting d6): The Laser Cannons are mounted high up on the walls and are impossible to hit from the ground unless the villain has a *ranged attack, flight, leaping*, or is at least 20' tall. Six Laser Cannon mounts protect the front gate and at least a pair of them covers any particular stretch of the minefield outside of the factory building, making the navigation a less than pleasant experience. 1d4+1 of these weapons are encountered at any given time inside the factory itself.
- **Mine Field:** The fenced off open area outside the factory proper is mined with a variety of surprises. Roll a d4 to determine what type a particular mine is. Stats for each type of mine can be found in the Gear section of the *Savage Worlds* rulebook:
 - Anti-Personnel Mine
 - Anti-Tank Mine
 - Bouncing Betty
 - Claymore Mine
- **Sealed Gas Room:** When the villains walk into this room, the doors slam shut behind them. The doors have a Toughness of 30(15). Gas is released into the room as soon as the doors close. Players trapped inside must make both a Spirit roll and a Vigor roll each round as long as they are in the room. A failed Spirit roll results in the negation of a power or skill as the *negation* power. Roll randomly to determine the power or skill affected. A failed Vigor roll results in the character gaining a Fatigue level. The effects fade at the rate of one level per ten minutes out of the gas or per five minutes if they rest and do nothing else.

If the villains succeed in destroying the manufacturing capabilities of the plant and Bromak is at the point of death or capture, he sets off the self-destruct device in the facility. The heroes have little time and must act fast to escape the building before it goes off. Deal everyone an action card immediately after Bromak activates the self-destruct. On the second round, deal a card for the self-destruct—it goes off on that card. Anyone caught inside the building when it blows takes damage from the blast (4d8, HW, AP8) and is thrown 1d10" from the building. Should they hit a solid object, add an additional d6 of damage to the blast damage.

If the players take too long on this mission, make too much noise (like setting off mines in the minefield), have too easy a time of it, or need to be chased away to save Bromak or prevent looting of the facility, a Fin strike team or two will show up to put an end to the issue.

AFTERMATH

If Bromak manages to escape, he retrieves information from the monitoring devices throughout the factory to identify the villains, or at least document as much as he can about them, and hunt them down. He still has a working prototype of the visor and uses it to search out the villains and exact his revenge on them.

If the players capture a visor, an Atlantean character will be able to use it. When Dr. Destruction contacts the team after the mission, he asks about the visor. If the villains want to keep it, they will have to lie to him. Otherwise he insists they send it to him through a set of blind drops and couriers.

If they recover the visor and give it to Omega, Dr. Destruction says:

"You succeeded again. Congratulations! The destruction of the factory has saved many an Omegan from the clutches of the V'sori. The visor will help us to find and recruit others to our cause. There are many out there who are anonymous, hiding in the shadows, unknown to even themselves. We need to find them before the V'sori do. We need them in our fight against the aliens. Keep it up and we shall be victorious!"

If they do not recover the visor or do not give it to Omega, Dr. Destruction says:

"Congratulations. The destruction of the factory has saved many an Omegan from the clutches of the V'sori. I regret we could not recover one of the visors. There are many out there who are anonymous, hiding in the shadows, unknown to even themselves, that could have been found and recruited to our cause. We need to find them before the V'sori do. We need them in our fight against the aliens. We will have to find another way."

Bromak (Wild Card)

Bromak tries to leave the dirty work to the Drones and traps. He will put up a fight should the villains corner him. He has an escape route planned, but will only use it if he is vastly outnumbered.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d10, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d8, Knowledge (V'Sori Science) d10, Notice d8, Repair d8, Shooting d10, Swimming d10

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 10

Edges: Aquatic, Low Light Vision, Telepathy.

Hindrances: Vengeful (major)

Gear: Personal Combat Armor (Heavy Armor +4), Blaster Pistol with laser site (Range 15/30/60; +1 Shooting; Damage 3d6; DT; HW; AP 4), Vibro-Sword (Str+4; HW; AP 8)





Sage Advice

Getting Things Started: New Players and Campaigns

The following tips were culled from the pages of *Roleplaying Tips Weekly*, a free weekly e-newsletter edited by Johnn Four, available by subscription from his website: <http://www.RoleplayingTips.com>. Johnn also offers a useful commercial product, the *Roleplaying Tips: GM's Encyclopedia*. For a review of this excellent item check out **Shark Bytes #2**. Johnn has granted permission to reprint tips from his newsletter, so Sage Advice will be a regular offering!

Make the New Guy Welcome

From Issue #65, by Heather Grove

If someone asks you about roleplaying, take a few minutes to answer their questions. We roleplayers can get defensive sometimes, and we often confuse a genuinely interested party with someone who just wants to ridicule us. Not to mention that some of the people who start out as detractors actually find the hobby interesting once they know more about it. Reacting badly on your part doesn't make other people want to learn more.

Try to be polite to people who show an interest in your hobby. You don't have to game with every one of them. You don't have to spend all of your time explaining things to them. Just don't make them think of all roleplayers as snobbish and irritating.

The Character is the Key

From Issue #66, by Angela R.

I have recently introduced my sister to role-playing. The thing that interested her the most was the character creation process. I usually expect experienced roleplayers to do this on their own, but for her first time, I walked her through step-by-step and forced her to do the background as well.

The most helpful tool was a list of questions I found on the net that were designed to assist a GM in creating a well-rounded NPC, but I have encouraged my players to use it themselves. As we went along, I would ask her the question and give several ideas to help spark her imagination, but then give her time to jot down her own ideas. By the time we made it through the entire list, she had a real person in front of her—someone that she was interested in and wanted to see develop.

In other words, before she even played one session, I had her personally tied to a part of the story. This process even sparked my own ideas for the party, so I highly recommend trying it.

Start Things Off One-to-One

From Issue #66, by Jillian A.

When a new player first joins one of my gaming groups, I keep them away from the "others" for a while. I take the time to help them create their main character according to the laws of the universe (the game rules), encouraging them to add as many details and nuances as they can come up with.

Once they have their character concept sketched out, I show them how to use a character sheet to quantify the character. Once that's done, their first two adventures are completely solo—just me and the new player, working with their character and their character's personal story. Admittedly this is a slow method, but it gives the new player time to become accustomed to playing without the pressure of other players. By the close of the second adventure, they are usually eager to join the rest of the group. I find that a little "one-on-one" guidance at the beginning goes a long way in helping to create an enjoyable campaign.

Hook 'em With the Story—Not the Dice!

From Issue #65, by Benedira

Hook them with a piece of a story, just like book jackets and movie trailers do. Don't talk about dice or numbers or character sheets. Give them a short but catchy cliffhanger and then ask what they'd do. People buy books to see what happens next, and trailers get them to the movies to see what happens next—it will work the same way with RPG's.

Hook 'em from the Start

From Issue #49, by John T.

When starting a new campaign or GMing for a group of gamers that is new to the RPG hobby, make sure their first plot is really blatant, really juicy, and really intriguing. Hooking characters into the first game of a campaign is very important. Establishing a common ground and making sure the players are grabbed by the adventure makes play proceed much more smoothly. After the first session you can let things slide. Whatever you do, don't give them an option to escape the plot—at least for the first session.

Finding New Players

From Issue #141, by Brett B.

I've seen very little advice concerning the logistics of finding, gathering, and officially recruiting players into a cohesive game group for local table-top RPGs. From my own personal experience I have had limited success, despite my living in a University town that should have a fair sized gaming community.

In all my searches I've found that the most important key is patience, and lots of it.

It was summer, and I was living out the classic sob story: my game group was breaking up, with the majority of the group members moving away to the corners of the world (Japan, Vancouver, and California) all in the space of a couple of months. Luckily, grief-stricken though I was, I had fair warning and had already put into motion a plan to attract new players. However, it took far longer than I had originally thought it would—a lot longer.

Initially, desperate for new players, I decided to go potluck. My first attempt at attracting new members was to simply post a "Looking for Players" notice at the local game store, but this proved mostly ineffective and after a number of weeks had passed I decided to take a more proactive approach.

To the Internet I went to scour the Web for potential players. I was fortunate, and admittedly a bit surprised, to find a number of online Player Registries and RPG Player Databases (see below). My search led to quite a few dead-ends and returned emails, but inevitably I stumbled across a few brave (and local) souls who answered the mysterious call of a stranger to join his game.

So, 14 weeks later I find myself with two new players and a happily mended game group, temporary though it may be. We are still losing another player next week and the final one by November. Thus, my searches continue in earnest to fill those forlorn and empty seats at the other end of table.

Here are the URLs to those player search databases I mentioned:

- <http://www.accessdenied.net>
- <http://www.rpg.net/etrigan>
- <http://www.nggnet.com/classifieds>
- <http://www.pen-paper.net>
- <http://www.rpgregistry.com>

Make the New Guy Welcome, Part Deux

From Issue #66, by Heather Grove

Make sure the new player understands what sort of game you're running and is interested in it. You don't want to bring someone in to play *Vampire: the Angsty*, only to find out that he thought it was a variant of *AD&D* and is quite miffed that he doesn't get to kill vampires with his +5 sword.

Make sure the new player knows ahead of time what sorts of things he should bring to the game. If he'll need his own dice, tell him where he can buy some. Consider giving him a small handful as a "welcome to the gaming group" gift (after all, dice are cheap). If someone will be willing to loan him some for a week or two until he knows whether or not he likes this gaming thing, tell him so.

Give your new player a brief written or printed sheet of any "house rules" you have. This includes rules of the game that don't match those in the books you just told him to buy. It also includes any rules like "don't use out of character information in character," "if you bring food, bring some to share," or "when you enter the gaming room, hop on your left foot twice." Okay, maybe not! But you get the idea. Sit down with your new player for five minutes and go through each item just to make sure he understands them.

Simple or Involved?

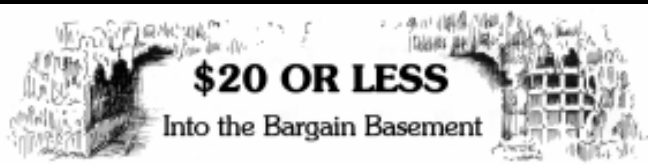
From Issue #164, by Andrew

New players tend not to know much about anything. I tend to teach them the rules and such as we play, because if you bore them with too many complications at the outset they decide the game isn't worth the trouble. So, you need a story line that will be able to teach them the intricacies of the game. I find that a solo game is usually the best to teach. If you introduce them too early into the game with other players, they quickly become overwhelmed. Always remember that the DM is the best judge. You know your players the best. Having said that however, I tend to find that the best story lines for new players tend to fall into two categories:

Simple: You and the player decide that you really want to get on with it and play the damn game. This sort of player is often interested in accumulating experience and getting up a level. They also tend to play combat-orientated classes, as these fit the straightforward attitude typical of this sort of player. A good one for these players is an arena type game. Make up a story line that puts the character into a gladiatorial arena where they can fight to their heart's content. Provide their character with a background, too:

- They were captured and must fight for their lives.
- They have wanted this since birth, and want nothing more than to hear the roar of the crowd.
- They see gladiatorial combat as the epitome of the duel and believe there is no more honorable way for their character to exist, or to die.
- They are honing themselves to become a commander of an army and believe it would be unfair to demand something of the troops that they themselves would not do or have not experienced.

Involved: This type of player is very much interested in the fantasy aspect of the game. They expect an in-depth plot and world, and dragons and magic are their meat and drink. However, do not go overboard. Most likely, in a starter session of this sort, you want it to be short so that you are able to put the character through it and get feedback on what they think of the game. An excellent scenario is that of the typical dungeon crawl with a bit of flavor, such as: The evil necromancer who is raising zombies to carve his own little empire. Or perhaps a dark elf faction is planning an uprising from their underworld lairs in order to take on the surface elves in a decisive confrontation. This sort of player appreciates roleplaying opportunities. If you find that the player doesn't want these sorts of story lines, you are able to tailor stories to their needs—the advantage you have over any author or screenwriter is that your story is interactive. Also, don't be afraid to ask your new player what sort of things appeal to them.



Please note that all of the following products are available on RPGNow. To locate them, simply do a search on the publisher's name. At the time of this writing, all of these products were offered at the discounted prices listed—that might have changed by the time this goes to print!.

Where Madness Dwells

FREE – Inner Circle – D20 Adventure

Salvage Rights and Skeleton Base

FREE – RPGObjects – Darwin's World (D20) Adventures

Darwin's World Gazetteer

FREE – RPGObjects – Darwin's World (D20) Sourcebook

Pulp Villains

FREE – P.I.G., Inc. – Two-Fisted Tales Sourcebook

The Clinic

FREE – P.I.G., Inc. – Dreamwalker Adventure

The Grave of the Prince of Lies

FREE – Oone Games – D20 Adventure

Cheap Folks: Undead,**Cheap Folks: The Ghouls, and****Cheap Folks: 21st Century Heroes**

FREE – Microtactix – Figure Flats

Strike Force-7

FREE – Otherworld Creations – Setting Background

The Burning Sage's Demesne

FREE – ST Cooley Publishing – D&D (D20) Adventure

A Magical Medieval City Guide

FREE – Expeditious Retreat Press – Generic Sourcebook

Ars Magica 4th Edition Rulebook

FREE – Atlas Games – Roleplaying System Rulebook

Blood Tomb

\$2.05 – Khan's Press – D20 Adventure

Blood Royal

\$3.99 – Troll Lord Games – D20 Adventure

E-Adventure Tiles: Coliseum

\$3.99 – SkeletonKey Games – Tileset (Battle Maps)

Slave Drivers and**Come for the Reaping**

\$4.00/ea. –Game Mechanics – D20 Modern Adventures

Modern Magic, Volumes 1-2

\$4.00/ea. –Game Mechanics – D20 Modern Supplements

Help Your Players Learn the Rules

From Issue #150, by Mitch M.

The characters struggle through difficult terrain, overcome twisted riddles, and manage to sneak into the lair of the Evil Necromancer, Gillbates. They draw their swords, ready their spells, prepare their prayers... and completely screw it up. They forget what magic items they have, don't remember what skills to use, and can't fight their way out of a wet paper sack. Honestly, what percentage of roleplayers do you suppose have actually read all the rules? Not most, by my experience. You need to make sure the players know how the combat rules work.

The first method is to engage them in simple, frequent combats to bring them up to speed. Next, I have friendly experienced NPCs give them a little on-the-spot training to emphasize rules. Finally, I summarize important rules on a sheet of paper and give a copy to all players. It behooves a GM to improve the players' knowledge of the rules. This brings the group together and keeps everyone on the same sheet of music.

Always Keep Your RPG Books in Plain View

From Issue #66, by Tony D.

Always keep your roleplaying books in sight. Carry them around in your car and store them in the public areas of your home. If you're a student, lug one or two around with your textbooks. Most RPG books have intriguing cover designs that draw the eye, and beg to be picked up and thumbed through. When an acquaintance shows more than a passing interest in the book, you know you have a possible gamer on your hands.

As an addition to my tip, I would add that it's probably a good idea to have a one shot, fairly simple—but fun—adventure/scenario (and maybe some pre-generated characters) on hand with your books, so you can truly introduce the new gamers. The actual experience is so much better than any explanation.

Reminisce About Great Campaigns

From Issue #65, by Michael

Have fun reminiscing like we roleplayers always do, but do it around your non-playing friends. When they hear a story or two, and the cheer in your voices, they are going to want to know more. If they are a fantasy or sci-fi fan, tell them the story of your whole campaign. Sure this may take a few hours, so this is especially good to do during long car rides, but start where the campaign really got exciting and tell it up to the present or all the way to the end. After hearing the whole amazing story from a veteran player they will be primed to join in if they have any interest at all. Otherwise your game probably isn't for them.

CASTING WITHOUT THE CAPE

Adapting Necessary Evil super powers to fantasy settings, by Joel Sparks

Clint Black's Necessary Evil campaign setting introduces a host of fabulous new powers for Savage Worlds, but they are all in the form of super-heroic abilities that would overwhelm a typical swords and sorcery campaign. Still, that's no reason not to make some of these new powers available to arcane spellcasters. Developed through application of secret formulae and dark rituals, here then are ten new powers for the Arcane Background (Magic), adapted from the superpowers of Necessary Evil.

FLASH

Rank: Seasoned

Power Points: 3

Range: Small Burst Template centered on caster

Duration: Instant

Based on: *Damage field*

Trappings: Energy burst

Effect: Casting *flash* is an attack. Magical energy flares out from the caster in a Small Burst Template centered on the caster, doing 2d6 points of damage to all adjacent targets (friend or foe).

IRON FORM

Rank: Veteran

Power Points: 4

Range: Self

Duration: Instant

Based on: *Absorption*

Trappings: Strike a pose!

Effect: Casting *iron form* is as simple as flinching. Just before a melee blow lands, the caster becomes completely rigid, like a statue, and takes no damage from the blow. Instead, he is knocked back 1" (more for extremely powerful blows; such as when the attacker achieves a raise on the Fighting roll) and must make an Agility roll or fall prone. The caster must see the attack coming, so *iron form* is not usable against missiles, spells, surprise attacks, or when the opponent has The Drop. It can be used against physical impacts that are not strictly attacks, such as hitting the ground after a long fall or being struck by a car. In all cases, the caster must cast *iron form* before the damage for the blow is known.

LEAP

Rank: Seasoned

Power Points: 1

Range: Self

Duration: Instant

Based on: *Leaping*

Trappings: Eating a dried grasshopper

Effect: With this spell, the caster makes a single prodigious jump in any direction. He can *leap* 4" horizontally (with at least a 10' ceiling), or 3" straight up. The *leap* can come before, during, or after the caster's normal Pace. If he runs at least 6" before jumping, the horizontal distance increases to 5".

MIND LINK

Rank: Veteran

Power Points: 6

Range: Sight

Duration: 3 (2/round)

Based on: *Telepathy*

Trappings: Concentration; a meaningful meeting of the eyes

Effect: *Mind link* establishes full two-way, silent communication, in words or images, between the caster and one target. The target can choose to resist the spell with Spirit, or can simply allow the link to take place. If the target is out of sight, but known to the caster and within one mile, the caster can make a single Smarts roll to establish the link. If he fails, Power Points are expended regardless.

MURDOCK'S EYE OF BAT

Rank: Seasoned

Power Points: 3

Range: Self

Duration: 3 (1/round)

Based on: *Awareness*

Trappings: Swallowing a bat head; smearing bat dust on the eyelids and ears

Effect: The caster becomes capable of echolocation. He ignores all penalties for darkness, concealment, fog, etc., for most purposes. *Murdock's Eye of Bat* senses only shapes and movement, so the caster cannot perceive colors or read with it. Pouring rain or other similar environmental circumstances render this power useless.

PARALYTIC RAY

Rank: Seasoned

Power Points: 3

Range: 3/6/12

Duration: 3

Based on: *Paralysis* (extra range)

Trappings: A sickly grey beam of light darts from the pointed finger

Effect: If the *paralytic ray* hits, the target must make a Vigor roll or be unable to move at all for three rounds. This paralysis cannot be maintained beyond the initial duration.

PHANTASM

Rank: Seasoned

Power Points: 4

Range: Smarts

Duration: 3 (2/round)

Based on: *Illusion*

Trappings: Subtle gestures and mutterings

Effect: *Phantasm* fills a Small Burst Template with visual and audible illusions under the caster's control. The illusions are generally believable, but if it becomes necessary to create an exact image or voice to fool someone familiar with the original, roll a contest of Smarts. It is possible to cover people and objects with the appearance of being "not there", but if the covered targets move the illusion is spoiled.

PHANTASMAL NEMESIS

Rank: Veteran

Power Points: 6

Range: Smarts

Duration: 3 (2/round)

Based on: *Illusion* (psychosomatic trauma, targeted)

Trappings: Your worst nightmare!

Effect: *Phantasmal nemesis* focuses on the mind of a single target and creates a personal hallucination, a terrifying apparition from the depths of that person's subconscious. No one else can perceive the threat; not even the caster knows what it is. The apparition locks the victim in vicious combat, but what is really happening is a contest of the victim's Smarts with the caster's Spellcasting skill. Roll one contest each round on the victim's turn. The *phantasmal nemesis* is autonomous and the caster need not be concentrating on the contest. If the victim loses, he is Shaken; further Shaken results have no effect. If he rolls a 1 on his Smarts die, he suffers a wound. If he beats the spellcaster's roll with a raise, he sees through the delusion and the *phantasmal nemesis* disappears.

REED'S FANTASTIC ELONGATION

Rank: Seasoned

Power Points: 4

Range: Self

Duration: 3 (1/round)

Based on: *Stretching*

Trappings: Rubbery flesh, unpleasant creaking noises

Effect: The caster's body becomes outrageously pliable, giving him +1 Reach and allowing him to stretch his body parts (legs, torso, arms, neck, etc.) up to 3 feet. When the spell expires, the caster's form snaps back to normal. If the GM judges that the caster is in a particularly extreme form when this happens, he must make a Vigor roll or be Shaken.

TREMOR

Rank: Veteran

Power Points: 8

Range: Smarts x2

Duration: 1 (4/round)

Based on: *Earthquake* (earthshake)

Trappings: Great rumblings from below; stamping of invisible giants

Effect: This spell shakes the earth within a Large Burst Template. Everyone in the area of effect must make an Agility roll or be Shaken; on a roll of 1, the person also falls prone. Other Agility rolls and Agility-based skills are at -2 in the tremor's area, and Running is impossible. Weak structures collapse, things fall from shelves, and non-reinforced buildings suffer minor damage.



The beauty of the *Savage Worlds* system is that adapting material from other games or sources is relatively simple and straightforward; with that in mind, I present a list of links to some of my favorite super hero resources.

The Superhero RPG Webring:

<http://u.webring.com/hub?ring=shrpq>

The Champions (HERO) RPG:

<http://www.herogames.com/Champions/index.htm>

PRIMUS:

<http://www.mactyre.net/scm/primus.html>

The Mutants and Masterminds HQ:

<http://www.mutantsandmasterminds.com/>

The Cartoon Action Hour RPG:

<http://www.zmangames.com/CAH/>

Superhero Teams:

http://members.optusnet.com.au/xmen_campaign/xmen/contact/superteams.htm

Marvel Comics and DC Comics:

<http://www.marvel.com/>

<http://www.dccomics.com/>

Alternative Arcane Styles

Fine tuning the Savage Worlds Arcane Powers System for any setting, by Simon Carryer

The Savage Worlds rules for arcane powers (hereafter referred to by the general term "magic") provide a lot of latitude for tailoring particular mechanics to your setting through the use of trappings. Trappings can go a long way to giving you the "flavor" of magic you want for your setting. But what if you want more? Below are four different ways to change the rules for magic in your Savage Setting to reflect the way that you feel it should work. These aren't balanced against the current rules, so it's not suggested that you mix these variants with the normal magic rules from the Savage Worlds rulebook. Some of these variants will also change the relative power of characters capable of using magic when compared to mundane characters. Be prepared to deal with game balance changes resulting from these variations.



The Arcane Powers system as described in the *Savage Worlds* rulebook is best suited for settings in which magic is both relatively common and quite powerful. Some Savage GMs may envision settings that don't necessarily follow those familiar tropes of "vanilla fantasy", so here are some ways to easily tweak the Arcane Powers rules that allow you to tailor the "ways of magic" in your own game world to better match your unique vision.

Magic is common, but not very powerful

Use this variant for a setting in which magic is common, but true magicians are rare; where many people know a few spells, but very few are masters of magic. This variant actually makes magic less powerful, but gives more characters the opportunity to use magic.

In this variant, there is no Arcane Background (Magic) Edge. The New Power Edge is also unavailable in this variant. Instead, all characters are considered to have the ability to learn and use magic. All characters start with an innate number of Power Points equal to $(2 + \text{Spirit}/2)$. During character creation, one can buy powers as skills—a separate skill for each power. The character receives a number of skill points for the purchase of arcane spell skills equal to their innate Power Point value. You could restrict this further for some powers, such as *boost/lower trait* or *detect/conceal arcana*, making each aspect of the power a separate skill. The important thing to note is that only arcane skill points can be used to purchase arcane skills—normal skill points cannot be used!

So for example, a woodsman could start play with 4 Power Points (Spirit d4), and the *boost trait: Tracking* skill at d6. Or a "gun mage" could start with 6 Power Points (Spirit d8), and the *boost trait: Shooting* and *smite* skills at d4 and d6 respectively.

After character generation, the only way to increase the number of innate Power Points, and thus the number of arcane skill points, is to purchase the Power Points Edge. An increase in Spirit die type has no effect on innate Power Points or arcane skill points after character generation.

After character creation, players may increase their skill with any power they currently have using the normal rules for improving skills. They may only buy new powers with unused arcane skill points acquired by purchasing the Power Points Edge. Unused arcane skill points may also be used to increase the skill levels with powers the character already has (at double the normal cost, as above).

Magic is rare and very powerful

Use this variant for a setting where magicians are feared throughout the land for their awesome abilities, but are rare, for the magical arts are reserved for those with the skill and dedication necessary to properly learn them. This variant makes magic very effective, but extremely hard for a character to learn. With this variant, it's recommended that you reserve Arcane Background (Magic) to non-player characters.

When using this variant, the Arcane Background (Magic) Edge requirements for PCs (if allowed) change. They are now: Heroic, Knowledge (Arcane Lore) d10, and Smarts or Spirit d10. The Edge now provides 20 initial Power Points rather than the original 10. The biggest change however, is that there is no longer a Spellcasting skill.

When activating a Power, the character rolls their Smarts or Spirit, depending on the nature of their magical power. Each mage must choose one trait or the other at character creation as the basis of their power. Unless they roll "snake eyes" (a result of one on both the skill die and the Wild Die), the spellcaster is considered to have succeeded on their "spellcasting" roll, and by spending double the normal Power Points, they are automatically considered to have succeeded with a raise.

In opposed rolls, the character rolls Smarts (or Spirit) +2. All of the normal Power Edges detailed in the *Savage Worlds* rulebook are still available; however the New Power Edge requires the use of two level opportunities. This change reflects the difficulty inherent in learning any new arcane power.

So for example, Baba Ghanoush, the God Priest of the Serpent Isle, is enraged by the presence of three unbelievers in his throne room. With a wave of his hand, he lays his Death Spell (*bolt*) upon them. Spending a massive 12 power points (3 x 3d6 bolts, doubled for "raise" effect), he deals them each a whopping 4d6 damage (3d6 *bolt*, 1d6 *raise*). Provided he doesn't roll snake eyes on his Spirit roll, the defilers will crumple to the ground and trouble Baba no more!

Matrix-style magic

Use this variant to turn your characters into whirling masters of combat, similar to the characters in *The Matrix*. This is in no way balanced, so if you use this variant it's best that all your player characters have Arcane Background (Focus), as described below.

This style uses a new Arcane Background—Focus. Other than the name, it works just like the Arcane Background (Magic) as detailed in the *Savage Worlds* rulebook. The arcane skill for this AB is called "Focus". The only power definitely not available to characters with AB (Focus) is *quickness*.

Here's how it works. At the start of every combat round, before cards are dealt, all characters with AB (Focus) may make a Focus roll. These characters receive their normal initiative card, plus one for every success and raise on their Focus roll. They may act on any and all of these cards as they come up in order that round. Characters with the Level Headed Edge receive extra cards as usual, but must discard down to their original hand size. Characters with the Quick Edge may discard and redraw any card of five or below. Note that extra attacks from Frenzy and so on still only occur once per round, on a card of the player's choosing.

Firearms cannot be made to fire faster with the Focus skill, and so may still only be fired once per round. The character is considered to spend the entire round shooting with that weapon and so subsequent actions in the same round may not use the hands occupied with shooting for other purposes.

So for example, Johnny is trying to escape from an alleyway, but three police officers bar his way. In the first round, Johnny rolls his Focus skill (d8) and gets a 9. He is dealt three cards, a King, a Nine, and a Four. The cops get but one card, an Eight. Johnny acts first, on his King, and starts shooting at one cop with his pistol. The officer goes down without a struggle. With his second card, the Nine, Johnny, still shooting at the first cop, runs forward and kicks a second cop in the head. He also hits the ground. The last cop acts now on his Eight, and fires at Johnny. Of course, he misses. On his last card, Johnny activates his *bolt* Power, rolling his Focus to hit. His *bolt* strikes the last cop and sends him flying against a wall.

Magic from an outside source

This variant represents settings where magic is the result of the characters contact with Beings of Power, be they demons, elementals, or some other such source.

In this variant, the Arcane Background (Magic) Edge changes significantly. The Edge grants no starting Power Points and no powers. Instead, the character gets the Cajoling arcane skill at d4 for free, and one "contact".

Contacts are Beings of Power upon which the character can call to create magical effects. They have no physical presence, but are considered to always be watching the character. They have their own Power Points, powers, and Spellcasting skill separate from the character. To evoke a power, the character must make a successful Cajoling roll. The target number is equal to (2 + [the contact's Spellcasting skill/2]). If a contact is successfully Cajoled the character may choose which power is used, what the target is, and in the case of powers with variable effects, the exact Power Point cost and effect of the power. With a raise on the Cajoling roll,

the character has procured extra help from that contact. The contact regains two spent Power Points per raise. Rolling a natural 1 on the Cajoling die, however, has serious consequences. In addition to the normal backlash effects, the contact will refuse to help the character for the remainder of the game session!

A new Edge, New Contact, replaces the Power Points and New Power Edges. This gives the character a new contact, with new powers, and new trappings for those powers. The exact abilities of each contact are dependent on the rank of the character when "summoned". Contacts can have powers available to a character of the same rank as the summoner. Any trappings for those powers should be based on the nature of the contact.

At the GM's option, characters may have regular or one-off contacts (see below) of above their rank. In such cases, it is suggested that you apply a penalty of -2 per difference in rank between the character and his contact to all Cajoling rolls. The penalties for a failed Cajoling roll in these cases should be appropriately severe.

The GM should feel free to occasionally have contacts demand some service in return for their help. This should usually take the form of some quest or task.

Also optionally, characters might be able to summon "one-off" contacts if needed for a particular circumstance. This requires a Cajoling roll opposed by the potential contact's Spellcasting skill, and a ritual that takes a minimum of one hour per rank of the summoned contact. If the character doesn't have time for a ritual, you could say that such a summoning could be done "on-the-fly", but the summoner suffers a penalty of -4 to the Cajoling roll, and an additional -2 per rank of the contact above Novice.

Contact Templates: Use the following as a base template for contacts when using this variant:

Novice: Power Points (5); Powers (2); Spellcasting (d6)

For each increase in rank, the contact receives five additional Power Points, one new power, and increases their Spellcasting die type by one step.

Sample Contacts:

Grandfather's Ghost (Novice)

Power Points: 5; Spellcasting: d6

Powers: *boost/lower trait* (calling on Grandfather's memories) and *deflection* (Grandfather's protection)

Air Elemental (Veteran)

Power Points: 15; Spellcasting d10

Powers: *fly* (gusts of wind bearing the character aloft), *deflection* (strong winds around the character), *telekinesis* (breeze which picks up objects, people), and *blast* (blast of icy air)

Demon Lord (Legendary)

Power Points: 25; Spellcasting d12+1

Powers: *bolt* (biting, stinging flies, or fire bolts), *obscure* (dense cloud of insects or smoke), *stun* (cloud of stinging flies), *blast* (blast of fire), *zombie* (demon possessed corpses), and *puppet* (demon possession)

BACKLASH IS BORING

Replacing arcane backlash with something a bit more exciting!

The following rules, derived from Wild Spellcasting, an OGC publication by Ryan Nock and Natural 20 Press, replace the ordinary rule regarding arcane backlash in the Savage Worlds rulebook. Now, whenever a mage rolls a 1 on his skill die (regardless of his Wild Die), they must roll on the table below to determine what happens. Both good and bad effects are included. This table is generic in nature and may be used with any Arcane Background that has a "botch" effect. Hopefully you will be inspired to create unique Mishap Tables for each such AB Edge—if you do, be sure to send 'em in to the Editor!

D%	Result
01-05	The power targets you, or if an area of effect, it centers on you. If it cannot target you or center on you, it simply fails.
06-10	Wild arcane energy deals you d4 points of damage per Power Point used.
11-15	The power affects a random target or area of effect. The GM should randomly determine a different target from among those in range of the power. If the power has no specified target or area of effect, it fails.
16-20	Instead of the intended effect a random power that you possess fires off, targeted as close to your original target as the parameters of the power allows. It is possible the random power could be the one you originally intended. If you have no other powers, this mishap has no effect.
21-25	The power fails, but its energies manifest as a bonus to all your trait rolls for the next minute (10 rounds). This bonus is equal to +1 for every Power Point used.
26-30	In addition to the power's normal effect, wild arcane energy deals 1 point of damage per Power Point used to any creatures or objects that are affected by the power.
31-35	Nothing happens. The power fails.
36-40	The power fails; however, odd sensory elements and bizarre (but harmless) phenomena occur in the area of effect the power would have affected, lasting as long as the power's duration would have lasted.
41-45	Your power fails and the GM gets to bestow a minor curse upon you!
46-50	The power functions normally.
51-55	The power fails, but the wild arcane energy leaves a permanent change (e.g., change in skin, hair, or eye color, gain a finger or toe, shrink or grow by d4", etc.) on your body.
56-60	Nothing happens. The power does not function, just as if it was never cast, and thus costs the spellcaster no Power Points.
61-65	For as long as the power's duration would have lasted, your appearance changes in moderate ways, such as alteration of the size, color, or shape of a body part, your facial appearance, or your sex.
66-70	The power functions, but odd sensory elements and bizarre (but harmless) phenomena accompany you for its duration.
71-75	The power appears to function normally, but is only an illusion. The target may make a Spirit roll to disbelieve if interacted with. If the power has no obvious sensory effects nothing happens.
76-80	The power functions normally, but your next arcane skill roll is made at -4.
81-85	The power fails; however, its energies manifest as a penalty to all your trait rolls for the next minute. This penalty is equal to -1 for each Power Point used.
86-90	The power functions normally, but with a different trapping than normal.
91-95	The power functions normally, but no Power Points are expended!
96-00	The power functions at full potential. If it normally allows a target a way to avoid its effects assume that the target failed such an attempt.

ALTERNATE WEAPON STAT FORMULAE

Taking another look at weapons in Savage Worlds, by Shadofehr.

I have come up with a new set of formulae for calculating a melee weapon's damage, minimum strength requirements, Parry bonuses, and AP values. The normal weapon stats are great; this is just something I came up with because I wanted more detail in combat (yeah I know, don't flame me... I love Savage Worlds; I just prefer more detail in regards to weapons).

Weapon Damage Formulae

There are three types of melee weapon damage: Smashing, Slashing and Thrusting. The Damage value of a given weapon is Str+(1 per full multiple of the weight increment). The weight increment is different depending on the type of damage the weapon causes.

- **Smashing** (blunt weapon used to bludgeon): +1 per full 4 pounds of weight.
- **Slashing** (bladed weapon used to cut): +1 per full 2 pounds of weight.
- **Thrusting** (pointed weapon used to pierce): +1 per full 3 pounds of weight.

Also, there are special modifiers for special types of weapons; for example slashing weapons with curved blades are +1 to damage based on the facts that a curved blade cuts deeper. I had a friend, who debated me on this, but it's a proven fact and anyone who knows weapons will agree.

Special Weapon Modifiers

- Curved Blade (scimitar, cutlass, falchion etc.): +1 to damage when slashing.
- Serrated Blade: +1 to damage when slashing.
- Spiked (morning star, spiked flail etc.): +1 to damage when smashing.

Keep in mind while using this formula that some weapons are capable of doing multiple types of damage. A longsword, for example, is capable of both slashing and thrusting damage. Using this formula, the damage is different for each type of attack.

Also note that just about any melee weapon can be used to inflict smashing damage, even if it wasn't specifically designed to do so. For simplicity's sake in such cases, treat a one-handed weapon as a Club and a two-handed weapon as a Great Club.

Parry Bonuses or Penalties

Applying Parry bonuses or penalties is simple and easy to implement. Any one-handed melee weapon weighing less than 4 pounds, but more than 1 pound, receives +1 Parry. Note however that all two-handed melee weapons are -1 Parry (with the exception of the quarterstaff), and any Reach weapon is -2 Parry.

One-Handed Melee Weapons: Those weighing less than 4 pounds, but more than 1 pound, are given +1 Parry. There are exceptions to this (such as the dagger and the whip); it's pretty hard to parry a longsword with a whip for example. Use your discretion.

Two-Handed Melee Weapons: All are -1 Parry (exception: the quarterstaff is not penalized, but other weapons with Reach are all -2 Parry).

Minimum Strength Formulae

Another change is the formula for calculating minimum strength requirements. You will note that a lower minimum is required for two-handed weapons, even though many of them weigh more than some one-handed weapons that have higher strength requirements. This is based on the fact that the character is using both hands to carry the weight, thus making it easier to bear.

One-Handed Melee weapons

- 1-4 pounds = No minimum
- 5-7 pounds = d6 minimum
- 8-10 pounds = d8 minimum
- 11-13 pounds = d10 minimum
- 14-16 pounds = d12 minimum
- 17-20 pounds = d12+1 minimum
- Etc...

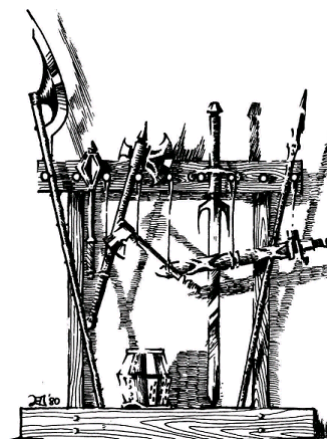
Two-Handed Melee Weapons

- 1-6 pounds = No minimum
- 7-10 pounds = d6 minimum
- 11-14 pounds = d8 minimum
- 15-18 pounds = d10 minimum
- 19-22 pounds = d12 minimum
- 23-26 pounds = d12+1 minimum
- Etc...

Armor Piercing Value

Finally, we'll determine the Armor Piercing (AP) value, if any, of the weapon. This is based on damage type and weight, and how easily that type of damage bypasses armor.

- *Smashing Weapons:* +1 AP per 5 pounds of weight (rounded down) vs. rigid armor only.
- *Slashing Weapons:* +1 AP per 6 pounds of weight (rounded down).
- *Thrusting Weapons:* +1 AP per 4 pounds of weight (rounded down).



Savage Fantasy Weapons

The prices on this list assume a fantasy economy using a 10:1 conversion of copper, silver, gold and platinum coin. (i.e., 10 copper= 1 silver, 10 silver= 1 gold, 10 gold= 1 platinum). All stat values were derived using the above formulae.

One-Handed Melee Weapons

Weapon	Smash	Slash	Thrust	Min Str	Wt*	Cost	Notes
Battle Axe	–	Str+3	–	D6	6 lb.	10 gp	AP 1
Club	Str	–	–	–	3 lb.	1 gp	Parry +1
Dagger	–	Str	Str	–	1 lb.	2 gp	Parry +1
Flail	Str+2	–	–	D6	5 lb.	8 gp	Ignores Shield Parry Bonus; AP 1
Gauntlet	Str	–	–	–	1 lb.	2 gp	
Hand Axe	–	Str+1	–	–	3 lb.	6 gp	Parry +1
Knife	–	Str	Str	–	1 lb.	2 gp	
Long Sword	–	Str+2	Str+1	–	4 lb.	15 gp	AP 1 when Thrusting
Mace	Str+2	–	–	D8	8 lb.	12 gp	AP 1 vs. Rigid Armor
Morning Star	Str+3	–	–	D8	8 lb.	8 gp	AP 1 vs. Rigid Armor
Pick	–	–	Str+2	D6	6 lb.	8 gp	AP 1
Rapier	–	–	Str+1	–	2 lb.	20 gp	Parry +1
Sap	Str	–	–	–	2 lb.	1 gp	Non-Lethal Damage Only
Scimitar	–	Str+3	Str+1	–	4 lb.	15 gp	AP 1 when Thrusting
Shield, Large	Str+2	–	–	D8	10 lb.	10 gp	2 Weapon/Off Hand penalties apply
Shield, Medium	Str+2	–	–	D8	8 lb.	8 gp	2 Weapon/Off Hand penalties apply
Shield, Small	Str+1	–	–	D6	6 lb.	6 gp	2 Weapon/Off Hand penalties apply
Short Spear	–	–	Str+1	–	3 lb.	1 gp	Parry +1
Short Sword	–	Str+1	Str+1	–	2 lb.	10 gp	Parry +1
Spiked Gauntlet	Str+1	–	–	–	1 lb.	5 gp	
Spiked Shield, Large	Str+4	–	–	D12+1	18 lb.	60 gp	2 Weapon/Off Hand penalties apply
Spiked Shield, Medium	Str+3	–	–	D12	16 lb.	52 gp	2 Weapon/Off Hand penalties apply
Spiked Shield, Small	Str+3	–	–	D10	12 lb.	46 gp	2 Weapon/Off Hand penalties apply
Unarmed Strike	Str	–	–	–	–	–	Cannot Parry weapon; Non-Lethal Damage Only
War Hammer	Str+1	–	–	D6	5 lb.	12 gp	AP 1 vs. Rigid Armor
Whip	–	Str	–	–	2 lb.	1 gp	Ignores Shield Parry Bonus: +1 to Disarm attempts

Two-Handed Melee Weapons

Weapon	Smash	Slash	Thrust	Min Str	Wt*	Cost	Notes
Falchion	–	Str+5	Str+2	D6	8 lb.	75 gp	Parry –1; AP 1
Great Axe	–	Str+6	–	D8	12 lb.	20 gp	AP 2; Parry –1
Great Club	Str+2	–	–	D6	8 lb.	5 gp	Parry –1; AP 1 vs. Rigid Armor
Great Sword	–	Str+4	Str+2	D6	8 lb.	50 gp	Parry –1; AP 1
Halberd	–	Str+6	Str+4	D8	12 lb.	10 gp	Parry –1; AP 2 when Slashing; AP 4 when Thrusting
Lance	–	–	Str+3	D6	10 lb.	10 gp	AP 1; Reach 1; Parry –2
Long Spear	–	–	Str+3	D6	9 lb.	5 gp	Reach 1; Parry –2
Maul	Str+2	–	–	D6	10 lb.	24 gp	AP 2 vs. Rigid Armor; Parry –1
Pike	–	–	Str+4	D8	12 lb.	6 gp	Reach 2; Parry –2; AP 3
Quarter Staff	Str+1	–	–	–	4 lb.	1 gp	Melee or Reach 1; Parry +1
Scythe	–	Str+5	–	D6	10 lb.	18 gp	Parry –1; AP 3

Ranged Weapons

Weapon	Range	Damage	RoF	Shots	Min Str	Wt*	Cost	Note
Crossbow	15/30/60	2d6	1	1	D6	8 lb.	50 gp	AP 2; Requires 1 action to reload
Dagger	3/6/12	Str	1	1	–	1 lb.	2 gp	
Hand Axe	3/6/12	Str+1	1	1	–	3 lb.	6 gp	
Hand Crossbow	4/8/16	2d4	1	1	–	2 lb.	100 gp	
Javelin	4/8/12	Str	1	1	–	2 lb.	1 gp	
Long Bow	15/30/60	2d6	1	1	D8	3 lb.	75 gp	
Short Bow	12/24/48	2d6	1	1	D6	2 lb.	30 gp	
Short Spear	3/6/12	Str+1	1	1	–	3 lb.	1 gp	Parry +1 (Melee only)
Sling	4/8/16	Str	1	1	–	–	1 gp	
Arrow** (20)	–	–	–	–	–	3 lb.	1 gp	Comes with quiver
Bolt** (20)	–	–	–	–	–	2 lb.	2 gp	Comes with bolt case
Sling Stone*** (20)	–	–	–	–	–	5 lb.	2 sp	Comes with bullet bag

* Weight and cost are doubled for large versions of weapons and halved for small versions.

** Outdoors, arrows and quarrels are recovered on a d6 roll of 4–6 (50% chance). Underground or indoors, the chance decreases to a roll of 5–6 on a d6 to reflect the increased chance of breakage.

*** Stones can be found for free with a Notice roll and 1d10 minutes searching, depending on terrain.

51 OCCULT EVENTS

Coincidence, fate, or premonition? You be the judge...

While science teaches us that the world is an orderly and predictable place obeying natural laws that never vary or change, those on the front lines in the war against the Shadow know better. For them, the world is not merely stranger than we imagine; it is stranger than we can imagine. The odd, the inexplicable, and the downright impossible are common occurrences for the men and women who have chosen to fight against the rising tide of evil. They encounter events that defy science every day. Whatever the truth, there can be no denying that occult events can and do occur. While many are minor and easily ignored—rains of frogs and the recurrences of certain number combinations—others are not so easily dismissed. If the Occult Wars are to be won—or at least contained—humanity will have to face up to the fact that our much-vaunted science is woefully inadequate to the task of describing the universe. The sooner we come to grips with this awful truth, the better.

This article, based on the OGC product *101 Occult Events* from Ronin Arts (see Section 15 of the OGL in this issue), is nothing more than a GM tool—a way to add mystery to an occult-themed campaign. The GM can select a handful of the events presented herein and sprinkle them sparingly into his adventures. The events need not tie into the adventure's plot—in fact, they work best when they do not—to create red herrings, misdirection, and hint at the notion that there are things going on in the world that the characters cannot hope to understand. If you like the ideas contained in this article, be sure to take a look at *51 Urban Legends*, also in this issue of **Shark Bytes**.

1. While driving along in a rainstorm, the raindrops start to run *up* the window instead of down. If the characters make a Notice roll, they form a recognizable pattern. The exact nature of the pattern should be determined by the GM.
2. The wind seems to carry the faint echo of screaming voices. Characters that make a successful Notice roll can make out what the voices are saying. The GM should determine the exact nature of the voices, and what they're saying.
3. A character experiences a sudden and severe muscle cramp (–2 to all actions for d6 rounds) every time he passes through a doorway of a particular locale.
4. In the middle of a normal conversation, one character inexplicably uses an utterly unfamiliar, alien word for a normal concept. Depending on the GM's wishes, the word can be a clue or just an oddity. Whether the word is in a recognized language is also up to the GM.
5. One of the characters' watches stops dead—or runs backwards.
6. A coffee stain on a map circles the place the characters are going next—but the map is a new one and no one has ever put a coffee cup on it.
7. A character finds a coin on the ground minted in the year of his birth. If he keeps it, he automatically succeeds on his next roll, whatever it is, after which the coin becomes useless.
8. A black cat crosses a character's path. If he does not make an effort to find another route, he suffers a –2 penalty to his next roll, after which this minor curse ends.
9. A photograph a character has taken no longer shows one or more people or objects that had previously been visible.
10. A photograph a character has taken now shows someone or something that had previously not been visible.
11. A character receives an anonymous telephone call from a mechanical-sounding voice that provides him with a small piece of information he had been searching for.
12. Every animal within sight of the characters suddenly freezes in its tracks and then bolts away at top speed, taking their owners, if any, along with them.
13. The image of a ghostly town, complete with people, appears as the characters travel through a desolate area. The image fades as soon as the characters approach it.
14. The characters encounter a surprising number of redheaded people over the course of a single day.
15. A great shadow of some object or creature falls across the ground, although there is no evidence of its source.
16. A brownish-red substance, resembling blood, pours from the faucet of the next sink a character uses.
17. An otherwise stationary object (like a rock or a tree) moves from one location to another while the characters are not looking.
18. A number (such as 23) keeps popping up again and again.
19. A character finds an old newspaper containing an article of relevance to their current activities.
20. The characters hear loud footsteps following them wherever they go, but cannot discern any source for them.
21. A character receives a misdirected email whose contents pertain to his current activities.
22. Someone mistakes a character for another person.

23. A small child stares at the character and then points toward something of interest to him, without saying a word.
24. A computer disk, CD-ROM, or other electronic storage device a character is carrying becomes inexplicably corrupted and utterly unreadable. A successful Knowledge (Computer Use), or other similar skill will reclaim the data, but it is retrieved in an altered form.
25. A character encounters an old acquaintance that he has not seen in years.
26. A character briefly sees another person's face when he looks into a mirror. The other person mouths something that the character can lip read on a successful Smarts roll.
27. A character sees a pair of eyes staring at him from a darkened window. If investigated, there is no sign of anyone (or anything) at the window.
28. The characters hear a song that is of pertinence to their current activities.
29. A character finds a coin lying face down. If he picks it up, he will automatically fail his next roll, whatever it is.
30. While passing through or near a graveyard, a character feels an urge to look at a particular tombstone and finds it bears his name. His next action is made at -2.
31. A black rain falls for the next d4 hours.
32. Someone approaches a character to ask for directions. As it turns out, he intends to go to the same place the characters are currently headed, although for a different reason.
33. A character gets a fortune cookie whose fortune pertains to his current activities.
34. A thunderclap knocks a painting off a wall, revealing a hidden compartment or safe behind it.
35. A character sees a person on the street suddenly wink out of existence.
36. A character's gun jams, because a small crystal is in the firing chamber.
37. A character finds a sheet of paper on which are written the final scores of baseball games that happen tomorrow.
38. When the character awakes from sleep, he finds a note written in his own handwriting that contains a clue to his current investigation.
39. With a successful Notice roll, the characters can see that they are being tailed by two men in black. Once spotted, the men disappear and never return.
40. While surfing the Internet, a character inexplicably gains access to a restricted government network for d4 minutes, after which he is shut out.
41. A character wakes up with a small piece of parchment inscribed with the Hebrew word *emet* (truth) on his forehead. A successful Knowledge (arcane lore) roll reveals that it is one possible activation word for a golem.
42. The next time a character buys a used item of any sort, he finds written on it somewhere the name of its previous owner: Nikola Tesla.
43. The characters see themselves doing something at a distance. If they go to the place where they saw themselves, they find no one but will see themselves looking back at them from their previous location.
44. The characters encounter someone with a vicious scar in the center of their forehead, which, if asked, he says he acquired when he drilled a hole into his head to "let out the evil spirits."
45. Stuck in between the pages of a book a character is reading is a leaf from another book, containing a map to a previously unknown location of interest to the character.
46. Throughout a single day, people—including the other player characters—consistently mispronounce a character's name.
47. A character sets off metal detectors wherever he goes for 24 hours.
48. When a character picks up a note pad to write, he can make a Notice roll at -2. If successful, he sees the imprint of his own handwriting on the top page of the pad—it's a note about the thing he was about to write.
49. All of the character's undergarments are turned inside out without his knowing it.
50. Several people comment that the character's canine teeth are unusually large.
51. A character's nose begins to bleed uncontrollably and will not stop until a successful Healing roll is made. In addition to blood, the character finds a tiny crystalline sphere that, under examination, is shown to be completely smooth, featureless, and of inorganic origin.

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FEEDING FRENZY

Clint Black, the resident Rules Meister answers all your rules questions...

Welcome to the third issue of **Shark Bytes**! In this ongoing column, I will try to provide answers to your burning questions about the Savage Worlds rules. Just because these answers may be "official" (i.e., Shane or Zeke has given the nod), does not necessarily mean that they are "correct". Always remember the Golden Rule: "The correct answer to any question about the rules is the one that makes your game fun—everything else is superfluous!" In this installment we cover questions from the Savage Worlds core rules, and the Tour of Darkness, and Necessary Evil Savage Settings.

Savage Worlds Core Rules Questions

Question: Does the quickness power allow you to repeat an action of the same type (e.g. attack twice with the same weapon)?

Answer: Yes. The character actually has two actions per round instead of one that can be of any type, including the same type. I think it makes sense if you look at it in the following manner: *Speed* costs 1 Power Point, doubles Pace, and can negate the MAP for Running. *Quickness* costs 4 Power Points! And it's the only power (at least that I can think of off the top of my head) that costs 2 Power Points per round to maintain. That means *quickness* would be equivalent to simultaneously casting *boost trait* (Fighting) and *smite*. For that, I'd think it's worth getting an extra action of any type. If you think that's too powerful, then I'd suggest dropping the cost to 2/1 and restricting characters from repeating the same type of action in a single round.

Question: In the Savage Worlds Revised (SWR) rules, it lists a power called waverunner, but I can find no reference to it anywhere else in the book. Is this supposed to be environmental protection?

Answer: Yes. The old *waverunner* power was replaced by the more flexible *environmental protection* in the revised rulebook.

Question: If an item provides the same Edge that a character already has, is the effect doubled? Would it provide the "Improved" version of the edge if there is one?

Answer: Edges are exclusive. A character either has them or they don't. If you have an Edge and get a magic item or something that provides the Edge as well, it normally does nothing for the character. In order to achieve "stacking" there has to be an "Improved" version of the Edge, and the item has to specifically state it can be stacked with the normal Edge. Short version: duplicate Edges don't stack.

Question: Detect/conceal arcana says, "The detecting character may only attempt to see through concealed powers once per fresh casting." What does fresh casting mean?

Answer: The "fresh casting" refers to the detecting character. It means if they use the power and fail in the opposed roll, they must re-activate the power from the beginning to get another roll versus any power they failed to see with the first use. For example, Stu knows there is an invisible character in the area (it is attacking his friends). He casts *detect arcana* but fails in the opposed roll, so he cannot see the invisible person. So now, despite the fact that he has 2 more rounds duration on his first casting, he must cast it again in order to get another roll against the *invisible* power. Basically, each activation of *detect arcana* only gives you one attempt at seeing through any specific concealed power, regardless of the duration of the spell. If a character wants another chance to see through a concealed power, they must cast the spell fresh, from the beginning.

Question: Teleport "Carrying Others" says, "More than two may be carried at once, but causes instant Incapacitation." What's the limit of how many can be carried at once?

Answer: This answer is as unofficial as they come, but I would say they could carry a maximum number equal to their arcane skill die type.

Tour of Darkness Rules Questions

Question: Is the accuracy given for napalm correct? It seems wildly inaccurate. The $(1d10-1) \times 3$ deviation seems to allow the attack to hit everywhere but the target.

Answer: Yes and no, to be honest. The deviation is set up to work in game terms to never be a sure thing, especially if it's called in close to the characters. If you have someone with the Spotter Edge the distance is halved, which is a big help. Honestly, it's better to use napalm on large enemy groups that are as far away from the friendly forces as possible. As far as real-world terms go it's probably too accurate. If you think about it, the napalm is going to hit between 0 and 54 yards from where it's called in... but never any further. That's pretty accurate! Just as an aside to keep scale in mind, "danger close" for a real 105mm barrage is 600 yards, though in the game it won't wander more than 40 yards.

Necessary Evil Rules Questions

Question: The parry power has a modifier for Catch and Throw. Isn't this a more appropriate modifier for deflection than parry?

Answer: It could be used with *deflection*, depending on the trappings and GM approval. It was simply felt to be a more common extrapolation of *parry*, with the reflexes and ability developed to block a melee attack leading to being able to perform the same effect against a ranged attack. For that matter, Catch and Throw could also be a modifier for *speed* if it provides a -1 or better penalty to attack rolls.

Question: Can you use modifiers from one power on a different power, even if it isn't listed?

Answer: It all really depends on the specific modifier, but, yes, there are definitely some that could be switched around as long as the GM allows it.

Question: Can someone with the awareness power "see" (whether it is detect, hear, whatever) someone who is invisible? How about in total darkness? How does it differ from darkvision?


Answer: Yes. Awareness bypasses any kind of obscurement, even if it only affects an individual target. Awareness does specifically say, "bad lighting" and any "other obscurement." Darkness falls in those categories since it is the absence of light. Just to clarify, "darkness" in *Savage Worlds* covers all penalties for lighting and/or illumination: from Dim (-1) to Pitch Dark (-6). So, awareness negates all penalties for that plus any other form of obscurement. It would be like sonar, as described in its possible trappings.

Darkvision only covers penalties for darkness and/or lighting. Awareness says the character "suffers no penalties" due to those factors. It does not say the character bypasses them totally. So Stealth still works, but the modifiers to Notice for darkness or other obscurement do not apply. It also says that cover modifiers for solid protection apply normally, and specifically gives the example of hiding behind a wall.

Question: Will the power malfunction work on a construct? If it does, is it an opposed Spirit roll with the attacker at -4 due to it being a "complex device"?


Answer: I'd say that's pretty accurate, though I'd probably use Spirit vs. Vigor (for the construct). In such a case, I'd probably rule that a successful *malfunction* causes a wound as opposed to determining the "sub-system" affected. Keep in mind this should also depend somewhat on trappings too. A construct that is a mystical golem would probably be unaffected by *malfunction*.

Well, that wraps up this installment of *Feeding Frenzy*. Remember to send in your questions, and until next time...Stay Savage! If you have a rules question for the Rules Meister, please email it to editor@sharkbytes.info. If you have a burning question that can't wait, check out the *Savage Worlds* Forums or the FAQ in the File section of the *Savage Worlds* Yahoo Group.




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THE BARE NECESSITIES

Just some food for thought, by William Littlefield

Well, the original plan was to fill this issue's installment of Blood in the Water with Butch Curry's "Savage Pulp Tweaks"; however, Butch, having a real life outside of gaming (shame!) was unable to meet our deadline. Needing something to fill the void, a recent discussion on the Pinnacle Forums sparked my imagination regarding the use of skills in Savage Worlds. So, having nothing better to do at work...I "put pen to paper". The article you're reading now is the result of my labors. Oh, by the way, look for Butch's "Savage Pulp Tweaks" in the February 2005 issue of **Shark Bytes**!

INTRODUCTION AND DISCLAIMER

This article is not meant to suggest that the current incarnation of the *Savage Worlds* rules be overhauled, but rather the intent is to provoke some thought about how skills and attributes are handled within the game. Yes, the rules as written work just fine, in fact, they work better than any system I have ever played. Of course, that doesn't mean I don't want to tinker around with it a little! So, take this article for what it's worth. Hopefully, in addition to giving you a few new ideas, it might also make you look at skills and attributes a bit differently in your own games. Oh, and by the way, this stuff hasn't been playtested...yet.

MY THOUGHTS IN A NUTSHELL

OK, so here's my opinion: *Savage Worlds* has too many damn skills. What, you say! How can it have too many skills? There are only 24 skills in the rules. Well, that may be; however, my position is that the game only needs *two* broad skill groups in order to function. Personally, I prefer having as few skills as possible and placing the emphasis of character development on Edges and Hindrances. I also think that attributes should have more of an effect on play than simply determining a couple of derived statistics and influencing the learning cost of your skills.



Whoa there, buddy! Before you lose your cool, just hear me out...yes, sit back down. Now check it out! Here are the key ideas I'm working with here:

1. Guts, Notice, and Stealth should be handled as derived statistics rather than as skills.
2. Climbing and Swimming should be described as alternate movement forms rather than as skills.
3. Intimidation, Persuasion, and Taunt should be described as opposed rolls rather than as skills.
4. Gambling, Healing, Investigation, Streetwise, Survival, and Tracking should all fall under the Knowledge skill rather than being represented as individual skills.
5. A "Talent" skill (the Agility-based version of Knowledge) should exist and would include skills such as Boating, Driving, Fighting, Lockpicking, Piloting, Repair, Riding, Shooting, and Throwing.
6. Hence, the *Savage Worlds* "core skills" should include only the Knowledge and Talent skills. Any additional skills needed for a specific setting should be extrapolated from these or represented as an Edge.

SO HOW WOULD I HANDLE THINGS?

Guts, Notice, and Stealth should be handled as attributes rather than as skills.

Honestly, I have no idea why these are skills. They seem tailor-made to be derived statistics as any character would be hard-pressed not to use them at least once during any given session, everyone can do them to some extent, and differentiating between those characters that are proficient and those that are not is easily handled by Edges and Hindrances. Rather than cluttering up the skill list, I thought that changing these skills into derived statistics was more in keeping with the Fast, Furious, Fun mantra. Outside of Edges and Hindrances, the only way in which the statistic's value change is if the attribute on which they're based changes.

- **Guts** reflect a character's bravery and intestinal fortitude. Whenever the GM calls for it, usually in response to witnessing grisly scenes or encountering horrific creatures, the player must make a *Guts Check*. A Guts Check is nothing more than a Spirit roll.
- **Notice** represents a character's general alertness, as well as their ability to search for items or clues. Notice also covers such things as detecting ambushes, spotting hidden doors, listening for out-of-the-ordinary sounds, and even scrutinizing other characters to see if they're lying, frightened, and so on. All such eventualities are handled by a *Notice Check*. A Notice Check is nothing more than a Smarts roll.
- **Stealth** is the ability to both hide and move quietly, as well as remaining unseen by those you want to avoid. You resolve these issues by means of a *Stealth Check*. A Stealth Check is nothing more than an Agility roll.

Of course, if you make Guts, Notice, and Stealth derived statistics you may have to look at Edges and Hindrances a little differently: As far as Guts is concerned, the Doubting Thomas and Yellow Hindrances work just fine as written. You might also consider adding the Brave and Very Brave Edges, which are detailed at the end of this article.

Notice is quick and easy as well. The Alertness and Danger Sense Edges can be used as written. The Clueless Hindrance should be re-written to allow the player the *choice* of either -2 to Common Knowledge rolls or -2 to Notice rolls.

The Thief Professional Edge is the only Edge that has an effect on Stealth and it may be used as written. You might also consider adding the What's with all the Ruckus Hindrance and the Quiet as a Mouse and the Whisper on the Wind Edges, both of which are detailed at the end of this article.

Climbing and Swimming should be described as alternate movement forms rather than as skills.

This one, as far as I am concerned, is a no-brainer. I assume all characters to be capable of climbing and swimming. Yes, everyone can swim! Now, I realize that in the real world this is simply not true; however, in my little fantasy land, it is. So what about the player who wants to have a character that can't climb or swim (for whatever reason)? Easy, let them take either the Quirk or Phobia (Minor) Hindrance to reflect the fact that they can't do what everyone else can. Give them the bonus points, but don't count this against the normal limit of four points.

I would rule that the descriptions of Climbing and Swimming given in the *Savage Worlds* rulebook apply to the average character. The base Pace for Climbing and Swimming is Pace/2 (characters that cannot swim have a Pace of 1"). To resolve climbing or swimming issues (usually only necessary under extreme circumstances) simply make a *Climbing Check* (Strength roll) or a *Swimming Check* (Agility roll). The Water Baby and Monkey Boy Edges, described at the end of this article, can be used to represent characters that are *really* good at climbing or swimming, and the aforementioned Quirk and Phobia Hindrances can adequately cover those that are at the opposite end of the scale.

Intimidation, Persuasion, and Taunt should be described as opposed attribute rolls rather than as skills.

Handle these just like Guts, Notice, and Stealth (i.e., as attribute rolls), but instead of using the TN of 4, make them opposed rolls. Intimidation is a Spirit vs. Spirit roll, Persuasion is a Spirit vs. Smarts roll, and Taunt is a Smarts vs. Spirit roll. The Charismatic Edge affects Persuasion attempts, as do the Attractive and Very Attractive Edges, and Strong Willed adequately covers Intimidation and Taunt. You might also consider adding the Weak Willed and Wishy Washy Hindrances detailed at the end of this article.

Gambling, Healing, Investigation, Streetwise, Survival, and Tracking should all fall under the broad Knowledge skill rather than being represented as individual skills.

The only difference here is that the aforementioned skills are not automatically available to the players. Either the individual GM makes the call as to which skills are available or the player lists them because they are germane to his character concept. In either case, they are annotated as Knowledge (Skill Name) and all are linked to Smarts.

Let's not forget the Common Knowledge mechanic either! This mechanic is a godsend and it really behooves the GM to require his players to adequately detail their character's backgrounds. Lots of "picky little details" can be resolved during play with minimal fuss by means of a simple Common Knowledge (Smarts) roll.

A broad "Talent" skill (the Agility version of Knowledge) should exist and would include skills like Boating, Driving, Fighting, Lockpicking, Piloting, Repair, Riding, Shooting, and Throwing.

All Talent skills are based on Agility (in the same manner as all Knowledge-based skills are based on Smarts) and should be handled in the same manner as described previously for the Knowledge skill.

NEW HINDRANCES

- **Weak Willed** (Major): You have self-esteem issues and for whatever reasons have a difficult time making your wishes known, let alone imposing them on others! You suffer a -2 penalty on all Intimidation and Taunt rolls.
- **What's with all the Ruckus** (Major): For whatever reason, you're not the stealthiest guy on the block. You suffer a -2 penalty on all Stealth rolls.
- **Wishy Washy** (Major): Your communication skills are sorely lacking and you have a hard time expressing your viewpoint to others, let alone convincing others of its veracity! You suffer a -2 penalty on all Persuasion rolls.

NEW EDGES

- **Brave** (Novice, Spirit d6): Your character has more intestinal fortitude than most. He gains a +2 bonus on all Guts rolls.
- **Very Brave** (Veteran, Brave, Spirit d8): Your character is nearly fearless, the bonus gained from Brave is increased to +4.
- **Monkey Boy** (Novice, Strength d6): Your character likes to climb things. In fact, it's safe to say that he's more at home in the air than he is on the ground. He gains a +2 bonus on all Climbing rolls and his Climbing Pace equals his normal Pace. In addition, he need only make a Climbing Check once for every 20" ascended or descended (rather than every 10").
- **Quiet as a Mouse** (Novice, Agility d6): Your character is adept at sneaking and skulking. He gains a +2 bonus on all Stealth rolls.
- **A Whisper on the Wind** (Veteran, Quiet as a Mouse, Agility d8): Your character has mastered the art of sneaking. You gain a +4 bonus to all Stealth rolls. This replaces the bonus from Quiet as a Mouse.
- **Water Baby** (Novice, Agility d6): Your character is as at home in the water as he is on the land. He gains a +2 bonus on all Swimming rolls and his Swimming Pace equals his normal Pace.

A “Bare Necessities” Character Example:

Mark Hauser is a character from my *Savaged Redline* campaign (see **Shark Bytes #1**). If I were to rewrite him using the aforementioned house rules, he’d look something like this:

Mark Hauser (Novice Wild Card)



Mark was born in 1970 and raised in New Hampshire. His father, an accomplished outdoorsman, taught Mark the basics of hunting and field craft. He also grew up a “gear head”—cars, snowmobiles, and motorcycles are his passion. New Englanders being a self-sufficient lot, after the war he stayed hidden in the White Mountains for several years—his only diversions being his fully stocked garage and his car collection. He lives in a fortified cabin that he calls “Fort Potato” (due to the fact that the hill on which it is located is known locally as Potato Hill).

Just recently, he came into contact with a wandering band of “flatlanders” and traded several of his cars for food, water, and fuel. As a result of this meeting, he’s decided to come down out of the mountains and is currently on his way to Laconia to check out the current situation.

Mark is a good-looking guy: 5’8” tall, 165 pounds, with blue eyes and blond hair. He dresses in jeans, T-shirts (or a flannel shirt if it gets cold), heavy riding boots, and his black leather biker jacket. A red bandanna and a pair of Oakley sunglasses are always around his neck. Mark is a generally likable guy. Some would call him a “northern redneck” and he’d be the first to agree with them. He is confident in his abilities, and when it comes to racing—he thinks he’s all that and a bag of chips.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, and Vigor d6

Pace: 6” (Climbing 6”/Swimming 1”); **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6 (includes Armor +1 for leather jacket)

Guts d6; **Notice** d6; **Stealth** d8

Intimidation d6; **Persuasion** d6; **Taunt** d6

Skills:

Knowledge Skills: (Vehicle Mechanics d8)

Talent Skills: (Driving d8, Fighting d6, Repair d8, Shooting d6 and Throwing d4)

Sample Common Knowledge: Hunting, field craft, very familiar with area within 5 square miles of Fort Potato, expert on the history of the Ford Mustang, huge fan of “classic blues rock”, pretty handy with a PC

Edges: Ace, Luck, and Monkey Boy (6” climbing Pace, +2 on Climbing, make check every 10”)

Hindrances: Arrogant, Overconfident, Quirk (Cannot swim)

Gear: Rucksack, bedroll, change of clothes, leather biker jacket (+1 Armor), 9mm pistol (Range 1/24/48; Damage 2d6; ROF 1; Shots 17) and two full magazines, four days worth of food and water, 1985 Mustang GT (ACC/Top Speed 30/56; Toughness 10/3) with a full tank of gas and an extra tank (full) mounted in the trunk.

SO HOW DOES THIS ALL FIT TOGETHER?

Well, I won’t presume to tell you how to handle things in your game, but here’s how they’re handled in mine: As mentioned above, all characters are capable of making Guts, Notice, and Stealth rolls. These are handled as derived statistics and are modified by Edges and Hindrances. Attempts to Intimidate, Persuade, and Taunt are handled as opposed attribute rolls and may be modified by Edges and Hindrances. Climbing and Swimming are treated as alternate forms of movement and are modified by Edges. Compensation for *not* being able to do these things is handled by the Phobia and Quirk Hindrances. So far, so good; now for the tricky part!

In my games there are no skill lists. Yes, you heard me correctly—no skill lists! During character generation, the *players* decide which skills their characters would possess based on their character concept. All they know is that all the skills they decide upon will either be Knowledge skills (Smarts-based) or Talent skills (Agility-based). This saves me lots of time. I don’t have to create detailed skill lists for each setting which, in my opinion, is an exercise in futility because players will inevitably think of skills that never crossed your mind. For once, take a break and let the players do some work! Let ‘em take whatever skills they feel are necessary to play that character concept in their head—the main thing to remember is that if it’s not on the character sheet than they don’t have it! I’d also suggest that they come up with a few character quirks to provide some Common Knowledge fodder (see Mark Hauser, above).

Skill points are handled as written in the *Savage Worlds* rulebook. Everyone gets 15 points and the skills they choose use the same costs we’re all familiar with (i.e., one point up to the die type of the linked attribute and two points per die type thereafter). The only other little twist I use is the idea of “skill defaults”. All skills will default to either Agility (Talent) or Smarts (Knowledge). An easy-to-average difficulty skill applies a –2 modifier while a more difficult skill gets a –4 (or more) modifier. Some skills cannot be attempted unskilled. I leave that decision up to the individual GM, but the list should vary by setting—in a pulp campaign, Piloting may be considered a difficult skill whereas in a gritty modern campaign, an unskilled individual would not normally be allowed to attempt such a task without any training.

PARTING SHOT

Well, I hope that this article has at least made you consider, perhaps, maybe someday, taking a look at the *Savage Worlds* skill system in a different way! If not, oh well. Like I said at the outset—there’s nothing wrong with the system “as is”. The main reason I wrote this article was because, as a GM, I prefer my “core rules” to be minimal. Representing three skills as derived statistics, another three as opposed attribute rolls, treating two as alternate forms of movement, and dividing everything else into two broad skill groups was as minimal as I could get. In addition, by defining no skills (other than Knowledge and Talent) the GM has total control over what skills he allows within his campaign.

SAVAGE CAVEMAN

An Interview with Rob Lusk, a.k.a. err... "Lug", the creative force behind the upcoming Sticks & Stones Savage Setting

Shark Bytes: So, tell us a bit about yourself. Where were you born?

Rob/Lug: [Rob decided to channel "Lug" to answer our questions.] Lug born in cave in Chicago.

SB: Where did you grow up?

Rob/Lug: In and around Chicago and New York City. Lug country boy at heart.

SB: How about college?

Rob/Lug: Lug go to University of Illinois and U.C.L.A. Lug get Ph.D. in Weird Prehistoric Science at U.C.L.A. Come in very handy!

SB: The military?

Rob/Lug: Lug fight many battles, but not in real life. Lug did work at VA Hospital for awhile.

SB: Are you married?

Rob/Lug: Yes, Lug have very understanding cavewoman. Don't have to club very often.

SB: Any children?

Rob/Lug: Lug have two cavechildren. Can't count any higher so can't have more.

SB: Hobbies? Interests? Passions?

Rob/Lug: Lug am gamer! Lug like RPGs and mini games best, but also like other kinds of games lots. Lug love writing game stuff! Lug like make scenery and sometimes even paint figures.

SB: When did you first get involved with roleplaying games? What was the first RPG you played?

Rob/Lug: *Dungeons & Dragons*[™]. Gary Gygax ran demos at con in Chicago shortly after D&D game came out. Lug & friends thought sounded interesting, so signed up. Experience was literally life-changing.

SB: What is your favorite RPG—other than *Savage Worlds*?

Rob/Lug: Though Spirits may strike Lug down for admitting it, Lug still occasionally like play other games (e.g., *Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay*[™], *Call of Cthulu*[™], and *Adventure*[™]). But *Savage Worlds* is hands-down favorite.

SB: GM or player—which do you prefer?

Rob/Lug: Lug like both, though often enjoy GMing more since Lug am ham and like play bunch NPCs.

SB: Miniatures and scenery, or "all in your head"?

Rob/Lug: Lug believe that miniatures and scenery add lots to game, especially during dramatic moments. Lug have RPG area in basement where use figures on coffee table, then move to minis table for big battles. Lug have honor of actually having Shane game in basement, so it favorable place to Spirits.

SB: How often do you play?

Rob/Lug: Most Tuesday nights. Have regular group that includes Ranger Dave Ross.

SB: Any memorable "gaming moments"?

Rob/Lug: Many! One that sticks out is sitting around campfire in real life playing game where we were sitting around campfire being watched from woods. Group got VERY paranoid!

SB: When did you first become involved with Pinnacle, and how did the relationship come about?

Rob/Lug: Lug bought *Deadlands* when it came out at Gen Con, and started campaign that has gone on intermittently since. Then, Lug played in one of Dave Ross' *Great Rail Wars* games, and got hooked on that game too. Dave and I became good friends, and Dave has been friend of Shane's for many years. They needed adventures for summer cons, and Lug wrote two that were later published. Then Dave had Shane in town for visit, and I ran them (and 10 other people!) in a *Deadlands* adventure. Shane, Dave and I then stayed up and talked for most of rest of night about concept Shane had. He subsequently developed *Savage Worlds* from that concept (as Shane relates in "Midwestern Odyssey" on GWG website). Lug became *Savage Worlds* playtester, tried different settings, and fell in love with game!

SB: When did you first come up with the idea for Sticks & Stones and how did it come about? How did you pitch S&S to Pinnacle?

Rob/Lug: *Sticks & Stones* evolved from simple convention miniatures game. Lug play game like this at con in late 1970s, and started running similar game himself in 1980s. In recent years, Lug start adding more and more to game. When *Savage Worlds* came out, Lug toyed with idea of savaging S&S, and decided to try running it at Gen Con. Bunch of Pegheads played game and really liked it. Shane ask if Lug would do book, and Lug scream YES!

SB: What makes S&S stand out from the crowd?

Rob/Lug: S&S really encourages roleplaying! It greatly limits the language a character can use, forcing players to act out lots of things. This not only fun, but seem really get people involved in game.

SB: Have you done any other freelance work besides Sticks & Stones?

Rob/Lug: Lug have written and co-written several adventures, articles and monsters for Pinnacle that appear in *Weird War Two: Blood on the Rhine*, two *Epitaphs*, and *Horrors of Weird War Two*. Lug also contribute some monsters to *Tour of Darkness*. Lug have adventures in *Campaign Magazine* and *Games Unplugged*, and articles in *Midwest Wargamer's Association* and *SAGA*. Lug contribute *Deadlands* material to *Knuckleduster's Cowtown Creator*, and just finish *Deadlands* campaign setting for Legion Publishing.

SB: What was it like developing a RPG via the Internet and a Yahoo! group? Who else worked on the project with you?

Rob/Lug: This was great experience for Lug. Lug told Shane him no can write 75,000+ words by himself (remember, Lug no can count past two). Shane say, "fine, get help". Lug have much help from following people:

Dave "Moog" Ross, who helped develop MANY ideas, and took lead on what became a second (miniatures) book. William "Gug" Littlefield, who helped organize whole project, and contributed many of most flavorful ideas (e.g., most of the Relics & Weird Prehistoric Science Inventions). Greg "Taah!" Whalen, who did most of creatures & contributed two adventures. Greg has distinction of having possibly first character ever die in *Savage Worlds*, succumbing to critical wound in first combat of first game we playtested. The Mysterious "Tel-Ur", who contributed several adventures and many excellent ideas. Mark "Nu Mon" Metzner, who plays a GREAT Cave N.E.R.D., and contributed several adventure ideas as well as inspiration for plot point series of adventures. Randy "Bloo-Trul" Mosiandz, who contributed excellent adventure.

Internet and Yahoo! Group worked very well for game development for most part. I missed having opportunity for group discussion (which I realize we could have had...) and socializing face to face.

SB: Any other interesting ideas in the works?


Rob/Lug: One for GWG that still secret (sorry!). As Lug mentioned, have campaign setting (southern California) for *Deadlands* that Legion is putting out in near future.

SB: Sum up your experiences with *Savage Worlds* thus far...

Rob/Lug: Lug play MANY systems over past 30 years. *Savage Worlds* is simply best. It work well for every setting we try so far.


SB: What does the future hold for Rob, err..."Lug" Lusk?

Rob/Lug: Lug not sure. Lug now elderly by caveman terms, but still love gaming and hope to keep doing it for many, many years. Working with Shane and the other folks at GWG has been great, and Lug want continue to do that too!



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NEW ADVENTURE DECK CARDS

By Matthew Mather

WILD DEUCE

"Too slow!"

You may play this card to replace any card drawn by friend or foe from the Action Deck for initiative at the beginning of a round. This card counts as a deuce. It takes effect regardless of any Edges or Hindrances possessed by the character it is played on (such as Quick). This card cannot be played again during this session. If the "Joker Up My Sleeve" card is played on the same character in the same round, roll a d6. On an even result, this card takes priority.

JOKER UP MY SLEEVE

"Now I'm smiling!"

You may play this card to replace any card drawn by friend or foe from the Action Deck for initiative at the beginning of a round. This card counts as a Joker. It takes effect regardless of any Edges or Hindrances possessed by the character it is played on (such as Slow). The Action Deck must be shuffled at the end of the round, and this card cannot be played again in this session. If the Wild Deuce card is played on the same character in a round, roll a d6. On an odd result, this card takes priority.

CATCHPHRASE

"It's like I always say..."

When you play this card, create a catchphrase for your character that you can invoke up to three times later in this session. You gain a +2 bonus on a single trait roll each time you invoke your catchphrase, but only if it is appropriate to the situation.

ANTI-BENNY

"But... that should have worked..."

This card is the very opposite of a Benny. Play it to cancel the use of one Benny (such as the one the GM just used to save the villain's hide for the umpteenth time). Further Bennies, if available, may still be spent for the same roll.

CHOREOGRAPHY

"Hup! Hah! Nearly got me that time!"

You may play this card to negate all damage that would otherwise be done to a single character during a single round, regardless of its source.

WUSHU OVERDRIVE

"I'm here to kick ass and chew bubble-gum... and I'm all out of gum."

Your hero ignores the Multiple Action Penalty rule this round—no matter how many actions he performs!

Well that does it for this issue's obligatory adventure cards! If you have any more ideas be sure to send them to your friendly Editor at editor@sharkbytes.info. You can find fully-formatted adventure cards for the above descriptions in the Web Extras section for Issue #3 at the **Shark Bytes Website** (www.sharkbytes.info)! Each file is provided as an unscaled JPG.

THE ONES THAT GOT AWAY

Installment #3: Monsters of the Pulps, by Butch Curry

While most of the bad guys fought by the likes of the Shadow and Doc Savage were fairly conventional (give or take a doomsday device here or a full-face mask there) they sometimes crossed paths with enemies that were more... unusual to say the least. With that in mind, here are a few pulp-inspired baddies to keep you busy during the cold winter nights!

KREUTZ, THE ÜBERAPE [Wild Card]



Created by a bizarre blend of Nazi mysticism and crackpot super-science, the Überape is a mountain gorilla implanted with massive steel bolts and covered in occult tattoos. Within his steel-capped skull is a brain that belonged either to a murdered genius, a demon from Hell, or perhaps a little bit of both! Normally, he wears a specially tailored SS uniform, complete with a cap that covers his artificial skull. He has developed a taste for expensive cigars and fine brandy; clever adventurers can track him

down by following his extravagant purchases of either!

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d10, Spirit d12, Strength d12+4, Vigor d12

Skills: Climbing d10, Fighting d12, Guts d10, Intimidation d12, Knowledge: Occult lore d8, Knowledge (Weird Science) d8, Notice d8, Repair d10, Shooting d8, Stealth d8, Throwing d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 12

Hindrances: Distinctive Appearance (He has attempted to move about in public wearing a trenchcoat and a very big fedora to disguise himself—it never works.)

Edges: Arcane Resistance, Hard to Kill, Improved Nerves of Steel, and Level Headed

Gear:

Lightning Gun (2d8, 24/48/96, AP 4): When used by anyone by Kreutz, if the gun isn't plugged into a power source it can only fire 3 shots before needing to be recharged. (Kreutz powers the gun by plugging it into a socket in the side of his head!)

Special Abilities:

Armor +2: Thick hide and big metal bolts.

Bite: Str+2. Kreutz has no claw attack; his clumsy ape hands were replaced by more precise mechanical ones.

Brachiation: When in a jungle setting, Kreutz can effectively fly at Pace 10 by leaping and swinging through the treetops.

Demonic Heritage: Kreutz prefers to stress the technological side of his creation, but cannot deny the magical portion. Because of his quasi-demonic nature, he cannot set foot on holy ground. He recoils at the sight of a faithfully presented holy symbol: Make an opposed Spirit roll (Kreutz takes a -2 to this roll). Success means Kreutz is Shaken. (His eyes, mouth, and tattoos burn with green fire when this happens.)

Fear +1

Leaping: Kreutz can leap the same distance he can walk or

run (Pace 6 as a normal move, +1d6 as a running action).

Powered by Electricity: Any damage from electrical sources (including lightning) automatically heals one wound level rather than dealing damage! If he's undamaged, he gains 1 extra wound level temporarily! This lasts for 1 hour, and Kreutz can get no more than 1 bonus wound at any one time in this manner. (At the beginning of any adventure featuring him, Kreutz is not aware that he can be "charged up" in this fashion. If it does occur, and he's left alive to attack the PC's again, he'll likely charge himself up before his next encounter with them!)

Shocking Touch: Kreutz can charge his hands with mystic green electricity once a day for 3 rounds. His punch attacks do no extra damage, but anyone Shaken by them suffers a -2 penalty to their Vigor rolls to recover.

Size +2

DR. VENOM [Wild Card]



The last survivor of an ancient race of serpent-men, Dr. Venom is a cold, calculating killer. He operates a thriving opium business out of Southeast Asia, and surrounds himself with a small army of minions who are more afraid of him than anything else (including death!). Venom is humanoid, 6' tall and unnaturally thin, with slit-pupiled eyes, fangs, and a long forked tongue. He is completely hairless. Dr. Venom normally wears a toupee, long coat, hat, scarf, and dark glasses to conceal his appearance in public.

Attributes: Agility d12, Smarts d12, Spirit d10, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d10, Guts d10, Intimidation d12, Knowledge (Occult lore) d10, Knowledge (Criminal Underworld) d12, Lockpicking d10, Notice d12, Persuasion d12, Shooting d8, Stealth d12, Streetwise d12, Throwing d12, Tracking d12

Pace: 8, **Parry:** 9, **Toughness:** 7

Hindrances: All Thumbs (Firearms, telephones, and motorized vehicles fascinate Venom, though he has yet to master them.), Distinctive Appearance, Gloater.

Edges: Command, Fleet Footed, Followers (lots!), Frenzy, Improved Dodge, Quick, Quick Draw, and Strong Willed

Gear:

Throwing Knives (Str+1, 5/10/20)

Poisoned Darts (Str, 5/10/20): Anyone Shaken by one of these darts must make a Vigor roll at -2 or be paralyzed for 3 rounds.

Special Abilities:

Aquatic: Venom can't breathe water, but he can hold his breath for up to 15 minutes and swims at Pace 10.

Armor +1: Scaly skin.

Bite: Str+1; on a raise, instead of doing extra damage the target is poisoned (see Poison Darts above for the effects of this venom.)

Enhanced Senses: Dr. Venom has an unnatural sense of smell as well as a unique form of infravision; he halves all lighting penalties and gets a +2 bonus to all his Notice rolls.

Fear

Mesmerism: By meeting someone's gaze and making an opposed Spirit roll, Dr. Venom can mesmerize his opponents. Treat this as the *puppet* power; it has no range (he must be standing directly in front of them), and the effects last for 1 hour. Anyone who resists Venom's mesmerism once is immune to it forever; anyone who fails will be easier to mesmerize later (-2 to their next Spirit roll, then -4 on the third attempt. After three successful uses, the victim becomes a pawn of Venom for as long as they, or the Doctor, live!)

Unnatural Speed: Dr. Venom has incredible reflexes; in addition to the bonuses from Improved Dodge, he gets a +2 bonus to Parry.

KALI [Wild Card]



Is she really the Indian goddess of death and destruction, or just a strange mutant with delusions of grandeur? Who can say? What is known is that she has recruited 100 peerless killers, her own Thuggee, to serve her every murderous whim. Kali is 7' tall, both horrifying and voluptuously beautiful. She has six arms and is clothed solely in a belt made of human skulls.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d10, Spirit d12+2, Strength d12+2, Vigor d12

Skills: Fighting d10, Intimidation d12+2, Notice d10, Streetwise d10, Throwing d8

Hindrances: Delusional (Thinks she's a goddess) OR Wanted (Goddess in exile, hunted by the other Indian deities); Distinctive Appearance

Edges: Ambidextrous, Improved Block, Level Headed, Nerves of Steel, Fervor, Combat Reflexes, Improved First Strike, Followers

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 9; **Toughness:** 12

Gear:

Daggers (6): Str+1.

Special Abilities:

Armor +2: Kali is unnaturally tough.

Fear -2

Fearless

Florentine Times Six: Kali wields her six daggers with terrifying grace. She can make three attacks per round before she begins taking any multi-action penalties, and opponents are denied any gang-up bonus against her. If she chooses to attack a single target, she gets +4 to hit and damage (she's actually striking the opponent with a flurry of quick, shallow cuts).

Nightvision: She ignores all lighting penalties.

Really Hard to Kill: Kali can only be slain if all 100 of her followers are killed first. (It's taken her years to develop this pack of the truly faithful, so replacing them isn't an easy process that can take months or more.) If she's "killed" while at least one of her flock still lives, she'll rise again on the next new moon.

Size +2



FLIGHT OF THE RED TERROR

A One-Page Savage Tale by Butch Curry

Setup

This is a short adventure designed for 2-4 Novice characters. It involves some dogfighting, so brush up on the Chase/Dogfight rules before you play. When the players are making characters, they'll need to be either full combat pilots (with both Piloting and Shooting) or teamed up into pilot/gunner pairs.

Premise

You're a group of test pilots working for legendary WWI ace "Prince" Henry Princeton. For the last six months, you've been testing his latest fighter, the PAF-X1. During an exhibition flight, a mysterious figure calling himself the "Red Terror" tries to destroy the X1's and kidnaps Prince's daughter Becky. Only your heroes can stop the Terror and rescue the girl!

Cast

Before the party gets started, take a moment to introduce our supporting characters. Prince is in his early 40's, big, loud, gregarious, and all business when it comes to airplanes. He treats non-pilots—including his daughter—as second-class citizens. Becky is a drop-dead gorgeous redhead in her mid 20's, a bad girl who smokes too much and drinks whiskey from a hip flask she keeps tucked in her garter. Expert mechanic "Greasy" Gil McGillicutty is small, stoop shouldered, skinny, has a huge nose and bushy moustache, and talks like an old prospector ("Consarnit!", "Dagnabbit!", etc.).

Airshow Assault!

With all the military/industrial types out in the middle of the desert to witness the exhibition, Prince has everything riding on today's performance. Before Greasy Gil can finish fueling up the X1's, the party is raided by a group of blood-red hulled fighter planes swooping in from the west (two for each PC-piloted plane, plus one state-of-the art fighter/bomber that no one recognizes.)!

While the characters fight off the raiders, the bomber moves into position (this takes 3 rounds), drops a bomb, and flies off. The other planes follow. Without full tanks of gas, any chance of pursuit is cut short (the enemy planes get a +2 to Flee rolls and need to make 2 to succeed).

Where's the Girl?

The bomb is nothing more than a jumbo flash-bang paint bomb, filled with blood red paint. It causes no serious damage. It doesn't take long for someone to notice Becky's car standing empty, with the engine running. Prince told her to take off when the shooting started. Becky's hip flask is lying on the sand, bleeding whiskey onto the desert floor. Pinned to the driver's seat with an ornate dagger is a note:

"Princeton, drop the X1 project or the girl dies. Call the police and she dies. You have 24 hours to decide—The Red Terror."

Prince begs the PC's to find her.

Footwork

Let the characters take the lead on the investigation. Whatever avenue they choose to follow will lead them to the Terror. If you need to pump some action into the scene, have some Goons (two for each PC) burst in and attack. They can also attack if the PC's get bogged down in the investigation: a captured Goon can give them enough information to point them to the docks (see *On the Waterfront*, below). There are three obvious clues to be investigated; they can follow one or more of them.

Clue 1: Out of the West: The planes used by the Terror came from the west. They're short-range fighters, so there are only a couple of local airstrips they could've come from. A bit of poking around reveals that a strip believed to be abandoned is now occupied by the Terror's Goons! Interrogation reveals the Goons have never seen the Terror's face, but that something big is going down at the docks tonight. (If none of the Goons survive, paperwork such as bills of lading for a ship will turn up the same information.) The name on the paperwork is Harry Lime.

Clue 2: That's Not a Knife: The knife left behind in Becky's car is unusual to say the least; it looks to be of Chinese origin. A trip to Chinatown and a little asking around leads them to the Resplendent Dragon, a curio shop. The owner, Mr. Lee, sends his sons after the PC's if they get too pushy (they have d6 Attributes and d8 Fighting), but eventually reveals that he delivered a crate of the knives to the docks, to someone named Lime.

Clue 3: The Red Hurricane: The Terror's special fighter/bomber. Only a few companies could have produced it, but initially none of them own up to it. However, a pilot who's willing to talk from one of the companies, Reinhardt Aerospace, soon contacts the PC's, if they meet him down at the docks at midnight. He claims to fear for his job—and his life—if he's caught talking about the plane. His name is Harry Lime.

Who Is Harry Lime?

If the PC's think to talk to someone - the cops, Princeton, or even Greasy Gil - about Lime, they'll discover that he was a pilot during the war with Prince. Prince was Lime's CO, and had Lime dishonorably discharged when he found out Lime was an opium addict. After the war, Prince gave Harry a second chance, hiring him as a test pilot. Lime met and fell in love with Becky Princeton, a romance Prince didn't approve of. He fired Lime, who then went to work for Reinhardt Aerospace. Three months ago, a plane he was test-flying—the Red Hurricane—went down in the ocean; neither he nor the plane were recovered.

On The Waterfront

When the characters arrive at the docks, they'll find a welcoming party of 3 Goons for each PC, led by Harry Lime dressed in a flowing red robe and topped with a stainless steel full-face mask. (If the PC's haven't found out the information in *Who is Harry Lime?*, he'll provide an informative villainous tirade about why he hates Prince before the shooting starts).

Lime fights to the death, but before being dispatched by the PC's, Lime reveals that he's not the *real* Red Terror. That's when the players hear a high-pitched cackle from across the warehouse, and catch a glimpse of another red-cloaked figure. "Enjoy your time in hell, heroes," the figure mocks in an unmistakably female voice, "My father will be joining you soon. Harry... farewell, my love." Of course, the Red Terror is actually Becky Princeton, out for revenge against her father.

Seconds later, strategically placed boxes in the warehouse explode and set the whole place on fire! The PC's must brave fire and smoke to escape; make Vigor and Agility rolls as appropriate to avoid taking Fatigue from heat and smoke and to leap away from falling debris. By the time they're out, Becky is long gone.

The Dogfight

Becky is going to go gunning for Prince, of course, flying the Hurricane. When the characters go to meet Prince at the airfield again, whether it's the same night, the next day, or whenever, doesn't matter. The Hurricane swoops in moments later and attacks. The PC's have to take the X1's up again and finish her! Greasy tells them that Becky has secretly been taking flying lessons from various test pilots for years; she's one of the best he's ever seen. Prince begs them not to kill Becky; if they decide not to, they can try to disable her plane by making Called Shots, or get aboard the Hurricane by crawling out onto the wing of an X1 and leaping aboard the Hurricane (good luck!).

Goons Attributes are all d6. Pace 6, Parry 5, Toughness 5. Fighting, Driving, Guts, Piloting and Shooting at d6. Gear: Knives (Str+1) and snub .38 revolvers (10/20/30, 2d6).

Harry Lime (WC) Agility d8, all other Attributes d6. Guts d8, Piloting d8, Shooting d8. Pace 6, Parry 5, Toughness 5. Gear: Tommy gun.

Becky Princeton (WC) Agility d8, Smarts d10, Strength d4, all other Attributes d6. Guts d10, Piloting d12, Shooting d10. Edges: Ace. Gear: .32 automatic (5/10/20, 2d6-1).

Red Fighters, X1s, and the Red Hurricane Toughness: Fighters 6 (0); X1's 7 (0); Hurricane 8 (1). All have machine guns (20/40/80, 2d8, AP2); ammo begins at High.

The X1's get a +1 on opposed Piloting rolls vs. the Red Fighters; the Hurricane gets a +1 vs. the X1's.

Use a Range Increment of 10 to resolve the dogfights.

Bad Gamemasters I Have Known and Loved: The Workaholic GM

This article originally appeared in Roleplaying Tips #234, published by Johnn Fours. It was originally authored by Scott G. Zaboem and appears here courtesy of Mr. Fours. For those of you who don't know it, Johnn is the editor of the excellent Roleplaying Tips Weekly newsletter. This publication is essential reading for anyone who's "serious" about the roleplaying hobby. You can get more information by taking a look at his website: <http://www.roleplayingtips.com/index.php>. Enjoy, and don't take it personally if Scott strikes a nerve!

Introduction

Bad gamemasters are a problem, so we might as well stop denying it. Over the past ten years, I have probably read two dozen articles full of tips for gamemasters on how to handle troublesome players. It's one of the most common topics to be found in *Roleplaying Tips Weekly*. In contrast, I have never seen an article that seeks to aid the many players who are saddled with troublesome gamemasters. My experience, however, has shown me that campaigns are more often wrecked by bad gamemasters than by bad players.

Good reasons exist why player-bashing is popular and gamemasters are rarely criticized. For one, most players are probably worried about expressing their opinions. They don't want to become labeled as bitter or immature, and there is a certain amount of legitimacy to this logic. Second, players often realize that their gamemaster's job is a difficult one and are willing to cut them some slack. This slack given to gamemasters is a good thing, but only in moderation. Third, most players simply don't realize that there is anything they can do.

The problem with all three of these reasons is that they don't allow the gamemaster any chance for improvement. When a chronic and substantial problem is disrupting the game, I think the gamemaster usually doesn't realize that such a problem exists. Other times, the gamemaster knows that something is wrong, but no one will tell her exactly what it is.

The point of this article is to help players identify, analyze, and aid a specific type of gamemaster in trouble: the Workaholic GM. There are actually many things players can do both in and out of game to assist such a GM, as discussed below. Remember: every bad gamemaster is a good gamemaster with a few select bad habits.

Example of a Workaholic GM

My present gamemaster is great. The Gamemistress, I will call her for now, is a solid story weaver. She handles small to medium-sized groups efficiently. She's involved in each player character's personal goals. She has a solid grasp of the rules. Best of all, her multi-layered conspiracies cause us to gather the morning after a session and trade theories until we drive ourselves crazy with paranoia. Unfortunately, we can't get her to run a game for us for more than two or three months at a time because she is highly prone to burnout.

In our last full campaign, the Gamemistress was handling extensive player-to-NPC storylines through e-mail between sessions, making detailed dungeon maps for her

own use, meticulously shading each square of rock on her graph paper and preparing countless NPCs in full detail.

As the campaign went on, experience was handed out less and less frequently. As a result, characters who accomplished goals during recent sessions were rewarded less generously than those who did well several sessions earlier. In addition, the Gamemistress began making excuses to end sessions early or cancel them altogether. After that six month campaign, we allowed her a break for another six months while others took turns behind the shield. Her next attempt only lasted three sessions before she quit and left our characters forever trapped in a dungeon.

Analysis of the Workaholic GM

The workaholic is well-meaning and loves the game, but allows banal game preparation to take too much of her free time. If a gamemaster ever brags that she spent a certain number of hours preparing for the session, you may take this as a bad sign.

This type of gamemaster hasn't learned to use her time efficiently. She may be spending way too much time doing simple things. She also is inclined to micromanage every aspect of the game. Micromanagement becomes a problem in a medium-sized or larger group. Likewise, running different campaigns simultaneously for different groups can accelerate burnout. If she tries to sidetrack the group with CCGs or movies, it's time to intervene.

Dealing with a Workaholic Gamemaster

Speak Up: If there is a Workaholic GM in your group, the worst thing you can do is ignore the problem. First, speak with the gamemaster. It wouldn't be rude at all to simply ask her, "Do you feel like you are about to burn out?"

Volunteer: Next, you should volunteer. In a previous article, I outlined several different ways that an assistant gamemaster can carry some of the proverbial burden (see 5 Ways to Harness Game Master Assistants in Issue #144). Tasks as simple as keeping track of experience points for her can be a huge help. Another great way to help out is answering rules questions for new players. If you don't work well with newbies and wish to avoid responsibility, ask to be given charge over mood music, the map, or anything else that interests you. A gamemaster who is skilled in working with large groups will likely assign idle players the task of roleplaying minor NPCs, but an observant player may volunteer for the job without being asked. There are many

other ways to take on gamemaster responsibilities, but these few are a good start.

Advise: The best way to help a workaholic gamemaster is a little tricky, and I don't suggest this step be taken in every situation. A workaholic may need to be shown ways to run a game more efficiently. No gamemaster will ever think to ask, but if done politely, tips may be given nonetheless. I directed my Gamemistress to the automated map creators at <http://www.irony.com>. As far as I know, she never actually used them, so I probably wasn't tactful enough.

Switch: As a last resort, try switching games. You could suggest that the gamemaster try running a game with simpler rules and a less epic setting for a while. Using myself as an example, I run the Star Wars RPG. The second edition with the old West End Game D6 rules is my personal standard game. I am willing to run other games, but I always come back to Star Wars. Most bad gamemasters are actually good gamemasters who are running the wrong game.

Unlike the player characters she terrorizes, the Workaholic GM will usually not improve with experience. Instead, she may become more of a workaholic and more prone to burnout. I myself was a workaholic gamemaster until I observed some very skilled gamemasters and saw how efficiently they ran their games. There is help for the worst workaholic.

Commentary from Johnn

Thanks for writing about this sensitive issue Scott. I've definitely been guilty of over-planning and over-preparing as a GM, and I've also played under a Workaholic GM. You made a good analysis of this ailment.

Some additional thoughts on the topic: Perhaps the GM has lost her confidence? Confidence is an ever-changing thing, regardless of circumstance. Professional athletes, for example, who are the best in the world at what they do, can lose confidence for a number of reasons. A home-run hitter can enter a slump and a reliable goal scorer can hit a dry spell. So, even though the players all agree a GM is awesome, she might be feeling unconfident and so she over-prepares.

Have you heard of the "fourth wall"?: I believe there's a fourth wall in RPGs. It exists in the players' minds as a suspension of disbelief. Some GMs' greatly fear exposing this fourth wall in a game. They fear they'll do something to break everyone's sense of disbelief in a blunt, ungraceful way. This not only shatters everyone's disbelief, but creates an uncomfortable and awkward social moment.

For example, imagine if the game session is going well and the GM suddenly says, "Oh no! I didn't plan for this. I don't know what to do." In many groups, that would be a shocker. The players would be ripped right out of roleplaying mode and be facing a real-life uncomfortable moment.

I believe this shattering of the fourth wall is a fear GMs have that's akin to the fear of making a fool of yourself

while public speaking. To compensate, GMs will over-prepare so that they'll never get caught-off guard.

Perhaps your GM has lost her passion and enjoyment of the hobby? It's a bit of a chicken and egg problem. Did the burn-out cause her enjoyment to wane? Or was she already losing interest and this scared her, so she over-prepared like a crazed doctor applying the paddles to a dead heart-attack victim? I personally went through this stage a few years ago. Fortunately, I tried some of the same solutions you mention and they helped a lot. I took a break, played different games, and played more than I GMed.

The pressure for realism is greater than ever before. As the RPG crowd ages and matures, and the quantity of material about GMing on the net proliferates, I feel there is a heavy pressure put on GMs today to "get things right." Ironically, I think this pressure comes from writers and not from the players.

There is a lot of criticism in articles, books, and forums about dungeon ecologies, for example. People who write about dungeons these days expect a realistic ecosystem in dungeon design. Long gone is the time when you could get away with a large dragon in a square chamber surrounded by square rooms filled with other creature types. How do these critters survive? Where do they get their water and food? Wouldn't they just kill each other?

GMs who read this good advice can fall prey to building up huge, self-made requirements to get things "right." They read, collect books, and take too long in preparation. Now, their plans are so brittle that the PCs break things left and right too frequently for the GM's comfort level.

One solution is trust. The GM needs to learn to trust the players. Players will almost always give a GM the benefit of the doubt. If an illogical thing occurs, players will just ignore it, rationalize it away, or ask the GM about it. Here's the fourth wall again. How does a GM react when a player exposes a logic error, mistake, or problem? Again, most players will work with the GM and give him the benefit of the doubt. Everyone makes mistakes, and players know GMs have got a lot to do.

A GM who takes this situation badly though, will work even harder to make things more realistic for next session, which unfortunately, is the wrong approach, as per your article.



Gumshoes and Femme Fatales

Pulp-Era Archetypes for Savage Worlds, by Bob Bretz

In place of the regular Bucket o' Chum column, Bob Bretz presents the following: In the 1920's and 30's, a nickel could buy you a magazine made of cheap, pulpy paper with a garish and often risqué cover that was capable of transporting you to worlds of adventure where all men were brave and all women beautiful. Labeled "pulp", after the paper they were printed on, they told epic tales of heroic adventure and fantastic vision. Living in this wondrous world were a number of iconic character types that lent themselves to high adventure and tales of derring-do. Private eyes, intrepid reporters, brilliant inventors, and other men and women of adventure were called upon to battle the evil machinations of gangsters, corrupt politicians, mad scientists, criminal masterminds, Nazis and even advanced scouts from alien races. The heroes of pulp battled evil head-on with a clenched fist or a trusty .38 snub-nose pistol with little regard to the danger involved. They were, and still are, the stuff of imagination and dreams.

These archetypes are not meant to be taken at face value and can be easily altered to best fit the style of your individual campaign. It's also possible for a player to use a given archetype as a starting point, modifying the template in order to create a unique character. So while these archetypes were designed to represent the iconic nature of the pulps, they are ultimately yours to use as you see fit.

THE ADVENTURER: Rich playboys, bored athletes, grizzled Teamsters, The All-American Joe, and dozens of other types; The Adventurer is a catch-all archetype for all those pulp heroes that don't fit neatly within any of the other archetypes. Included in this class are characters with limited or defined occupations, such as sidekicks and the many non-femme fatale female characters of pulp literature.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Driving d6, Fighting d6, Guts d8, Notice d8, Riding d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d6

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Gear: \$100 (Annual Income \$1,368), .38 snub-nose revolver (Range: 12/24/48; Shots: 6; Damage: 2d6; AP 1), set of normal clothes

Hindrances: Enemy (Minor: Mob Boss, Business Rival, Romantic Foil, etc.), Heroic

Edges: Luck

THE ARCHAEOLOGIST: While the more academically-inclined Archaeologists are to be found in a library, laboratory, or behind a large desk in the museum, this archetype is more likely to be found in the jungles of Africa looking for King Solomon's Mine. In this dangerous role, they may have to use their brawn as well as their guile to advance their studies. Unfortunately, the local authorities in most countries don't see them as heroes rescuing lost artifacts, but rather consider them grave robbers and rabble-rousers.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d6, Investigation d6, Knowledge (Archaeology) d8, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Streetwise d6, Survival d6

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Gear: \$100 (\$3,111), bull whip (Damage: Str+1; Reach 2; grants +1 to Tricks; -1 Parry), Webley Revolver (Range: 12/24/48; Shots: 6; Damage: 2d6+1; AP 1), leather jacket, Stetson hat, set of travel clothes

Hindrances: Curious, Phobia (Minor: Pick One), Wanted (Minor: Local Authorities)

Edges: Luck

THE AVENGER: A mysterious stalker of the night, the Avenger is a shadowy figure that is dedicated to fighting criminals in the "Big City". They assume an alternate identity to help spread fear within the criminal community; they nonetheless make only a small effort to hide their true identity, perhaps only covering their face with a simple scarf. Their motivations are often unknown, but their effectiveness is apparent by the lack of criminal activity within their sphere of influence. The Avenger is the progenitor of the Golden Age superhero...

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Driving d6, Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d8, Streetwise d6

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5

Gear: \$100 (\$1,368), Mauser pistol (Range: 12/24/48; Shots: 6; Damage: 2d6; AP 1), an appropriate "costume"

Hindrances: Enemy (Minor: Mob Boss), Heroic, Quirk (Minor: Always leaves a "calling card")

Edges: None

THE AVIATOR: During the so-called Pulp Era, airplanes were still a fairly new concept. Most people had never actually seen one. Many adventurers raised some money, built a plane and put on shows to exhibit their skills. Some raced their planes, while others did stunt shows such as the famous Barnstormers of the 1920's. Industrialist Howard Hughes made much of his fortune in the burgeoning aviation industry. These daring men, more at home in the wild blue yonder than on the ground, were always on the lookout for adventure and the opportunity to make a few bucks.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d6, Notice d6, Piloting d10, Repair d6, Shooting d8, Taunt d4

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Gear: \$100 (\$1,368), .38 snub-nose revolver (Range: 12/24/48; Shots: 6; Damage: 2d6; AP 1), leather flight jacket, set of typical clothes

Hindrances: Enemy (Minor: Rival aviator), Loyal, Overconfident

Edges: Ace

THE EASTERN MYSTIC: Hailing from the more remote areas of Asia (such as Tibet), the Eastern Mystic is an individual on a quest to uncover the great secrets of the world. Through meditation and study they have unlocked the secrets of the mind and are able to tap into their psychic potential. When they travel to Western countries, such as America, they often are subjected to racism and treated as second-class citizens. The Mystic believes he can change the hearts of men by sharing his great wisdom; and if that doesn't work they can always fall back on their extensive knowledge of the martial arts (which, by the way, are nearly unknown in the West during this period).

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d6, Knowledge (Philosophy) d6, Notice d4, Psionics d8, Stealth d8, Throwing d6
Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5
Gear: \$50 (Varies), walking staff (Damage: Str+1), suitable "Eastern" clothes
Hindrances: Code of Honor, Pacifist (Minor), Poverty
Edges: Arcane Background (Psionics)

THE FEMME FATALE: An irresistibly attractive woman, who leads men into danger for her own needs, is the standard definition of a Femme Fatale. A classic situation involving a Femme Fatale is the mysterious woman who hires a detective to find an item, only to find that she was using him to locate and kill the person who stole the item from her. They are the perfect foils for a trusting, heroic adventurer who is often unfamiliar with the wily ways of these wicked women. They are dangerous and willing to use their beauty, or anything else, in order to attain their goals. They are included with these heroic archetypes because of they often portray themselves as heroic, possibly for several months or even years, until they spring their trap and reveal their true nature.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Driving d6, Fighting d6, Notice d8, Persuasion d8, Riding d6, Shooting d6, Taunt d6
Charisma: -2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5
Gear: \$100 (\$1,368), stiletto (Damage: Str+1), sexy dress
Hindrances: Bloodthirsty, Greedy (Minor), Stubborn
Edges: Attractive, Connections

THE GUMSHOE DETECTIVE: Often a washed up former police detective, the Gumshoe Detective hires out his services to anyone willing to pay his fees. More often than not, the client turns out to be less than honorable and frequently doesn't pay up even after the detective puts in many hours of hard work. Usually broke, they are always on the lookout for a new client, in part to support the ever-faithful secretary who keeps his office running from day to day. Such is the life of the detective; often the only honorable man in a world of intrigue and mystery.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d8
Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d6, Investigation d8, Notice d8, Shooting d6, Streetwise d8
Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6
Gear: \$50 (\$684), .38 snub-nose revolver (Range: 12/24/48, Shots: 6, Damage: 2d6, AP 1), ratty trench coat, out-of-style suit
Hindrances: Enemy (Major: Mob Boss), Poverty, Vow (Minor: Solve the case at all costs)
Edges: Investigator

THE INVENTOR: Master of gizmos, the Inventor is intrigued by the complexities of metal and electricity. He is a master of "Weird Science", an advanced level of mechanics and electronics that allows the Inventor to create devices well beyond the everyday capacities of the Pulp Era. Not happy just being in the workshop, Inventors want to get out and field-test their inventions under real-world conditions. Somewhat unkempt, too busy to worry about unimportant things, they more than make up for their lack of social decorum through the brilliance of their inventions.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d4, Vigor d6
Skills: Driving d6, Fighting d4, Investigation d8, Knowledge (science) d8, Repair d8, Shooting d6, Weird Science d10
Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5
Gear: \$100, Portable Tool Kit, Unkempt Clothes, Annual Income: \$2,520
Hindrances: Cautious, Curious, Quirk (Minor: Bathes infrequently)
Edges: Arcane Background (Weird Science)

THE KID: Adventure-seeking young kids who try to help out sometimes accompany the heroes of the pulps. At first, the Kid appears to be more of a nuisance than a help, but in the end they find a way to bring the hero an important piece of information or warn him of approaching danger, saving his life and revealing their true worth. Remarkably, the Kid puts himself into danger all the time, but always seems to come out of it all unscratched and ready to do it all over again!

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d4, Vigor d6
Skills: Fighting d4, Guts d6, Notice d6, Stealth d4, Taunt d6, Throwing d6
Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5
Gear: \$50 (\$0), normal clothes
Hindrances: Big Mouth, Poverty, Young
Edges: Luck, Great Luck

THE LAB RAT: In a world in which widespread knowledge of radiation, genetics, and the mysteries of outer space are unknown, the Lab Rat seeks to understand the natural mysteries of the world around him. In the Pulp Age creatures once thought extinct, evidence of aliens from outer space, and emerging powers of the mind strive to keep the Lab Rat on the path to discovering the ultimate truths of the universe. As far as he's concerned, there must be a rational explanation to these and the myriad other mysteries that confound him on a daily basis. Lab Rats may travel the world to uncover the secrets to these mysteries and try to understand them; however, their studies just as often lead them into unwanted adventures for which they are not at all ready for!

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d4, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Driving d6, Fighting d6, Investigation d8, Knowledge (Choose Specialty) d8, Knowledge (Choose Another Specialty) d8, Notice d6, Repair d6, Shooting d6
Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5
Gear: \$100 (\$2,520), portable lab kit, lab coat, ordinary clothes
Hindrances: Curious, Doubting Thomas, Vow (Minor: Uncover hidden truths)
Edges: Scholar

THE REPORTER: The Reporter is the eyes and ears of the city. Investigating gangsters, corrupt politicians and other juicy leads to expose the rotten underbelly of the Big City is what keeps this character going. Their self-imposed crusades often cause the Reporter to become embroiled in dangerous and deadly adventures. Constantly on the hunt for that next big story, they will uncover the secrets that others would rather not be told.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Driving d6, Fighting d6, Guts d6, Investigation d8, Notice d8, Shooting d6, Streetwise d8
Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5
Gear: \$100 (\$1,368), camera, normal clothes
Hindrances: Curious, Enemy (Minor: Mob Boss), Vow (Minor: Meeting deadlines)
Edges: Investigator

THE SAVAGE LORD: Many of the worlds' more remote areas are still unexplored during the Pulp Era. Dense jungles, vast deserts, and deep oceans hide lost civilizations and monstrous creatures long thought extinct. The master of these realms is the Savage Lord. Sometimes they were abandoned as children and raised by local populations, sometimes they are city dwellers who have grown tired of the hustle and bustle and seek an escape from the daily grind of life in an industrial society. Whatever the reason, they defend their savage world from outside interference, but will help those who enter their wild kingdom unprepared for its danger or those who come with open arms and an honest heart.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d6
Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Riding d6, Survival d6, Swimming d6, Throwing d6
Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5
Gear: Dagger, spear, loin cloth
Hindrances: All Thumbs, Loyal, Vow (Major: Defend the wilds from intruders)
Edges: Beast Master

THE STAGE MAGICIAN: Acolytes of the ancient arts and keeper of mystical secrets—at least that's how they like to portray themselves. The Stage Magician is just one of the many flavors of stage performers popular before the age of television. They frequently find themselves involved in adventures through what often appears as nothing more than fate. They are often called upon to perform their skills (sleight of hand, hypnosis, and illusion) for pay; however, they just as often research ancient mysteries and dusty tomes in search of true mystical power. More often than not they seem to fall into situations they are just not prepared for!

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Fighting d6, Investigation d6, Knowledge (Stage magic) d8, Lockpicking d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d8, Shooting d6
Charisma: +2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5
Gear: \$100 (\$2,500), portable magic tricks, tuxedo and cape
Hindrances: Curious, Doubting Thomas, Quirk (Minor: Performs magic tricks to distract foes)
Edges: Charismatic



The beauty of the *Savage Worlds* system is that adapting material from other games or sources is relatively simple and straightforward; with that in mind, I present a list of links to some of my favorite pulp resources. I hope that you find them as useful as I have.

Adventure! RPG:

<http://www.white-wolf.com/Games/Pages/Adventure.html>

Daredevils RPG:

http://www.drivethrurpg.com/catalog/index.php?cPath=70_113

GURPS Cliffhangers (RPG Sourcebook):

<http://www.sjgames.com/gurps/books/Cliffhangers/>

The Dirty 30's:

<http://www.paper-dragon.com/1939/>

The Bloody Pulp:

<http://fearlessrpg.tripod.com/BloodyPulps.pdf>

Additional Pulp Archetypes:

<http://fearlessrpg.tripod.com/PulpArch.pdf>

The Value of a Dollar:

<http://fearlessrpg.tripod.com/ValueofaDollar.pdf>

Tales of Future Past:

<http://www.davidszondy.com/future/futurepast.htm>

The Vintage Library:

<http://www.vintagelibrary.com/index.cfm>

Tales of the Gold Monkey:

<http://www.goldmonkey.com/>

The Internet Guide to Jazz Age Slang:

<http://home.earthlink.net/~dlarkins/slang-pg.htm>

World War One.Com:

<http://www.worldwar1.com/>

Ancient Scripts.Com:

<http://www.ancientscripts.com/>

Library of Congress Map Collection:

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gmdhtml/gmdhome.html>

NIGHTCLUBS AND SECRET SOCIETIES

An insider's look at a couple of pulp staples, by Tom Harrison

Posh nightclubs and secret societies are staples of the pulp genre. Not only do they provide plot hooks for the characters, but they also go a long way toward recreating the feel of pre-Depression and post-World War II society. In this article, Tom Harrison takes a look at a couple of these establishments in the hopes that his work will inspire you to create some nightclubs and secret societies of your own.



What the Public Knows

Located in the Queens borough of New York City, the Succubus Club is a low-key establishment just outside the regular entertainment district. Few people are even aware of it, but it does a steady business and has a large number of regular customers. It is a private club and membership is quite expensive. Non-members must be the invited guests of paying members—you can't just walk in off the street and buy a membership. The main doors are manned by imposing bouncers who are resistant to bribes. Naturally, there are special tables set aside for visiting celebrities.

The grandeur of the club is immediately apparent when one enters the club. The walls of the foyer are polished hardwood, dark and inviting. Lighting is dim and intimate throughout. Hosts are present to see to the needs of the members, whether to take a coat or call a cab. A great staircase leads into a main dining area, a cavernous room of green marble. Rows of tables all radiate from a central stage and dance floor where a sultry jazz ensemble performs. The star attraction is a Caribbean singer, Fabiana, whose voice is best described as mercurial. The club's attendance is best on the nights she performs.

The proprietor and owner of the club is a wealthy Romanian immigrant, Zaharia Dodrescu. He can often be found mingling among the members after midnight. He is a mysterious figure who is never seen outside the club. Zaharia is aloof, but has a warm demeanor.

The Succubus Club is fully staffed. Despite the Depression, they have not let staff go. Much of the staff has been working here since the club opened in 1929.

Memberships costs \$100 a year. All of the existing clientele are well-to-do. The club reserves the right to refuse or revoke the membership of those who Zaharia deems unwelcome.

What the Public Doesn't Know

The Succubus Club is unique among New York nightlife in that it specifically caters to vampires. That's not to say all its members are children of the night. The majority of them are normal men and women. Only a few elite members know the truth, and they are very protective of the secret.

Beneath the club is a secret series of chambers where these elite members congregate. It is accessible only through a particular service elevator that is always guarded. Only the vampires of the club know of these chambers. Those mortals they bring with them are given a delicious death.

A few of the mortal members of the Succubus Club have been transformed into craven lackeys of their vampire hosts. This is typically done only when a member of the club (or a visitor) learns too much but his disappearance would raise too many questions. These lackeys are those who have fed on vampire blood, but not enough to become vampires themselves. This quickly becomes an intense addiction! These mortals will take the secrets of the club with them to the grave, so great is the compulsion.

Ongoing Schemes and Plot Hooks

- Blackmailing the New York Lieutenant Governor, who has occasionally frequented the club, is the most notable scheme at the moment. In addition to compromising photos, Zaharia is in possession of samples of the politician's blood, kept in stasis through sorcery.
- Zaharia, an amateur sorcerer, is currently searching for a rare, arcane tome from India called the *Book of Black Bones*. A ceremonial chamber exists deep below the club where he conducts his foul rituals.
- Many of the club's elite clientele have grown fond of a strange drug, a mix of opium and vampire blood. Among the drug's effects is that it makes humans highly susceptible to suggestion.
- Several high profile individuals are actually vampires. Most of them became so while members of the Succubus Club. The characters might find their plans thwarted by some of these influential creatures of the night.
- The Mob is not really in control of New York's docks and waste disposal industry—Zaharia just lets them think that they are.

Key Players at the Club

Zaharia Dodrescu (Wild Card)

Vampire, Ancient

Zaharia is several hundred years old. He immigrated to New York thirty years ago. He is incredibly wealthy. He has a mercurial personality. Only the most elite members of the club will ever meet Zaharia. To others he is a mysterious figure shrouded in rumor.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d12, Spirit d10, Strength d12+3, Vigor d12

Skills: Fighting d10, Guts d10, Intimidation d12, Knowledge (Occult) d12, Notice d10, Persuasion d10, Throwing d10

Pace: 6; **Charisma:** +6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 10

Hindrances: Collector (Minor: Zaharia is an impulsive collector of some type of item—wines, art, ceramics or maybe even cupie dolls! This is a mild obsession. He is willing to spend exorbitant amounts of money on rare objects of this sort.)

Edges: Very Attractive, Charismatic, Level-Headed, Very Rich

Special Abilities: As Vampire, Ancient (see the *Savage Worlds* rulebook for details)

Vampire Seductress

Vampire, Young

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d12+1, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d8, Shooting d6, Swim d8, Throwing d6

Pace: 6; **Charisma:** +4; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 9

Edges: Very Attractive

Special Abilities: As Vampire, Young (see the *Savage Worlds* rulebook for details)

Bouncers

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d10, Guts d10, Intimidation d8, Notice d8, Shooting d8, Streetwise d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 7

Edges: Block, Brawny, Combat Reflexes

Gear: S&W .38 Police Revolver (12/24/48; Damage: 2d6+1; RoF 1; Shots 6; AP 1), Baton, Knife

Special Abilities:

The bouncers who work the doors at the succubus club are all under the charms of the vampiresses at the club.



The Most Ancient Society of the Blood of the Pharaoh's

Because the ancient ways are the best ways...

The ancient Egyptians believed the Pharaohs were living gods. Today, a small cabal of men and women exist who claim to be descendants from the original line of the Pharaohs. These people meet in secret, working to place themselves in positions of power that they might reclaim their birthright...as masters of the world!

This secret society has chapters in the most influential cities in the world: London, Paris, and New York to name a few. Its membership consists of politicians, wealthy entrepreneurs and other people of power. The demeanor of the membership varies. Some are benign philanthropists who hope to use their power and influence to improve life for all mankind. Others long for dominion and wealth and for the glory and reverence once visited on their ancestors in ancient Egypt.

The leaders of the society can indeed trace their lineage back to the dynasties of ancient Egypt. None are pure descendants, but this matters not, for they still believe themselves to be gods among men, with untapped powers waiting to be discovered. They surround themselves with sycophants and other attendants who answer to them, hoping to establish themselves within the hierarchy of power of the dawning technological age.

For the most part, the existence of this society is unknown to the majority of the world's population. A few scholars of the occult and of secret organizations are aware of its existence, but are ignorant of its true designs and membership. Members are forced to enter a strict vow of confidence and secrecy, and those who betray this vow rarely live long enough to expose the organization's deepest secrets. Scholars who dig too deeply into the roots of the organization are similarly dealt with.

Members of this organization can be from any nationality and race, though the majority of members live in western nations. Their appearance does not necessarily betray their Egyptian ancestry, so far removed are most members from the line of Pharaohs. As an indication of brotherhood, a member wears a silver ankh on a slim chain around his or her neck.

Naturally, members of this organization are firm supporters of archaeological research and Egyptology studies in universities. Their most delicate research is handled through private grants and patronage, since it would not do for some secrets of the Double Kingdom to be known to all.

Ongoing Society Schemes and Plot Hooks

- The search for the “daughter of Isis,” who must be sacrificed to Anubis to restore the former glory of the Pharaohs and restore the Egyptian pantheon.
- The assassination of Adolf Hitler in Germany, whose interest in the occult and interrogation of German members have led the organization to determine he is a danger to their aims.
- The financial backing of Norwegian Scientist, Live Kristiansen, who is investigating anthropological similarities between the Mayans and the Egyptians.
- Through its research efforts, the organization have come into possession of a number of anthropological artifacts of mysterious (and mystical) origin.

Mystical Artifacts in the Possession of the Society

- **The Rod of Thoth:** A scepter of yellow and red gold marked with hieroglyphics, recovered from the tomb of an anointed scholar who served Neferirkara Kakai, third King of the Old Kingdom, 5th Dynasty (2477-2467 BC). When certain hieroglyphs are read, the rod begins to glow with a brilliant white light that does not harm the eyes. Those within the glow gain +2 to Smarts and Knowledge rolls.
- **The White Crown of King Sekhemkhet:** a tall Egyptian crown, typical of Old Kingdom fashion. It is believed that whoever wears this crown cannot be defeated in battle. This artifact is highly sought after by Nazi operatives! The wearer is considered to have the following Leadership Edges: Command, Fervor, Hold the Line and Inspire. He also adds one level to the skills Knowledge (Battle) and Knowledge (Tactics), if possessed.

New Powers Available to Arcane Characters

***Editor:** Bob Johnston submitted these powers. My original intent was to include them in a future issue; however, they fit so well with the “feel” of the Most Ancient Society of the Blood of the Pharaoh’s that I decided to add them to Tom’s original article.*

Bestow Benefice/Curse

Rank: Seasoned

Power Points: 3

Range: Touch

Duration: 3 (1/round)

Trappings: Evil Eye, rag doll & big pin, pinch of salt

Description: With this power you can instill a Novice or Seasoned level Edge or minor Hindrance on someone else. The Edge or Hindrance is chosen when the power is bought. If use of this power would “double” an existing Edge or Hindrance then the effect of the power is in fact doubled for the duration of the power.

Bestow Greater Benefice/Curse

Rank: Heroic

Power Points: 5

Range: Touch

Duration: 3 (1/round)

Trappings: Evil Eye, rag doll & big pin, pinch of salt

Description: With this power a you can instill a Veteran or Heroic level Edge or major Hindrance on someone else. The Edge or Hindrance is chosen when the power is bought, though knowledge of the first level Edge or minor Hindrance is not required. If use of this power would “double” an existing Edge or Hindrance then the effect of the power is in fact doubled for the duration of the power.

Noteworthy Society Members

- Dorian Lacour, a French Aristocrat
- Joseph Landon, a California movie mogul
- Daniel, a wealthy New York philanthropist with close ties to the city government
- Omolara Maga, an African noble from the Ivory Coast
- Rudolf Berend Eckerman, a German and member of the Nazi party with close ties to Adolf Hitler
- Musa ag Awinagh, a North African warlord

Here are some links that may assist you in creating your own secret organizations, nightclubs, and fringe groups...

Mind Surf with the Skeptic:

<http://home.earthlink.net/~promethean/secrets.html>

Secret Organizations:

<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14071b.htm>

The Illuminati Conspiracy Archive:

<http://www.conspiracyarchive.com/>

The Jazz Age—Flapper Culture & Style:

http://www.geocities.com/flapper_culture/

Jazz Age Culture:

<http://faculty.pittstate.edu/~knichols/jazzage.html>

Egyptology Resources:

<http://www.newton.cam.ac.uk/egypt/>

Farshores:

<http://www.100megsfree4.com/farshores/amyst.htm>

Ancient Mysteries (Edward Cayce):

<http://www.edgarcayce.org/am/>

Mysticism Resources Page:

<http://www.clas.ufl.edu/users/qthursby/mys/>

Vampire Earth

The lowdown on an upcoming Savage release from its author, E.E. Knight

For those of you that don't already know, E.E. Knight, author of the Vampire Earth series of novels is the latest Savage Worlds licensee. Don't know what Vampire Earth is all about? Well, after reading this article, take a trip on over to his official website: <http://www.vampireearth.com> and check it out. You won't be disappointed!



Why an RPG?

The *Vampire Earth* series sprouted from a campaign I ran with the *Aftermath* RPG around 1980 or '81. The campaign was little more than a pastiche of Wells' *War of the Worlds*, but there were vampiric aliens, quislings, and so on for the heroes to battle; lots of mutants too, though I've discarded much of that in my books. So it was always niggling at my imagination that I should come full circle with this story, and once the books were out there and selling well enough I sat down and did it with the aid of a few friends.

I half-jokingly tell people that to get an idea of *Vampire Earth* they should just imagine occupied Europe circa 1941, swap out the Nazis for vampires, and they pretty much have it. There are concentration camps, slave labor, propaganda broadcasts, underground organizations, guerillas like those of Tito or the Soviet Partisan armies, free armies battling for civilization as we know it... and an assortment of butchers, maniacs, and thugs helping the side of evil.

The condensed version of *Vampire Earth* is that humanity has been caught up in a millennia-old war between two factions of a godlike (in the Arthur C. Clarke sense) race called the Lifeweavers. The Lifeweavers lived on nine different worlds, including, very quietly, on Earth. About twelve thousand years ago a group of Lifeweavers on a planet called Kur illegally researched an ancient "Great Old One" practice of achieving near-immortality through infusions of "vital aura" from living creatures, essentially becoming vampires. These "Kurian Lifeweavers" went to war against their brothers, devouring auras with the aid of harvesting avatars that do the dangerous and dirty work of extraction. The "good" Lifeweavers managed to shut the gates between the worlds. On Earth, the good Lifeweavers used humans to stamp out the Kurian menace, the inspiration for our vampires and other monsters of legend. These Lifeweavers also gave select humans special powers to make them a match (nearly!) for the invaders, thus giving rise to a few heroic legends as well. We've garbled all that history in the eons since.

In 2022 the Kurians came back to Earth. They engineered everything from earthquakes to wars to epidemics to break up human society. This time they won. It's the year 2065, and as it says on the first *Vampire Earth* novel "Earth is Under New Management".

There is a resistance, helped by the Lifeweavers, and free areas in out-of-the-way places. Once again the Lifeweavers are "modifying" humans to make them a match for the Reapers and other menaces, but the resistance is scattered, outnumbered, and outgunned. It's a pretty rich field for role-play. Characters have no end of challenges and wrongs to right!

Game Development

I wanted a flexible, fast-paced rules system. To me the world meant more than the rules. Different groups want different kinds of role-play...you have the campaigns that are almost all skirmish-based at one end to the deep role-players on the other. I wanted to give GMs and players the freedom to run different sorts of campaigns. I contacted most of the major game companies (*White Wolf*: Thanks, but no thanks; *GURPS*: No more post-apocs!) and even Shane (who passed on the project when I first hit him up) thinking since it was a bit of a cross between *Deadlands* and *Weird Wars* he'd be interested. Unfortunately, Shane had too many hotcakes on his griddle in the spring of 2004 and had to pass on the project. I ended up developing the sourcebook and playtesting, well, more like "partially playtesting" it with the *Action!*TM System—an open source ruleset which I'm not here to knock, despite what I say below.

The *Action!*TM System just didn't fit. It had holes in it you could drive a truck through (that is, if there were vehicle rules) and attempts to run my "starter" adventure turned into 14-hour marathons. A couple of people noted that some of the more military campaigns would be skirmish-heavy and a game-store manager I hit up for advice said I should look into a *Savage Worlds* license. Ting! At least that's what I heard when the little bell in my head went off—because early on, when I was fishing for ideas about the RPG on the *Vampire Earth* forum (<http://www.fossilrecords.net/vampireearth/index.php>) I had a gentleman from England who rather passionately advocated *Savage Worlds* as a solid and flexible system that was just perfect for the kind of two-fisted action I write. And when I say passionate, I mean PASSIONATE, as in "I have seen the light brothers, and The Creator's initials are SLH!"

So I picked up the rules and hacked up some *Vampire Earth* *Savage Worlds* characters. And boy was that easy. So much of what I needed was right there. I got increasingly excited as I tried a *Road Warrior*-style vehicle chase, had some fast, furious fun, and sat down to write another email to Shane, this time asking about a license. Make that "begging" (let's be honest here). I sent him my sourcebook as it stood and some of the graphics I'd put together. He offered some great advice and gave me the go-ahead to do further development, with the caveat that if the end product wasn't up to snuff it would all go away, though he didn't foresee problems (so do me a favor and write Pinnacle that you want to see this game...that is, if you want to see this game).

If I get approval, I intend to have the *Vampire Earth Savage Worlds Sourcebook* into production late February—just prior to the launch of the third *Vampire Earth* book (*Tale of the Thunderbolt*) in March.

Savage Worlds, a Love Story

I'm very excited to be involved with *Savage Worlds*. It lets you pack a lot of fun into a brief amount of gaming. To me, a perfect 4-6 hour gaming session should allow you to pretty much act out a movie. That's with a setup, conflict, and resolution—though even if you have the pizza delivered, few actually work out that way due to laborious mechanics.

I'd bet my vampire fangs that you could do *Raiders of the Lost Ark* with *Savage Worlds* in six hours, provided you did your prep work and had Indy, Marion, Sallah and so on generated ahead of time. Think of just the events in Egypt: attempted poisoning, fist-and-sword-fighting in a bazaar, blowing up a truck, nattering with the villain, sneaking out to a desert, penetrating a Nazi archeological site, finding a map-room and deducing a dig site, more sneaking around, digging, exploring, snake-burning, getting trapped, getting out, a fistfight at a flying wing, machine-gunning a truck full of soldiers from the flying wing, running away from exploding flying wing, a horse chasing a truck, cars chasing a truck, fistfights in the truck, and then an escape by boat...whew! With most games, the players' eyes would be glazing over about the time the big bad German mechanic gets turned into propeller-processed wiener schnitzel.

A good GM will keep the cards falling and the action chugging, and if you've got a mouthful of nachos when it's time for your nine of diamonds to go...well, you just stand there gaping while others act—which brings me to another thing I love about *Savage Worlds*: the cards. The action deck, "raises" and so on makes gaming feel a bit like high-stakes gambling, and nothing's more exciting for everyone around the table than when old Smilin' Jack appears. Time to chew bubble gum and kick ass...only there're no rules for bubble gum (props to John Carpenter)!



What to Expect from the *Vampire Earth Sourcebook*

I built the Sourcebook around the three “worlds” (a rather unholy trinity) that exist on Earth circa 2065. Most readers of the *Vampire Earth* series will want to play a “Freehold” campaign as Wolves, Cats, Bears...the special groups trained by the Lifeweavers to make them a match for the Kurians and their henchmen. It’s a good setup for mission-oriented adventuring, and the narrative has the advantage of simplicity: keep your people free and oppose Kur.

The second world is life in the “Kurian Zone.” Players could aid Kur in its dastardly designs and attempt to win favor and power from Earth’s New Order, or they can act as an underground organization spreading resistance and revolution, or even play Zorro-type characters who have some power in the Kurian system but use their abilities on the sly to do a bit of good.

The third and perhaps most challenging world is that of “Nomansland,” the areas that are controlled neither by Kur nor the Freeholds. I see these campaigns as having a grim, film-noir (or spaghetti) western feel to them, with characters doing everything from aiding one side or the other in their wars as mercs to attempting to establish an independent civilization or to control a vital resource.

As it stands now I’ve taken a cue from Shane and divided the book into a player section (with character generation, equipment, new skills, edges, and hindrances) and a GM section.

The character generation system was a bit of a challenge: I had to come up with a way for players to get to be Wolves and so on pretty much right from the get-go, since it would normally take several gaming sessions to earn enough of the Edges that constitute Lifeweaver enhancement. I’ll wait and see what the playtesters say but I think I’ve licked it into shape and added some background flavoring based on card draws that players should like.

Over in the GM section I’ve got tips on building a convincing slice of *Vampire Earth*, dozens of adventure seeds (differentiated according to campaign type and player experience level), an illustrated bestiary, and of course some *Savage Worlds* rules add-ons specific to the world.

I wrap the whole thing up with a starter adventure, “Chattanooga Chaos” (though it’s pretty easy to adapt any medium-sized city to the situation). It’ll work for “Freehold” “KZ” or “Nomansland” characters (just in case the GM’s got a bunch of moon units with different origins to unify) as a starting point and campaign spin-off—and it can turn into quite a skirmish if you’re so inclined.

The whole book is smothered in as much evocative writing as possible...I threw in a few stories and scene-setters that will give even those who aren’t into gaming, but have read the *Vampire Earth* novels, more grist for the mental mill and background data.

Hopes for the Future

The *Vampire Earth Sourcebook* will probably be sold through RPGNow as a PDF with a Print-on-Demand (POD) option. I’m still hoping to get a publisher interested; I’ll be sending POD copies around in the hope of finding someone who wants to provide printing and distribution. The game will be advertised in the *Vampire Earth* novels starting with #4, due out in December 2005. If I make a little money I’ll try and improve the quantity of the art and put out original adventures. Let me wrap this up by saying thanks to Shane, the Savage Yahoos, and of course my own team who are working, playtesting, and thinking about how to bring *Vampire Earth* to life.

THE ANKH OF ANGUISH

A Savage Tale of Pulp Adventure set in the 1930's

Well, William Reger's at it again! This contribution was handed to me way back in August, but now seems like the perfect time to put it out there for the Savages to enjoy. If you've missed William's former contributions, be sure to check out **Shark Bytes #1** (Asteroid Zero-4) and **Shark Bytes #2** (The Haunted Moor). Look for another of William's adventures, Red Mane's Revenge, in **Shark Bytes #4**. Oh, by the way, the maps for this adventure can be downloaded at our website: www.sharkbytes.info as a single ZIP file.

SCENE ONE: Ill Met at Kelly's Bar & Grill.

It's near midnight in the big city. You and your buddies have just gotten off work and you've decided to stop by Kelly's Bar & Grill for a few drinks and a bite of Irish stew. This was nothing but another "day at the office" and so far tonight's been a night like any other. Then "she" runs in—a real looker with midnight black hair, dangerous curves, and a pair of the deepest blue peepers that you've ever seen.

She approaches the table that your group is seated at. Her hands are shaking, and you notice those delicious cerulean eyes are furtive and fearful. As these thoughts pass through your minds she utters words that reverberate in your ears like the sound of a passing freight train "I'm Vivian Lane. Will you help me?"

Vivian, an Extra, is Attractive and has a d8 Persuasion skill. Before the heroes can answer her plea, the bar doors are flung open and in struts as disreputable-looking a bunch of goons as ever graced Kelly's place.

Several locals start to rise to their feet. "Stay put ya bunch of swells, and you'll stay healthy! We're just here for the girl", they growl, indicating Vivian.

A successful Streetwise roll will identify the goons as belonging to Mob boss "Thumbscrew" Tony's crew. The other bar patrons slink back to their seats, not wanting any trouble with these roughnecks. The player characters, however, should jump at the opportunity to protect this frightened woman, or they're playing the wrong type of game! The goons (See The Cast of Characters—NPCs, below) number two more than the heroes. They don't plan to use anything but fists or improvised weapons against anyone who resists them. They only have enough money on them to pay for any damages they might incur—not that they'd ever willingly offer to.

The goons have a black sedan with a driver idling outside that will race off to report to the Boss if the players are winning, or if the goons can get Vivian into the car.

If the goons get Vivian to the car, run a wild chase scene through the streets as they attempt to get away. About three rounds into the chase, if the heroes haven't caught them, Vivian wrenches herself free and throws herself out the door (she isn't hurt by this, just mussed up). In the confusion, the goon driver fails to notice a fruit truck turning in front of him and the mobster's sedan strikes it, bursting into flames!

SCENE TWO: "So, What's Your Story Sweetheart?"

If the heroes defeat or drive off the goons, Vivian tells them that she works as a secretary for Carson Drew, a curator at the City Museum. She also reluctantly tells them that she was Tony's moll, and is now trying to distance herself from him for reasons she will not reveal. Dr. Drew recently stumbled across an Egyptian ankh of ancient origin and unusual design. The curator has complained that certain parties, unknown to Vivian, were pressuring him to sell the ankh to them, but he steadfastly refused. Now the ankh has been stolen and Vivian is sure Tony is behind it and setting her up for the fall!

Vivian tells the heroes that Tony runs his operation from a warehouse on the riverfront docks. She pleads with the heroes to recover the ankh from there before Dr. Drew finds that it was stolen and blames her for it, a situation that would cost her job and maybe land her in the clink. Vivian says that she will hide out at a girlfriend's apartment and wait to hear from them when the ankh is recovered. She gives them an address and telephone exchange where she can be reached (both are fake).

SCENE THREE: Warehouse Woes!

At the waterfront warehouse, a Notice roll will reveal two goons with shotguns watching the front gate and a raise will also reveal a couple of guard dogs prowling around the wooden fence surrounding the warehouse. Inside the warehouse (a 3-story affair, 40 feet wide, 120 feet long) are a few offices, a couple of delivery vans, a large number of crates (filled with illegal goods), Tony, and at least two goons per character.

If the characters decide to somehow stealthily explore the warehouse, they will not find the ankh or any clues to its whereabouts.

If confronted, Tony and his boys say they know nothing about the stolen ankh. They only wanted to find out where Tony's girl Vivian and his top lieutenant, "Break Legs" Bogart are. Tony says they both disappeared two days ago, and he was starting to smell a rat!

The truth of the matter (as Tony suspects) is that Vivian *was* Tony's girl until she found Legs more to her liking. Unknown to her, Legs stole the ankh and contacted the parties that were pressuring Dr. Drew to sell the ankh to them. He has convinced his crew of double-crossers they'll all be rich if they stick with him!

If the heroes try to contact Vivian, they'll discover her deception about her hiding place. It will take an hour and a successful Investigation or Streetwise roll to track her to an abandoned speakeasy across town.

SCENE FOUR: It's Never Easy!

The abandoned speakeasy is now Legs' illegal sideshow with drinks, and girls, at fair prices. Upstairs are the "private" rooms for the girls; the main hall has gambling tables and a bar; and the cellar is where Legs is meeting his buyer: Heir Glickman and his Nazi goons! Present are Vivian, Legs, and Glickman, as well as one Mob goon and one Nazi goon per character.

If (when) a fight breaks out and things start to go badly for the villains, Legs or Glickman will seize Vivian and threaten to kill her if the heroes don't back off and let them escape. This could lead to a thrilling chase scene, perhaps in cars across the dark city streets to the nearby river, and then in speedboats as the Nazis attempt to reach a U-boat lurking under the surface of the harbor. Hopefully your players will find a way to save the day and the girl!

SCENE FIVE: Wrapping it all Up.

Well, it should be obvious by now that Vivian was just being used by Legs to help establish his own operation. If not, well...your players are, shall we say, a bit thick in the noggin! If the characters are able to recover the ankh and return it to the City Museum they will be given the Key to the City as well as a small cash reward. In addition, they will gain a useful contact in the person of Dr. Carson Drew. Dr. Drew is always searching for arcane antiquities to add to the museum's collection, and he pays well to anyone who can provide him with what he desires.

As for Vivian, she is devastated that she has been used so callously by Legs and swears off dating gangsters forever. She informs the players that she is going to move back to Ohio to marry her high school sweetheart, whose heart she broke when she left for the city.

Oh, and the ankh? It possesses arcane properties and is a much sought after artifact, but that's a tale for a different time...

THE CAST OF CHARACTERS

NPCs:

Mob and Nazi Goons (Extras)

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6.

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d6.

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6.

Edges: Brawny.

Gear: Knife, club, Colt 1911 pistol (mob goons), Luger pistol (Nazi goons) (Range: 15/30/60, Shots: 8, Damage: 2d6, AP 1, Semi-Auto).

Thumbscrew Tony (Wild Card)

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8.

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d10, Guts d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d8, Shooting d8, Stealth d8, Streetwise d10, Swimming d6, Taunt d8.

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 6.

Hindrances: Overconfident, Greedy (major).

Edges: Block, Brawny, Command, Hard to Kill, Two-Fisted.

Gear: Knife, two Colt 1911 pistols.

Break Legs Bogart (Wild Card)

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6.

Skills: Fighting d10, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d8, Shooting d8, Stealth d8.

Charisma: -4; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 6.

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty, Greedy (major).

Edges: Block, Brawny, Combat Reflexes, Nerves of Steel.

Gear: Knife, sawed-off double barrel shotgun, and a Colt 1911 pistol.

Miles Glickman, German Agent (Wild Card)

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8.

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d8, Shooting d10, Stealth d8.

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 6.

Hindrances: Overconfident, Stubborn.

Edges: Block, Brawny, Combat Reflexes, Nerves of Steel.

Gear: Knife, sawed-off double barrel shotgun, and a Luger pistol (Range: 15/30/60, Shots: 8, Damage: 2d6, AP 1, Semi-Auto).

The Heroes (All Heroes are Wild Cards):

Corkey Eatsonley, News Photographer

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d4, Strength d6, Vigor d8.

Skills: Climbing d6, Driving d4, Fighting d6, Guts d4, Intimidation d4, Knowledge (Photography) d6, Lock-picking d6, Notice d4, Repair d4, Shooting d6.

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 5 (run +d4); **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6; **Bennies:** 5.

Hindrances: Bad Eyes (wears glasses), Clueless, Obese.

Edges: Luck, Great Luck, Quick.

Gear: Camera, snack, 12 bullets, .38 pistol (Range: 12/24/48, Shots: 6, Damage: 2d6, AP 1).

Captain Rick Ransome, Army Captain & Athlete

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6.

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Guts d6, Knowledge (Army) d4, Notice d4, Shooting d8, Stealth d6, Survival d4.

Charisma: -1; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6; **Bennies:** 3.

Hindrances: Heroic, Loyal, Quirk (always strikes a heroic pose before each action).

Edges: Ambidextrous, Brawny, Two-Fisted.

Gear: Army uniform with holster, two extra clips, and a Colt 1911 pistol.

Doc Cabbage, Doctor and Inventor

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d10, Spirit d4, Strength d4, Vigor d6.

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d4, Healing d8, Knowledge (Science) d8, Notice d4, Repair d6, and Weird Science d8.

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 4 (Run d4); **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5; **Bennies:** 3.

Hindrances: Lame, Doubting Thomas and Cautious.

Edges: AB: Weird Science (*heal*), New Power (*bolt*), and Mr. Fix-it.

Gear: Lab coat, science kit, lighter, electric holster re-charger with electric *bolt* gun (10 Power Points) and 3 *healing* patches.

Nancy Clue, News Reporter

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6.

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d6, Healing d6, Knowledge (News) d4, Notice d6, Persuasion d8, Shooting d6, Stealth d4.

Charisma: +1; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5; **Bennies:** 3.

Hindrances: Curious, Delusional (Thinks everyone has a story they want to share!), Quirk (asks everyone for their story).

Edges: Attractive, Healer.

Gear: Fashionable dress, trench coat, shoulder purse, 12 extra rounds of ammo and her .22 pistol (Range: 10/20/40, ROF: 1, Shots: 6, Damage: 2d6-1).

Sam Hunter, PI

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6.

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d6, Investigation d8, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d4, Streetwise d8.

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5; **Bennies:** 3.

Hindrances: Code of Honor, Poverty, Vengeful (minor).

Edges: Alertness, Investigator.

Gear: Cheap suit, trench coat, cigarettes and lighter, flask of rotgut, shoulder holster, 12 extra pistol rounds, Snub nose .38 pistol (Range: 10/20/40, ROF: 1, Shots: 6, Damage: 2d6, AP1).

Dutch Dorsey, Daredevil Flying Ace

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6.

Skills: Boating d4, Driving d4, Fighting d8, Guts d6, Piloting d8, Notice d6, Repair d4, Shooting d8.

Charisma: -1; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7 (6 if encumbered); **Toughness:** 5; **Bennies:** 3.

Hindrances: Overconfident, Quirk (always says "Never fear, I am Here!"), Stubborn.

Edges: Ace, Acrobatics.

Gear: Bombardier jacket, cigarette and lighter, holster with two extra clips, knife in sheath, and a Colt 1911 pistol.

Indianapolis Bones, Field Archaeologist

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d6.

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d6, Investigation d4, Knowledge (Archeology) d6, Lock-picking d4, Notice d6, Riding d4, Shooting d6.

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5.

Hindrances: Loyal, Overconfident, Stubborn.

Edges: Quick Draw.

Gear: Jungle clothes, leather jacket, hat, cigarettes and lighter, holster with two extra clips, bush knife (Str +3) with sheath, and a Colt 1911 pistol.

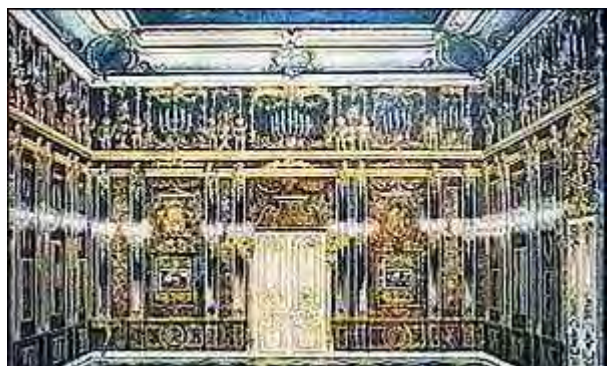
The Magic Fish

Five detailed arcane artifacts for use in any Savage setting.

This issue we present a selection of five arcane artifacts culled from the pages of *Another 13 Occult Artifacts* by James Maliszewski, published by Ronin Arts. This wonderful product was originally intended for the D20 Modern System®; however, as it was released as OGC, I have taken it upon myself to Savage it and include it here within the pages of **Shark Bytes** for all to enjoy. Be sure to check out Ronin Art's website: www.roninarts.com for lots of goodies just waiting to be savaged!

Another Thirteen Occult Artifacts, like its predecessor, provides the GM with thirteen different occult artifacts, each one drawn from the real world. Admittedly, not all of the artifacts described actually exist (at least so far as anyone knows), but all of them derive from people, places, and events in the conspiratorial history of the world and thus add a great deal to any campaign that incorporates the supernatural. Each entry provides background information on the artifact in question, as well as game mechanics, allowing the GM to insert the artifact into his campaign with ease. All organizations referenced in this product are described at greater length in *Thirteen Conspiracies*, another *D20 Modern*® product available from Ronin Arts.

THE AMBER ROOM



History: Begun in 1701 at the behest of Frederick I of Prussia, the Amber Room was intended as a testament to the king's power and prestige. At that time, amber was a new material with which to work for decorative purposes and its mystical healing properties were well known to Frederick. He hoped to have his master artisans produce a private sanctum that might help him fight the infirmities of old age. Unfortunately, insufficient quantities of amber existed to complete the room before Frederick I died in 1713.

His son and heir, Frederick Wilhelm I, had no interest in the Amber Room (and may not have known of its occult properties). As a show of diplomatic goodwill, Frederick Wilhelm gave the room to Peter the Great, tsar of Russia in 1716. It is unclear whether Peter or

any subsequent tsar understood the power of the Amber Room, although Grigori Yefimovich Rasputin's interest in the room suggests that some knew its true nature. It is almost certain that Josef Stalin was aware of the room's purpose and used it to keep himself healthy.

During World War II, Heinrich Himmler wished to obtain the room for himself and saw to it that it was seized during Operation Barbarossa, despite the Soviets' attempts to hide its location. The Amber Room was taken back to Königsberg, where it remained until the British and Soviets bombed the city. While many believed the Amber Room was destroyed in the bombardment, it survived, becoming one of the most sought after occult artifacts of the 20th century.

Physical Description: The Amber Room is a series of large wall panels inlaid with several tons of masterfully carved high-quality amber, long wall mirrors and four Florentine mosaics. The amber, which covered three walls, is arranged in three tiers. The central tier consists of eight large, symmetrical vertical panels. Four contain pictures made from semiprecious stones such as quartz, jasper, jade and onyx, depicting the five senses. Mirrored pilasters occupy the distance between the large panels. The lower tier of the room is covered in square amber panels. One of the corners contains a small amber table. The room's furnishings consist of inlaid wood commodes of Russian origin and a vase of Chinese porcelain. In addition, one of the most valuable collections of amber objects created in the 17th and 18th centuries is housed in the room's glass-covered display cases.

Current Whereabouts: The Thule-Gesellschaft (a German archaeological society linked to the early formation of the Nazi Party) possesses the bulk of the Amber Room, which has hidden it away in Agharti beneath Tibet. The missing pieces are scattered across the globe, primarily in the hands of collectors who would prefer to remain anonymous. Thule agents scour the globe seeking these pieces in order to restore the room to its former glory.

Game Mechanics: The complete Amber Room has several effects. First, anyone placed within its four walls is completely healed of all wounds, non-magical diseases, poisons, and other similar temporary effects. Second, each hour spent within the Amber Room decreases a person's effective age by one week.

Alternatives: The separate pieces of the Amber Room might function to a lesser degree than the whole, in which case the GM can create diminished versions of the effects described below. Another possibility is that its effects are limited to members of the Russian royal family or their descendants, in which case the Thule-Gesellschaft will be very disappointed should they obtain its missing pieces.

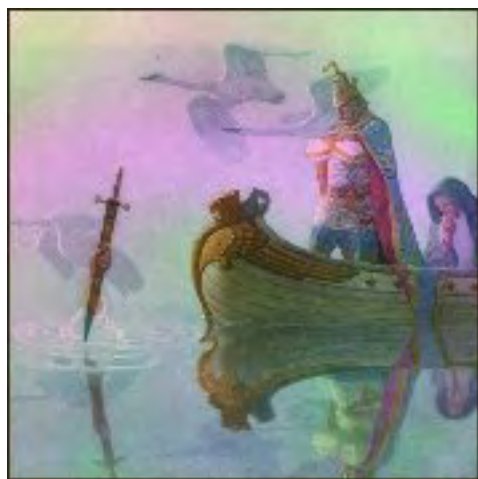
Some Additional Information:

<http://www.usnews.com/usnews/doubleissue/mysteries/amber.htm>

<http://www.germanculture.com.ua/library/weekly/aa050800a.htm>

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/143364.stm>

EXCALIBUR



History: Flavius Valerius Artorius was a Romano-British cavalry officer who, as a very young man, served at the battle of Mons Badonicus in A.D. 500 under the warlord Aurelius Ambrosianus. Though the Saxon invaders had been defeated, they were not wholly vanquished and would continue to threaten Roman civilization in ancient Britain. Upon Ambrosianus' death, Artorius assumed the imperium, or generalship, of the British forces, attracting soldiers and mercenaries from as far away as Palestine to his side.

He rallied the British forces and subjected the Saxons to his fair but sometimes brutal rule. The territory he ruled came to encompass not only all of Britain south of Hadrian's Wall but pieces of the European mainland as well, which led to clashes with Justinian I, the demon-emperor of Byzantium. The Welsh bard and prophet Emrys (called Myrddin after his birthplace) assisted Artorius with sage advice and arranged a political marriage with a British princess named Gwenhwyfar. Emrys also provided Artorius with his mighty sword, which later generations dub either Excalibur or Caliburn.

Eventually, despite his generally just rule, Artorius could not hold together his kingdom. Beset by Saxon revolts and betrayal within his own court, he was mortally wounded at the battle of Camboglanna. Legend says Artorius did not die but was sent to "another place" to heal until Britain again needed him.

Physical Description: Excalibur is a *spatha*, a Late Roman cavalry sword approximately 35 inches long, of which 28 inches is the steel blade. The blade is straight and designed to be used as a slashing weapon. It possesses a bronze guard and pommel and a burl wood grip.

Current Whereabouts: No one currently knows the whereabouts of Excalibur. It is generally believed to be located somewhere in Great Britain, perhaps in the vicinity of Glastonbury, although some believe it rests within a pocket dimension accessible only to descendants of Arthur. Unsurprisingly, the Prieuré de Sion (the high cabal of the Merovingian Dynasty, reputed to direct all other secret societies worldwide) is very interested in seeking out Excalibur.

Game Mechanics: Excalibur is treated as a longsword that receives a +4 bonus to Fighting and damage rolls. When drawn, it glows brightly and all beings with an opposing allegiance must make a successful Spirit roll or be blinded for d4 rounds.

Alternatives: The sword might be usable only by Britain's rightful king (who may or may not have any association with the current royal family). Likewise, it might function only when wielded against Britain's enemies during a time of great crisis. Otherwise, it functions as an ordinary longsword.

Some Additional Information:

<http://www.geocities.com/morganlafey/Ring.html>

<http://www.britannia.com/history/arthur/excalibur.html>

http://www.mythicalrealm.com/legends/king_arthur.html

PHILOSOPHER'S STONE



History: Philosopher's Stone, also called "materia prima" and the "magnum opus", has been sought since the beginning of time as it, in some sense, is the goal of every human being whether they realize it or not. The stone is a finite instantiation of the Infinite and an example of the Base made Pure. The stone is both the symbol and the means by which the fallen world may be raised up and reclaim its divine birthright. It's also a good way to get rich and live forever, which is why many less reputable sorts have also sought the philosopher's stone.

The first Philosopher's Stones were created in ancient Egypt, drawing on alchemical formulae handed down from Atlantis and other earlier civilizations. The Hermetic tradition preserved the method of its creation, but did so in a manner that prevented all but the most worthy and enlightened seekers from achieving it. Throughout most of the Classical and Middle Ages, few were able to create Philosopher's Stone.

While the Renaissance and early modern periods saw wider success, they were not long lasting, as science triumphed over what it deemed "superstition."

In the 21st century, only a handful of people know the means to create Philosopher's Stone and most, unfortunately, are unworthy of possessing such a lofty prize, using it to further their own ends and to hold wealth and power beyond their natural lifespans.

Physical Description: Philosopher's Stone is a large lump of silvery black material. While it looks like stone, it has metallic characteristics as well (being shiny and electrically conductive). The stone is also hollow, filled with a clear liquid that is the source of the stone's power.

Current Whereabouts: Philosopher's Stone is not a singular artifact and can, in theory, be created by anyone who knows the method to do so. Two of the most notable current possessors of Philosopher's Stones are Nicholas Flamel and the Count of St. Germain. Flamel and his wife Perenelle currently reside anonymously in northcentral France, while St. Germain travels the world... *as he has since the 18th century*. He was last seen in Los Angeles, California.

Game Mechanics: The liquid in a single Philosopher's Stone can transmute up to 5,000 pounds of iron into silver or up to 1,000 pounds of lead into gold. Alternately, the liquid inside can also be used to create a single dose of *aqua vitae*, which halts aging for 10 years. If used in this fashion, the remaining broken stone cannot be used to transmute metals.

Alternatives: At the GM's discretion, Philosopher's Stone may only create *aqua vitae* and not be able to turn base metals into precious ones. Alternately, the substance may do both, but take some other form, depending on its origin.

Some Additional Information:

<http://www.crystalinks.com/alchemy.html>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosopher's_stone

http://www.world-mysteries.com/awr_alchemy.htm

THE RING OF SET



History: After the sinking of Atlantis, the land that would become Egypt was a stygian realm whose sybaritic rulers were devoted black magic and necromancy. Among them, it is said, was a sorcerer so powerful that later generations would confuse tales of his exploits with those of their gods. The sorcerer worshipped a demonic entity who would eventually be known as Set, and from him learned to craft a ring with which to summon the dark being's servants to do his bidding. With this ring, the sorcerer gained great power and dared to challenge the barbarian king of the greatest nation of this long-ago time. Thanks to the magical assistance of an ally, the king survived and the ring's power was turned back upon the sorcerer, who died in the backlash. The Ring of Set then passed into history, with many would-be conquerors (including the Roman emperor Tiberius) possessing it before succumbing to the same fate as its maker. Unsurprisingly, the safest way to hold on to the ring is to refrain from using its powers.

Physical Description: This gold ring contains a large diamond and two sapphires. It is otherwise quite unassuming.

Current Whereabouts: The current owner of the ring is a Belgian politician who, as yet, has no idea of the ring's origins or powers. It is believed that both the Temple of the Serpent and Vehmgerichte, however, do know these things and are making every effort to obtain the ring, the former for its power and the latter to destroy it.

Game Mechanics: The ring has two related effects. First, if the wearer possesses the Arcane Background (Magic) Edge, it doubles the number of Power Points available to him. Second, all Spellcasting rolls are made as if the wearer possessed Spellcasting skill at d12+1. If a character who possesses no arcane ability wears the ring, it grants arcane ability to the wearer so long as the ring is worn (i.e., they gain the AB (Magic) Edge for free while they wear the ring). Treat them as having 20 Power Points and Spellcasting d8. Use of the ring is not without its consequences. Any time a 1 is rolled on the Spellcasting skill die, regardless of the result of the Wild Die, the wearer must make a successful Vigor roll or suffer a wound. If "snake eyes" are rolled, the wound is automatic!

Alternatives: The ring might be used safely if the wearer is a devout servant of Set.

Some Additional Information:

<http://enworld.cyberstreet.com/hosted/adilbrand/conan/ringset.htm>

<http://www.marvunapp.com/Appendix/thotha.htm>

http://hyboria.xoth.net/bestiary/ring_set_demon.htm

ROLAND'S HORN



History: In 778 A.D., the Frankish king Charlemagne was engaged in a war against the Muslim king of Saragossa. The Muslim king pretended that he would convert to Christianity if Charlemagne left him and his kingdom in peace. Charlemagne agreed to do so and returned to France, believing that the king would follow him back to Aachen, his capital, for baptism. A treacherous Frankish lord named Ganelon conspired with the Sargossan king to attack the rearguard of Charlemagne's army, which was led by Roland. Roland, despite being outnumbered, fought bravely and refused to use his magical horn, "Olifant", to summon reinforcements to his side. He died fighting the Muslims because his code of honor would not allow him to ask for assistance. The horn wound up in Muslim hands, where it remained until the Battle of Las Navas de Tolosa in 1212, when the king of Navarre obtained it. The horn was lost after Navarre was absorbed into the united kingdom of Spain in the early 16th century,

although many groups, both within Spain and without, attempted to find it.

Physical Description: Roland's Horn is an oversized, hollowed-out ivory horn that has been reinforced with gold and silver bands. Along its surface are intricate tracework decorations in the Carolingian style.

Current Whereabouts: During World War II, the Thule-Gesellschaft attempted to obtain Roland's Horn but were foiled by French Resistance fighters, who did not themselves find the artifact. So far as anyone knows, no one has rescued it from its hidden location within the Pyrenees. Rumors persist that a leader of the Basque separatist movement Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) has recently come to possess it.

Game Mechanics: Roland's Horn can be sounded as a normal horn, but if the user sounds it while facing a threat he believes to be life-threatening, it deals 3d10 points of sonic damage to creatures within the area of a Large Burst Template, automatically causing them to become Shaken, and deafens them for 4d6 rounds (a successful Vigor roll at -4 reduces the damage by half and negates the automatic Shaken and deafening effects). If the Horn's magical abilities are used more than once in a given day, there is a 20% cumulative chance with each extra use that it explodes and deals 3d10 points of damage to the person sounding it.

Alternatives: The horn might instead be the horn of the leader of the Wild Hunt, or one of the horns used by the Valkyries to call the valorous dead to Valhalla.

Some Additional Information:

<http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/OMACL/Roland/>

<http://kuhttp.cc.ukans.edu/kansas/medieval/108/lectures/roland.html>

http://www.brainyencyclopedia.com/encyclopedia/t/th/the_song_of_roland.html

Now Hear This!

Because what fanzine would be complete without a few quick reviews?

In this issue, I review *Bloodlines*, an awesome tale of horror from the guys at 12 to Midnight, Inc. I also take a look at *Dreamwalker: Diceless Roleplaying in the Land of Dreams*, a sourcebook/setting for the Active Exploits Diceless RPG published by Politically Incorrect Games, Inc., *Bits of Darkness: Dungeons* from Tabletop Adventures, and *Savaged Starships*, the first *Savage Worlds* release from the guys at Ronin Arts.

DREAMWALKER



**EDITOR'S
CHOICE**

Type: Setting for *Active Exploits Diceless Roleplaying*

Publisher: Politically Incorrect Games, Inc.

Authors: Peter Spahn, David Griffin, Michael Patton

Retail Price: \$6.00

Format: 71 page, 3.1MB PDF Download (ZIP)

Availability: RPGNow and publisher's website

Demo Version: Available from the download sites above

Pros: Well-written, awesome layout and design; converting to *Savage Worlds* is a breeze; there's a free adventure available (*The Clinic*); the price can't be beat!

Cons: None that I could find!

Content: 5; **Appearance:** 5; **Utility:** 5; **Value:** 5

The Publisher Says: The enemy is an alien species that assails us in our most vulnerable state—while we sleep. You are a Dreamwalker and capable of leaving your own dreams and traveling into the Dreamworlds of others. You have been recruited by Project Dreamwalker—a government backed organization that unites others like you in order to rid the spirit world of the Taeniid plague. Not only must you face the Taenia (hive-minded entities), but also satisfy the whims and desires of the Dreamer in whose mind they are ensconced. Can you do this and still maintain a grasp on your own sanity? Good luck, Dreamwalker. You may be our last hope.

Prepare to enter a world where anything can happen—the world of dreams. This book allows players to delve deep into the hidden recesses of the human mind—a place where the dreamer must act out his past experiences or current desires. The world of *Dreamwalker* is a place where reality has no influence and the surreal makes perfect sense.

My Initial Thoughts: This book is an awesome product that most of the Savages will find intriguing. I know I did, and at only \$6 for a 71-page book, how can you go wrong? Simple, elegant design and layout coupled with well-written and edited text and topped off with some easy-on-the-printer graphics—what's not to like? Converting this setting into *Savage Worlds* terms is as easy as 1-2-3.

On Further Reflection: Chapter One contains the obligatory fiction blurb, *Simpler Times*, and sets the mood for the rest of the book. After reading this I had a very clear idea of what this setting was all about... and I was hooked.

Chapter Two concerns itself with some brief background material on dreams, the "Empyrean" (World of Dreams), and the history of Project Dreamwalker. Brief and to the point, this chapter, along with *Simpler Times*, accomplish their tasks of "setting the mood" and leave you wanting more information.

Chapter Three, which is only six pages long, details the process of creating a character using the *Active Exploits* system. This is easily adapted to *Savage Worlds*. For example, the Aspect (Mana) is obviously an Arcane Background. Its uses are SW powers: Aegis (*deflection*), Channel Damage (*smite*), Speed Boost (*speed*), Heightened Skill and Heightened Ability (*boost trait*), etc. The new Gimmicks would be Edges and the new Aptitudes can be either arcane skills or new powers depending on your preference.

Chapter Four contains some detailed information for the GM that mainly expands on the information already presented. Chapters Five and Six detail the alien Taenia and the world at large. Chapter Seven covers dream design and adventures. The book closes with Chapter Eight, which details the Pinebrook Chapter of Project Dreamwalker and includes three adventures to get you started.

There is no wasted space in this book. Everything a GM needs to know to run adventures in this setting is covered and there are plenty of "hooks and ideas" for future expansion should the GM desire to expand the world of the Dreamwalkers.

When you consider that there is a full-blown adventure available for this setting (which is free by the way), the value of this product is increased well-beyond its retail price tag.

My Recommendation: Buy it. Buy it now! This is an awesome setting with lots of great ideas that can be "savaged" with minimal effort.

Website: <http://www.pigames.net/index.php>

Other Products of Interest: *The Clinic*, *Two-Fisted Tales*, *Unbidden*, and *Bloode Island*, *Rune Stryders*, and the *Red Dwarf* RPG.

BLOODLINES (Savaged Edition)



Type: *Savage Worlds* Adventure

Publisher: 12 to Midnight, Inc.

Author: Preston P. DuBose

Retail Price: \$10.00

Format: 106 page, 9.6MB PDF Download (ZIP)

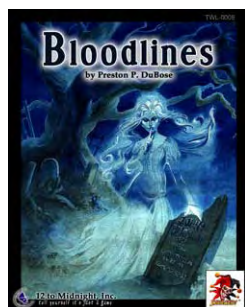
Availability: RPGNow

Demo Version: RPGNow and publisher's website

Pros: Fully bookmarked; 27 pages of maps and handouts; includes both on-screen and printer friendly versions.

Cons: The production values could be better.

Content: 5; **Appearance:** 3; **Utility:** 4; **Value:** 5



The Publisher Says: Welcome to Pinebox, Texas. There's gold buried in these hills...or at least, that's the local folklore. Join the Apollo Geocaching Challenge to race against other teams in search of a time capsule buried 100 years ago. Do you think you can succeed in 24 hours where two generations of treasure hunters failed? The race is

on and the competition fierce. But be warned: there's much more to Pinebox (and the competition) than meets the eye. Some secrets are best left buried and some family trees best left unshaken.

My Initial Thoughts: I own all of 12 to Midnight's other products (see below). I've yet to find one that I didn't like. Their latest offering is no exception. Once you get used to some of the layout oddities (underlined headings, an overly-compact header font, oddly placed pull quotes, and lined dividers between columns as well as at both the top and bottom of the page), the substance of this product quickly overshadows any concerns you may have regarding the overall look of the product.

While some may balk at the \$10 price tag, you have to remember that you're getting a 79-page adventure and 27 pages of maps and handouts. Besides, this adventure (at least when I ran it) provided nearly 20 hours of roleplaying goodness. That's more than most adventures currently on the market, and at a rate of only 50¢ per hour of gaming, who's to complain?

On Further Reflection: At first glance, this adventure appeared to be quite linear in nature. Events happen in a specific order and the characters have to connect these events by visiting certain places and doing things in a specific order. Admittedly, *Bloodlines* works best when the players fall for the premise hook, line and sinker. At this point, I wasn't impressed—I'm not a big fan of overtly linear scenarios; however, after reading the "walkthroughs" (summaries of each major section of the adventure) and re-

reading the product in full, I realized that you're given all the necessary information for running a non-linear game. You just have to be able to step outside the box and run things "on the fly". You've got an interesting situation with a strong background. Add to that a bunch of Extras who have their own agendas and will stick to them (or not) depending on the actions of the characters. Top it off with situations that occur, evolve, and resolve themselves through the characters actions (or inaction). Sure, it was written in a linear manner, but that doesn't mean you have to run it that way!

Another point to consider is that *Bloodlines* may very well be the perfect introductory adventure for starting a campaign based in Pinebox, TX. Take a look at the 12 to Midnight website and you'll find a bunch of background material on the adventure area. There's also the soon-to-be-released *Pinebox Places* which will flesh out this setting even more.

My Recommendation: If you haven't bought it yet you need to do so as soon as you're able! Ed Wettermann and the folks at 12 to Midnight have once again delivered an excellent product that will have you clamoring for more!

Website: <http://www.12tomidnight.com>

Other Products of Interest: *Last Rites of the Black Guard*, *Innana's Kiss*, *Weekend Warriors*, and *Pinebox Places* (coming soon!).

QUICK PICKS

...And a 10-Foot Pole (ICE5703)

... *And a 10-Foot Pole* is the ultimate equipment sourcebook for use with any RPG system! In these pages, you'll find full equipment lists for all eras, from Stone Age to Modern. Each era has its own list, detailing prices for the era as well as production time and availability. In addition, each list is sorted by type of product: from food products to weapons and armor. This book is published by Iron Crown Enterprises and has a retail price of \$25.

Atomik Add-Ons (RPGNow)

The *Atomik Add-On* series consists of a free "system booklet" and five add-ons: *Atomik Magick* (\$6.95), *Atomik Grimoire* (\$5.00), *Atomik CyberTek* (\$5.45), *Atomik Alienz* (\$5.95), and *Atomik Psioniks* (\$5.95). Each presents a "system-neutral" method of adding original magic, aliens, cyber-technology, and psionics rules into your system of choice. These books are published by Atomik Vortex Studios.

Rune Stryders (RPGNow)

Yes, it's designed to be used with the *Active Exploits Diceless Roleplaying System*, but the idea of mecha running around with your standard fantasy staples is too cool to pass on! This game is easily adapted to *Savage Worlds*, and even at \$10 (for which you get 200+ pages) is worth a look by anyone wanting to try something a bit different. This game is published by Politically Incorrect Games, Inc.

BITS OF DARKNESS: DUNGEONS



Type: Generic Roleplaying Aid

Publisher: Tabletop Adventures, LLC

Authors: Daniel Brakhage, Mark and Vicky Potter, and Randy Eliason

Retail Price: \$4.75

Format: 40 page, 3.2MB PDF Download (ZIP)

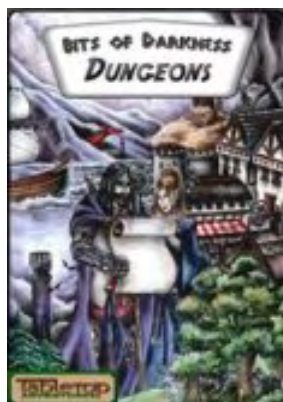
Availability: RPGNow

Demo Version: RPGNow and publisher's website

Pros: Low cost and high utility value for most GMs; internal links make navigation a breeze.

Cons: Amateur production values (graphic design, layout, and editing); lack of bookmark feature; doesn't meet the minimum checkout cost for RPGNow.

Content: 3; **Appearance:** 2; **Utility:** 4; **Value:** 4



The Publisher Says: This product is part of the new "Harried Game Master" line from Tabletop Adventures. *Bits of Darkness: Dungeons* is designed to bring new life to your dungeons by adding short "bits" of description to energize your adventures. It was written to be of use to both experienced and inexperienced Game Masters, particularly those who (for whatever reason) find themselves

short on time or creativity. This product was created to be an "on the go" item, which means you don't need to read the entire work before you can use it. The descriptions are designed so that they can be randomly generated as you play; however, if you prefer, they may also be placed carefully ahead of time as integral parts of your storyline.

My Initial Thoughts: Once you get past the amateurish graphic design and layout, and ignore some of the areas where a good editor could have done wonders, this is a pretty good product. Personally, I would have spent a bit more time polishing my premiere release, but that's neither here nor there. The simple fact is that the cons (appearance) don't outweigh the pros (content). This is a useful product for any GM who finds himself stuck for ideas and I personally have a hard time finding fault with any decent product that retails for under \$5.00!

Now one area I do take issue with, and one that the publisher really needs to address, is that the product is not available for purchase from the publisher's website. Normally, this wouldn't be a problem since you can get it from RPGNow; however, at only \$4.75, it doesn't meet the minimum checkout total of \$6.40 required by RPGNow. This means you must purchase additional products in order to download the file. This is not good for a company that only

offers (at the time of this writing) a single product. They're going to lose a lot of "impulse buys". So, what would I suggest? Either offer the product for sale directly from the publisher's website as well as listing it at RPGNow, or "beef up" the product in order to justify a retail cost of \$6.40. Bundling this product with *Bits of Darkness: Caverns* (due out on November 24th) and selling the whole shebang for \$8.00 is also an option...I'd buy it!

On Further Reflection: When all is said and done, this product delivers exactly what it promises.

The book includes 100 "Bits" and six "Shards". Bits are small pieces of information that can be stuck in anywhere a little description is needed, and are numbered so they can be chosen randomly. Shards are slightly longer, and depict a particular place or event. The material is also indexed to allow a GM to easily find a description to fit a particular circumstance. Each Bit is also provided in card format for ease of use by Game Masters during actual play. The publishers have also included eight descriptions that could be used in a catacomb area, and a few "Bits of Trouble": tricks and traps to keep your players on their toes.

I think any GM buying this product will get her money's worth. It'll probably be most useful when used during adventure generation as a catalyst for sparking ideas. With this in mind, perhaps a printer friendly version (i.e., no graphics and a smaller font) is in order?

My Recommendation: If you're running a fantasy game and find yourself short on ideas, pick this one up. It'll definitely help you get out of your rut and at only \$4.75 you can't really go wrong.

Website: <http://www.tabletopadventures.com>

Other Products of Interest: *Bits of Darkness: Caverns* and *Shards of the City* (due out in 2005).

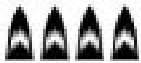


Editor's Note: If you'd like to see your product reviewed in a future issue of **Shark Bytes**, please contact the Editor (editor@sharkbytes.info) and let him know why you think the Savages would enjoy your product. You might also want to send along an electronic copy of your product as well. It doesn't matter what system it was designed for, so long as it's a solid product, because we all know that "anything can be Savaged"!

If you're a Savage and you have a review you'd like included in a future installment of *Now Hear This* just write it up (using the format presented here) and send it in!

If your product has been reviewed, we welcome your reply (good or bad). All such replies will be published in future installments of *Now Hear This*.

SAVAGED STARSHIPS!



Type: Sourcebook for *Savage Worlds*

Publisher: Ronin Arts

Author: Michael Hammes and Phillip J Reed

Retail Price: \$6.95

Format: 40 page, 5.8MB PDF Download (ZIP)

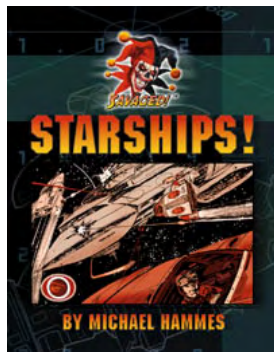
Availability: RPGNow

Demo Version: None

Pros: Professional layout and design; printer friendly version included; it's from *Ronin Arts!*

Cons: Only six starships are detailed.

Content: 3.5; **Appearance:** 4; **Utility:** 4; **Value:** 4



The Publisher Says: This collection presents six starship designs for use in *Savage Worlds* Campaigns. It includes ship descriptions, adventure hooks, game statistics, recognition sheets, and counters (for the fighters). All of this comprises a 1-page cover, 15 pages of stats and information (in both on screen and printer friendly versions), 10 pages of craft recognition graphics, and 14 pages of counters.

My Initial Thoughts: Oooh, *Savage Starships!* I have to admit, I was pretty excited when Bill (the other Editor) sent me a review copy of this new licensed *Savage Worlds* product. Since he helped out on the project, he felt I could present a more objective review. Now "space adventure" is my favorite RPG setting, so I was happy to see some long overdue "space stuff" for *Savage Worlds*. I was doubly delighted to see that it was from the folks at Ronin Arts, a company that has built a solid reputation for quality with its long line of *D20 System* releases.

The starship designs in *Savage Starships!* can easily be dropped into any typical space adventure campaign as "home bases" for heroes, or as some of the many other starships they will encounter in their journeys among the stars. The book begins with a chart of standard starship weapons used in the ship designs and a list of special equipment and vehicle abilities that expands upon those listed in the *Savage Worlds (Revised)* rulebook.

Each starship entry begins with a descriptive paragraph, providing a bit of information and history about the vessel's design and past exploits in addition to several adventure hooks to get the GM's imagination going.

The first three ships are variations on the "modified stock light freighter" theme. The *Black Mantis* is a powerfully armed space pirate ship, the *Nova Star* could be a typical free trader or smuggler's vessel in a galaxy far, far away. The third design, the *Thomas O'Dell*, has a more *Firefly* or *Traveller* feel to it.

The second batch of ships is a selection of star fighters. The formidable *Devilbat* is an example of a top-of-the-line design. The more modest *Harrasser* fighter represents the mid-range of the scale, and the comparatively primitive *F-27 "Gnat"* rounds out the selection.

The Recognition Guide provided features, elevation illustrations, and deck plans for each ship in the book. These visual aids are presented in a format resembling a computer display, a nice touch that helps maintain the feel of the product. These sheets are designed to be handed to the players during play.

The Counters are attractive, printable, tabletop-scale cutouts of the fighter ships and a few pieces of the freighter deck plans. In a savvy move, the starship designs in *Savage Starships!* are adapted from previous releases by Ronin Arts for the *D20 System* for which they have also created a series of play-aids called "e-Future Tiles" that provide sets of printable deck plans to scale with 28mm miniatures or counters. Each freighter in *Savage Starships!* can be mapped on the tabletop with tiles from the *e-Future Tiles: Star Freighter* and *e-Future Tiles: Star Hunter* sets.

On Further Reflection: There's not much to criticize about *Savage Starships!* As you would expect from Ronin Arts, the writing, layout and design of the book and the quality of the visual references are excellent. It does what it promises to do for a great value.

The only possible errata I noted were that the Damage Control System doesn't have a Repair skill level listed, and the *Devilbat* fighter's stats don't include the Marksman Targeting System noted in the text.

The new weapons and special equipment are great overall, except maybe the Gravitic Enhancement Drive, which seems kind of under-powered and dangerous to use the way it's presented.

Personally, I wish the "scope" of *Savage Starships!* had been a little greater, offering rules additions like spaceship maneuver tables, tweaks to the Chase/Dogfight rules, and other items to make *Savage Worlds* vehicle combat a little more spaceship-friendly. I'd like to have seen at least one example of a big space cruiser or capitol ship, along with suitable new special equipment like fighter bays and tractor beams. Hopefully we'll see these things and more in future products from Ronin Arts.

My Recommendation: Ultimately, *Savage Starships!* is a well-written and useful collection of representative mid-sized and smaller starships. Six completely detailed stock spaceships for seven bucks is a pretty good buy in my book. Pick this one up if you are running or plan to run a space-faring *Savage Worlds* campaign!

Website:

http://www.rpgnow.com/product_info.php?products_id=3847&

Other Products of Interest: *e-Future Tiles: Star Freighter*; *e-Future Tiles: Star Hunter*.

And Now for Something Completely Different...

Twenty-two, well... odd racial types from the twisted mind of David Goecke

*Sometimes the mind just starts to wander and you have no control over where it takes you! That is what's happened here... these strange, bizarre, and downright odd ideas for alternate racial types just popped into my head one day. For good or ill, I set them to paper and submitted them to **Shark Bytes** for all to see. Hopefully, they will provide some inspiration for those of you seeking to break the "Human—Dwarf—Elf—Halfling" paradigm. If any of you aspiring authors want to use any of these in your publications, please feel free to do so...just drop me a line and let me know. Enjoy, and stay Savage!*

BATFOLK

The "batfolk" are large humanoid bats. They can be found in dark gothic fantasy worlds, deep in underground caverns, or on far-off planets shrouded by eternal night. Batfolk look very much like normal bats, only with slightly more humanoid legs that end in wicked-looking talons. They are bipedal and stand as tall as an average human. The hands and wings of batfolk are combined within the same appendage, and while on the ground they are able to manipulate items and wield weapons normally. Batfolk cannot take the Brawny or Obese Hindrances without sacrificing their ability to fly. The diet of batfolk is considered foul by the standards of most other races: plump insects, rotten fruit, and living blood. All batfolk have the following abilities:

- **Flight:** Batfolk can fly so long as they have room to maneuver their massive 12-foot wingspans. Their Pace while flying is 10"; though they can double this during a dive (each inch of forward movement must lower their altitude by one inch). Their climb rate is 5". Use the standard encumbrance rules to determine how much a batfolk can carry. Each -1 load penalty subtracts 2" from their flying Pace.
- **Low Light Vision:** Due to a combination of keen eyesight and a sophisticated natural sonar, batfolk suffer no attack penalties in Dim and Dark lighting.
- **Climber:** Batfolk are natural climbers, and start the game with Climbing d6 at no cost.
- **Bite:** Str+1
- **Outsider:** Their stretched faces, jittery movements, and screechy voices make it difficult for them to deal with other people; therefore, batfolk suffer a -2 Charisma penalty when interacting with all other races.
- **Weak:** Batfolk have light, brittle skeletons and wiry muscles. It costs 2 attribute points to raise their Strength one die type during character creation, and they must dedicate two leveling opportunities to raise their Strength afterwards.

BIRD-MEN

"Bird-men" are a popular staple in sci-fi and fantasy stories. These birdmen are based upon various earthly birds of prey. Whether they're eagles, hawks, or falcons, they all work the same. They have two legs that end in talons, humanoid arms, and fully functional wings on their backs. Their typically sleek, lightweight frames prevent them from being Brawny or Obese, unless they sacrifice their Flight ability.

- **Flight:** Birdmen can fly so long as they have room to maneuver their massive 2" (12 foot) wingspan. Their Pace while flying is 10", though they can double this during a dive (each inch of forward movement must lower their altitude by one inch). Their climb rate is 5".

Use the standard encumbrance rules to figure out how much a birdman can carry. Each -1 load penalty subtracts 2" from their flying Pace.

- **Claustrophobic:** Birdmen feel caged and closed-in very easily. They suffer -2 to all trait rolls when the open sky is not in sight, and -4 when there also isn't enough room for them to spread their wings.
- **Natural Weapons:** Birdmen have sharp talons on their hands and feet and strong, sharp beaks. These natural weapons inflict STR+2 damage.
- **Outsider:** While very beautiful, they have eerily expressionless faces that are very hard to read. -2 Charisma when interacting with people from other races.
- **Aware:** With keen eyes and a constantly alert ear, birdmen have the Alertness Edge and start with a free d6 in Notice.
- **Frail:** Birdmen have brittle, hollow bones, making them a little more vulnerable to harm. -1 Toughness.

Owl-men variant: The "Owl-men" variation of the birdmen may very well be a wizardly type in some settings. Owl-men have the Curious Hindrance, suffer no attack penalties in Dim and Dark lighting, and benefit from a +2 bonus to Common Knowledge rolls.

CENTAURS

Centaur are beings with the body of a horse and the upper torso of a human. In Greek mythology, the first centaur was the result of a cursed man's boasts of having seduced the wife of Zeus. They were wild and violent creatures, who were prone to drinking and carousing, carrying off human women never to be seen again. In some contemporary fantasies they are portrayed as reclusive, studious protectors of nature. This profile represents the classical Greek version.

- **Big:** Centaurs are naturally large... as big as horses, obviously. Their size adds +2 to Toughness.
- **Fleet of Hoof:** A centaur's pace is 10", and he rolls a d8 when running instead of d6.
- **Striking Hooves:** Centaurs can strike with either their front or back hooves as a natural attack for STR+2 damage.
- **Drunkard:** Centaurs have a well-known weakness for wine and spirits. They suffer from the Habit (Major) Hindrance for alcohol and can never be cured of it (short of divine intervention).
- **Violent:** Centaurs don't take mistreatment lightly, and see no point in taking in mercy. They suffer both from the Vengeful and Bloodthirsty Hindrances.
- **Outsider:** Centaurs live in the plains and wilds, at the edge of human society. The ways of a centaur are very

different than those of humans. They don't believe in hard work, and they don't believe in clothes. While this may not cause much trouble for male centaurs, females can cause a bit of a ruckus in the marketplace.... -2 Charisma when interacting with other species.

- **Lecherous:** Centaurs are known for their unchecked libidos and infliction of unwanted attention upon women. Women fear being attacked by the male centaurs, for good reason (see "Big" above), and men fear the centaurs running off with their women (again, see "Big" above). Male centaurs suffer an additional -2 Charisma around humans. Humans tend to forget that female centaurs have just as much of a libido as the males, so females don't suffer the additional Charisma loss... in fact, sometimes that libido and their particular style of dress (i.e. nothing...) may help their Charisma with human men!

DARK ELVES

"Dark elves" often have another name for their people, and are used differently in various settings. Like their more common cousins, dark elves are graceful and elegant. However, dark elves have a dark, more malicious bent to their existence, typically enslaving other races and reveling in torture of their victims. Dark elves look similar to "typical" elves but are colored differently, with either very pale or very dark skin (depending on setting). Their hair color tends to be black, white, or various shades of gray.

- **Agile:** Dark elves are graceful and agile. They start with a d6 in Agility instead of d4.
- **Dark Vision:** Dark elves often live in complete darkness. They suffer no penalties in Dim and Dark lighting, and only half penalties in Pitch Darkness.
- **All Thumbs:** Elves have an inbred dislike of mechanical objects, and thus have the All Thumbs Hindrance. Unlike their high elf cousins, they do not have as severe an aversion to metal (dark elves often leave deep underground).
- **Bloodthirsty:** Dark elves care little for the lives of their slaves, enemies, passers-by... and well, anyone. They suffer from the Bloodthirsty Hindrance.
- **Stealthy:** When moving in the dark and shadows, dark elves receive a +2 bonus to their Stealth rolls.
- **Outsider:** Those who know of dark elves tend to steer clear of them, though many country folk wouldn't be able to tell the difference between a light-skinned dark elf and your everyday high elf.
- **Enemy:** Dark elves are highly disliked by their noble cousins the high elves, and the feeling is mutual. Both see the other as a betrayer to their kind. Dark elves and high elves suffer from -4 Charisma when interacting with each other.

DOG-MEN

"Dog-men" are a fusion of man and canine that could resemble wolves in the forest, jackals in the desert, dingos in the Outback, or just plain mutts in urban settings. This profile can work for any such version of them. They appear as basic humanoids covered in fur, and have the appropriate head and tail of their particular breed.

- **Sense of Smell:** Dogmen have a keen sense of smell, giving them +2 to Notice and Tracking rolls. This ever-present advantage means they are always considered "Active" when consulting the Stealth results table. Heavy,

overpowering smells may counter this advantage at the GM's discretion.

- **Bite:** Dogmen have sharp canine teeth capable of tearing a man's throat out. They may bite as a normal attack for STR+2 damage.
- **Go For The Throat:** Dogmen naturally strike for an enemy's most vulnerable spot. With a raise on the character's attack, they've struck the opponents least armored location.
- **Loyal:** Dogmen are fiercely loyal to their pack, whether that is their family or their boon traveling companions.

ELEPHANT-MEN

Not commonly seen, "elephant-men" fit well in space faring sci-fi or wild jungle- and steppe-themed fantasies. Elephant men typically travel in nomadic family herds, stopping at various watering holes (or planets) around the region. They are always careful to not deplete all the resources in an area.

- **Strong:** Elephant men are naturally stronger to carry their heavy frames. They start with a d6 for Strength rather than a d4.
- **Never Forgets:** Elephant men have a keen memory; they get a +2 bonus to Common Knowledge rolls.
- **Tusks:** Elephant men have strong tusks that they can gore with as a natural attack for STR+2 damage.
- **Size +1:** Elephant men are tall and bulky creatures, granting them +1 to Toughness.
- **Stubborn:** Elephant men are very sure of themselves and their ways. They suffer the Stubborn Hindrance.
- **Trunk:** Elephant men have long semi-prehensile trunks like normal elephants. The trunk can be used for simple tasks like picking up small items, pushing buttons, scratching themselves, etc. They cannot wield weapons with the trunk. It's assumed in the Tusk ability above that the trunk is helping to pull in a target, so the trunk grants no further bonuses in combat.
- **Loyal:** Family and friends are very important to elephant man society. Consequently, all elephant men have the Loyal Hindrance.
- **Code of Honor:** Elephant men have a strict set of guidelines they live their life by, per the Code of Honor Hindrance. They never attack without their presence being known, they never use weapons against unarmed opponents, and never tell lies that could lead to harming someone (the GM could modify these codes to something more appropriate for the setting).
- **Slow:** Unlike their four-legged ancestors, elephant men can't move at such impressive speeds. Their Pace is reduced to 5.

FROG-MEN

An interesting space alien or a fantastic swamp creature, "frog-men" could fit a number of settings. They typically appear as upright-walking, humanoid frogs with either dull brown and green coloring for typical swamp swimming frogs, or bright blues, reds and black for tree climbing jungle frogs.

- **Alert:** Frog-men have large eyes that can see in a near-full circle around themselves. They benefit from the Alertness Edge.
- **Small:** Frog-men average only about 4' tall, and are thin and lanky. This subtracts -1 from their Toughness.
- **Outsider:** Frog-men have very few muscles in their face, making discernable facial expressions difficult to detect. -

2 to the frogman's Charisma when interacting with other races.

- **Leap:** As a normal action, a frog-man can leap twice his Pace.

Tropical Frog variant: Another variation of frog-men comes from deep dark rainforests and jungles. They are skilled climbers, receiving a free d6 in Climbing. Their skin also secretes a mild poison. It's a natural deterrent to large jungle predators, and they sometimes coat their weapons with this poison. In either case (a laced weapon, or a successful predator bite), the poison's victim must make a Vigor roll or suffer -2 to all trait rolls for the next d6 rounds due to fierce burning and itching in the affected area.

GIANTS

Giants are popular in fantasies and legend. Typically a giant is just a gigantic human, proportionally a bit more bulky than the average human frame. Clothing and arming a giant is difficult since no craftsmen make gear to a giant's scale, and giants typically don't have the patience to learn how to craft such items themselves. Clothes tend to be patched-together sheets and tarps taken from human settlements and the hides of creatures they've killed. Giants are usually armed with large tree limbs or trunks that they wield as clubs, sometimes they've been able to get them re-enforced with bands of iron. Giant can have items specially made to their size and cost and weigh about four times as much.

- **Size+4:** Giants are downright big, standing about 10' tall with bulky frames. They add +4 to their Toughness.
- **Strong:** Along with the giant's great size comes great strength. They start with a d8 in Strength, rather than a d4. They may purchase their Strength up to d12+2. The Professional and Expert Edges can increase this to d12+4
- **Slow:** Despite their long legs and great stride, giants take their time about moving around. Starting Pace is reduced to 4.
- **Clumsy:** A giant's bulk isn't easy to move around. It costs 2 points to raise their Agility during character creation, and they must dedicate two leveling opportunities to raise their Agility afterwards.
- **Dumb:** The giant's thick skull doesn't leave much room for brains. It costs 2 points to raise their Smarts during character creation, and they must dedicate two leveling opportunities to raise their Smarts afterwards.
- **Bloodthirsty:** Giants see no point in taking it easy on an enemy. An enemy is just that, an enemy. And when you're as big as giants are, there's usually not much left of an enemy once you hit it.
- **Outsider:** Something about giants doesn't fit with other races. Maybe it's their loud, brash voices. Perhaps it's their aggressive attitudes. Maybe it's just the smell.... -2 Charisma when interacting with other races.

Cyclops variant: To make your giant a Cyclops, simply add the Bad Eyes (major) Hindrance.

GNOMES

Gnomes are similar to half-folk in appearance and stature. They commonly sport long pointed beards, and oft times wear tall, pointed hats. Gnomes are inherently curious, and in many settings show a remarkable aptitude for magic and machinery.

- **Small:** Gnomes average between 3' and 4' tall. This subtracts -1 from their Toughness.

- **Spirited:** Gnomes are optimists, always looking towards the brighter things. They start with a d6 in Spirit instead of a d4.
- **Curious:** Gnomes have an insatiable curiosity. On the off chance they lose interest in things near home, they go questing for more mysteries.
- **Lucky:** Gnomes draw one extra Benny at the beginning of every session. This may be combined with the Great Luck Edge.
- **Low Light Vision:** Gnomes have adapted to life in the dark, living in small burrows and sometimes in modest underground towns. They can see in all but Pitch Darkness.

GOBLINS

Goblins are sneaky little creatures often associated with orcs and their ilk. They typically attack in numbers and from the shadows. "Hero" goblins are different in that... well, they're not that different, really. They are a bit cleverer than the average goblin and have more gumption than most as they have set out to seek fame and fortune.

- **Small:** Gnomes average between 3' and 4' tall. This subtracts -1 from their Toughness.
- **Smarter Than The Average Gobbo:** Hero goblins are a bit cleverer than their dimwitted brethren, giving them a +2 to Smarts-based Trick rolls. PC Goblins also receive a free d6 in the Taunt skill.
- **Duck!:** A clever goblin knows that a good way to survive a fight is to not get hit! This practiced avoidance gives the goblin +1 Parry.
- **Cowardly:** The cleverest goblin knows the best way to survive a fight is to just get the hell away from it. Goblins suffer from the Yellow Hindrance.
- **Sneaky:** Goblins are used to skulking in shadows and creeping along out of sight of bigger things that would want to beat them up or eat them. Goblins get a +2 bonus to their Stealth rolls.
- **Infravision:** Goblins can see in the infrared spectrum, halving attack penalties (round down) for bad lighting against living creatures.

GOD CHILDREN

In many fantasies and mythologies there are God Children, people born of a mortal and a god. They are destined for great things in the world, whether they like it or not. They are typically graced with powers befitting their godly parentage, but often suffer the wrath of rival gods. This profile represents the child of a human and a god, as you might see in Greek or Roman tales of heroes like Achilles and Hercules.

- **Free Edge:** God Children start with one free Edge of their choice. The character must meet the requirements of the Edge as usual. This Edge may or may not have anything to do with their divine lineage.
- **Free Trait Point:** God Children have a little something over mere mortals; they start with six trait points rather than five. The boosted trait usually has something to do with their divine parent. The child of a war god would have boosted Strength, while the child of the God of Wisdom would have boosted Smarts.
- **Hamartia:** It's easy to become a bit cocky when you're good at something. Imagine how bad it can be when you're godly? God Children are Overconfident and Stubborn.

- **Heroic:** Or not... a God Child often encounters people seeking his aid, or is being sent off on quests. Whether or not he actually likes it, he tends to get sucked in anyways, putting his divine gifts to work.
- **Divine Touch:** God Children have a unique version of the Arcane Background (Super Powers) Edge. They have one power (and one power only, the Additional Power Edge may not be taken) that relates to their divine parent. The child of the thunder god may have the *bolt* power with lightening trappings, for example. God Children may also have other Arcane Background Edges if they are available in your setting, but do not add up the Power Points from both Arcane Backgrounds, just take the highest. The God Child automatically receives the appropriate arcane skill for their power at d6.
- **Enemy:** Most adventurers pick up enemies as they go. You have enemies just from being born! And they're powerful enemies... *gods*. The gods never quite get along, and there are always rivalries between them. The rivals (or cheated spouses) of your godly parent are always sending their minions after you. This should cause trouble at least every other session, and is up to the GM's whims. And no matter how many you kill off there are always more, so there is no getting rid of this Hindrance.

HALF-OGRES

Half-ogres have unfortunate origins similar to half-orcs, and are born to a world where they don't really fit in. Most turn to what they do best... fight. Many join tribes of orcs or packs of brigands, where their strength is respected. More socialized ones find the companionship of a group of stalwart adventurers.

- **Strong:** Half-ogres start with d6 Strength instead of d4.
- **Dumb:** Half-ogres are cursed with their ogre parent's dull mind. It costs 2 points to raise their Smarts during character creation, and they must dedicate two leveling opportunities to raise their Smarts afterwards.
- **Tough:** Half-ogres are taller and bulkier than a man, and have thick skin granting them +1 to their Toughness.
- **Fearsome:** Half-ogres possess the naturally intimidating bulk and unpleasant visage of their ogre parentage. They also instinctively know how to manipulate their deep voices into a fierce roar. Half-ogres get a +2 bonus to Intimidation rolls.
- **All Thumbs:** Half-ogres' large sausage-like fingers and simple minds can't grasp machinery and mechanical devices. They suffer from the All Thumbs Hindrance.
- **Outsider:** Most people consider Half-Ogres to be vile abominations. -2 Charisma when interacting with other races.

MINOTAUR

In ancient Greece there was a mortal woman, the Queen of Minos, whom the thunder god Zeus took a liking to. Zeus' wife Hera grew jealous, and enchanted the queen to believe that a great white bull was her lover Zeus in disguise. Thus the Minotaur was born: part man, part bull. The King of Minos locked the strange creature away in a massive labyrinth. The king sent group of condemned young men and women into the labyrinth every year, but none ever returned. Well, the Minotaur must have gotten quite friendly with some of those young women and the resulting offspring escaped, for many fantasy settings have minotaur spread all across the world. This profile is for the Greek classical monstrous, barely-civilized type of minotaur.

- **Strong:** Minotaurs have great physical power, starting with a d8 in Strength, rather than a d4. They may purchase their Strength up to d12+2. The Professional and Expert Edges can increase this to d12+4.
- **Size +2:** Minotaurs are well over 7' tall and add +2 to their Toughness.
- **Fleet Footed:** Minotaurs start with the Fleet Footed Edge.
- **Gore:** Minotaurs maneuver to gore their opponents with their long horns. If they can charge at least 6" before attacking, they add +4 to their damage total.
- **Violent:** Minotaurs don't take mistreatment lightly, and see no point in mercy. They suffer both from the Vengeful and Bloodthirsty Hindrances.
- **Cursed:** The first minotaur was created by a curse, hence all minotaurs born afterwards can feel fate beating down upon them. They suffer the Bad Luck Hindrance, starting each session with only two Bennies. They may not take the Lucky or Great Luck Edges.
- **Enemy:** In Greek settings, minotaurs are constantly at odds with the minions and priests of both Zeus and Hera.
- **Outsider:** Minotaurs are violent beasts created by a curse, hence most people shun them. -2 Charisma when interacting with other races.

MOLE-MEN

"Mole-men" are strange humanoids sometimes seen in old sci-fi movies and comic books. They typically come from the center of the earth, uncovered when man digs down too far. Sometimes they are instead invaders from outer space, searching desperately for something they need that their planet is running low on; gold, oxygen, or buxom cheerleaders. They usually appear as short humanoid figures with pale wrinkly skin, thin pointy teeth, and large pink eyes.

- **Claws:** Mole-men have large, broad, clawed hands usually used for digging, but they make excellent natural weapons as well. These claws inflict Str+2 damage.
- **Burrowing:** Using their claws, mole-men can burrow through dirt, sand, and loose gravel at their normal Pace.
- **Darkvision:** Mole-men come from a naturally lightless environment. They can see perfectly in absolute darkness.
- **Light Blind:** Bright light, on the other hand, causes problems for mole-men. During daylight conditions on the earth's surface (or the equivalent), they are completely blind. Assess penalties equivalent to Pitch Darkness in such situations. They can compensate for this with thick black goggles. So long as they wear those, they have the Bad Eyes (major) Hindrance instead.
- **Outsider:** The strange ways of mole-men are often very alien to humanity, causing a -2 Charisma when interacting with other races.

PIG-MEN

Pig-men are short, portly humanoid figures with porcine heads and tails. Their manner is typically crude and their appearance dirty. Pig-men could be a good replacement for orcs in some fantasy settings.

- **Tusks:** Pig-men have hard, sharp tusks jutting from their lower jaw. The female's tusks are a little smaller than a male's, but no less damaging when put to work. They can be used as a natural attack, inflicting Str+1 bite damage.

- **Tough Hide:** Pig-men have tough, bristly skin, granting them +1 Toughness.
- **Smelly:** Due to their messy appearance and particularly distasteful aroma, pig-men suffer -2 Charisma when interacting with other races.

RABBIT-MEN

Rabbit-men have a humanoid shape, covered with soft fur, rabbit heads complete with long ears, and strong elongated rabbit legs, perfect for bolting away in a hurry. They are typically gentle and kind beings, though a little high strung due to the fact that they are often the prey of larger hungry monsters. Rabbit-men may be farmer living in small collections of burrows, or they may be more primitive nomads, living off of the lands and running from beats that come down from the sky and snatch them away.

- **Fleet Footed:** Rabbit-men have quick reflexes and quick legs. The character automatically gains the Fleet Footed Edge.
- **Alert:** The large ears and eyes of a rabbit-man often give him the heads-up he needs to avoid trouble. They benefit from the Alertness Edge.
- **Defensive:** Rabbit-men are skilled at being where a foe's weapons aren't. They gain a +1 bonus to Parry.
- **Cowardly:** When it comes to the "fight-or-flight" instinct, a rabbit-man will instinctively choose "flight". They possess the Yellow Hindrance.
- **Cautious:** After a lifetime of being preyed upon, rabbit-men tend to play it safe when it comes to dangerous situations. They also suffer from the Cautious Hindrance.
- **Twitchy:** Rabbit-men are always on their guard against danger. Because of this, they are always quickly looking back and forth, and twitching occasionally. This behavior makes other people nervous, and subtracts 1 from the character's Charisma when interacting with other races.

RATFOLK

A race of ratfolk is popular in a certain fantasy miniatures wargame, but could easily be found on a space barge or other fantastic setting. Typically not socially accepted by other, more refined races, ratfolk find a way to wheedle themselves into nearly any milieu.

- **Agile:** Ratfolk are naturally agile. They start with a d6 in Agility instead of d4.
- **Small:** Small both by nature and malnourishment, ratfolk suffer -1 to Toughness.
- **Sneaky:** Ratfolk are sneaky critters—they have a free d6 in both Stealth and Climbing. They seem to get in just about anywhere you don't want them.
- **Low Light Vision:** Ratfolk are used to the dark parts of the world, and suffer no penalties in Dim and Dark lighting.
- **Vermin:** Coming from the foul places they do, ratfolk have developed a natural resistance to disease and infection, gaining a +4 bonus to Vigor rolls to resist illness. Also, a disease that the ratfolk resists may still be carried for others to catch... but that depends on how much trouble your GM wants to cause.
- **Outsider:** Ratfolk live on the fringes of society, in the gutters and dark holes where no one else wants to go. They also harbor fleas and bacteria, causing a noticeable unpleasant smell. -4 Charisma when interacting with other races.

SATYRS

Satyrs, also called "Faun", are beings from Greek mythology. They have the upper body of man and the horns and legs of a goat. In some settings, female satyrs are called "Nymphs", and do not possess goat's legs or horns. In either case, satyrs are high-spirited beings who know how to have a good time and are usually associated with gods of pleasure.

- **Spirited:** Satyrs are optimistic and light-hearted most of the time. They start with a d6 for Spirit instead of a d4.
- **Libidinous:** Satyrs are widely known for their sexual appetite. Males suffer a -2 to their Charisma around "moral" women and all men (who fear the satyr will make off with their women). However, males get +2 Charisma around women of lower moral standing and the priests and worshippers of pleasure and love gods. Nymphs suffer a -2 to their Charisma around women (who are jealous of their unearthly beauty) and men of high moral standing. Average men are dumbstruck by the nymph's shapely form, granting her a +2 bonus to her Charisma.
- **Athletic:** Despite their gluttonous appetites and the constant imbibing of wine, beers, and ales, satyrs are fit and healthy. Satyrs start with a d6 in Vigor rather than a d4. Nymphs also start with the Attractive Edge, though it often brings them unwanted attention.
- **Drunkard:** If you lose track of a satyr while in town, the best place to look for them is the tavern. Satyrs suffer (well maybe not *suffer*...) the Habit (major) Hindrance for wine and spirits.

SIMIANS

"Simians" are a race of evolved simians. They can speak intelligently and have a rather developed society. In some simian cultures, human beings are their slaves (in the immortal words of Chuck Heston, "It's a madhouse... a MAD HOUSE!!!"). Simians come in several varieties. They are all descended from, or based on, different breeds of terrestrial simians, but consider themselves to be one race.

- **Prehensile Feet:** Simians almost never wear shoes or other foot coverings, for they can manipulate their feet as an extra set of hands. This also gives them a +2 bonus to Climbing.
- **Curious:** Simians are naturally curious, per the Hindrance, which can often get them into trouble.

Chimp variant: Descended from the clever chimpanzee, they most often work as merchants, scholars, inventors, politicians, or skilled tradesmen. **Smart:** Chimps have excellent problem-solving skills, and are quick learners. They start with d6 Smarts.

Monkey variant: Descended from smaller monkeys, they most often function as scouts, messengers, craftsmen, and artisans. **Agile:** Monkeys are naturally quick and agile. They start with d6 Agility instead of d4. **Small:** Monkeys have smaller and lighter frames than other simians, causing them to have -1 Toughness. **Prehensile Tail:** Monkeys have strong, agile tails that they can hold things with, even their own body weight. The tail is not dexterous enough to wield a weapon or pull a trigger though.

Gorilla variant: Descended from the mighty gorillas, they most often work as warriors, enforcers, and laborers. Those who rise to power usually do so by sheer force. **Strong:** Gorillas are the strongest of the simians, and natural warriors. They start with d6 Strength instead of d4.

Snake-men

Similar to saurians, snake-men trace their specific lineage to serpents. While they have a humanoid upper torso and arms they have no legs, just a powerful serpent-like tail to propel them. "Standard" snake-men are based on constrictors and other non-venomous breeds.

- **Saurian Senses:** Snake-men's forked tongues constantly dart in and out of their mouth. They actually taste the air, giving them +2 to Notice rolls. This ever-present advantage means they are always considered "Active" when consulting the Stealth results table.
- **Cold-Blooded:** Snake-men are cold-blooded and suffer -2 to resist cold conditions or powers with cold or icy trappings (or +2 damage from a damaging power, such as a *bolt* of cold).
- **Slithering:** Due to the unique musculature of the snake-men, they can move at their full Pace while lying Prone.
- **Swimming:** Snake-men glide effortlessly through the water. They have a free d6 in Swimming. (Note: if swimming doesn't fit your snake-man quite right, change it to d6 in Climbing, or perhaps the Burrow ability with a Pace of 6 for a desert breed).
- **Outsider:** Their cold reptilian nature and eerie, sinuous movement makes other races uncomfortable. -2 Charisma when interacting with other races.

Venomous variant: this variation of the snake-man is based on asps, vipers, cobras, and the like. They possess the abilities above as well as those detailed below. **Poisonous Bite:** Venomous snake-men may bite as a natural attack causing Str damage. On a raise, this also poisons the victim. The victim must make a Vigor roll. With a success, the area bitten swells painfully and the victim is Exhausted until healed. With a failure, the victim becomes Incapacitated, and must make a second Vigor roll or suffer 2d6 damage (armor does not protect from this poison damage). Snake-men can only produce enough venom for one bite every 24 hours. **Quick:** Poisonous snakes are notoriously fast, and so are their humanoid cousins. Snake-men benefit from the Quick Edge. **Small:** Poisonous snakes are often on the small side; poisonous snake-men are as well. -1 to Toughness. **Bloodthirsty:** Venomous snake-men are dangerous foes who come from harsh environments. They are Bloodthirsty, per the Hindrance.

Ursans

An intimidating sight, bear-men or "ursans" are quite imposing—thick fur, large bodies and vicious claws. Fortunately, common ursans can be as good a friend as they can be a deadly foe. Presented here is the profile for a "standard" ursan. Feel free to use the variations below to create a "grizzly" ursan or "polar" ursan.

- **Stubborn:** When an ursan makes up his mind, he makes up his mind for good. He suffers from the Stubborn Hindrance.
- **Heavy Sleeper:** Ursans require a lot of sleep. They've been known to sleep for weeks at a time, especially when food is scarce. When an ursan falls asleep, he falls asleep *hard*. He suffers a -2 penalty to any surprise checks while asleep, and -2 to Vigor rolls to stay awake while on watch or if he must stay awake for some particular reason when Fatigued.
- **Strong:** Ursans have hefty frames and powerful bodies. They start with d6 in Strength instead of d4.

- **Size +1:** An ursan's hefty frame also makes them very resilient to harm, granting them +1 to Toughness.
- **Bear Hug:** With a raise on an ursan's Fighting roll, they may pin their opponent down. The opponent can only try to break free of the pin for their next action by making an opposed Strength roll.
- **Natural Weapons:** Ursans have powerful claws and sharp teeth. The character can bite or claw as a normal attack for STR+2 damage.
- **All Thumbs:** Those claws don't make for delicate handling, however. Ursans suffer from the All Thumbs Hindrance.
- **Runs On All Fours:** The natural posture for an ursan is on all fours, despite being able to walk at their normal Pace while standing upright. Running is more difficult, and requires the ursan to drop to all fours, which means they must stow or drop any items they are carrying in their hands.

Grizzly variant: "Grizzly" ursans are more feral and violent than their cousins. They possess the Berserk Edge and the Bloodthirsty Hindrance in addition to the standard abilities above.

Polar bear variant: "Polar" ursans have white fur and live in very cold climates, where life is hard and snow and ice is the norm. They have a free d6 in the Swimming skill and have a +4 bonus to resist cold and cold-based effects. On the other hand, the harsh environment has made them Bloodthirsty, per the Hindrance. This is in addition to the standard abilities above.

Wild Elves

Another cousin of the more common "high" elf, wild elves have a more survivalist and barbaric life, usually living in harsh wilderness. They are still agile and graceful, but far more feral and, well... wild.

- **Agile:** Wild elves are graceful and agile. They start with a d6 in Agility instead of d4.
- **Low Light Vision:** The character's eyes amplify light like a cat, allowing him to see in the dark. He ignores attack penalties for Dim and Dark lighting.
- **All Thumbs:** Elves have an inbred dislike of mechanical objects, and thus have the All Thumbs Hindrance. They shun most metallic or manufactured items of any design.
- **Wild Child:** Wild elves live a simpler life; they suffer the Outsider hindrance with most races and suffer the Clueless Hindrance when it comes to the world outside their forests and civilization (this never penalizes the Survival skill).
- **Survivor:** Wild elves are trained from birth to "live off the land" and start with the Survival skill at d8.
- **Tracker:** The character learned early on to track down prey and intruders. Wild elves start with d6 in Tracking.
- **Curious:** Despite living in the great outdoors for untold years, they are still fascinated by anything new... so long as it provides no threat to the forest. Wild elves possess the Curious Hindrance.

SAVAGE DOT COM

Fire up the wireless, er... computer and return to the thrilling days of yesteryear!

This issue it's all about the classic pulps of the 20's and 30's...so let's take a trip back in time and check out some websites that focus on tales of adventure from a bygone era. Join us now for a trip in the Wayback Machine to those thrilling days of yesteryear!

BLACKMASK ONLINE: PULP FICTION

http://www.blackmask.com/page.php?do=page&cat_id=212

Conan, Solomon Kane, The Shadow, Doc Savage, The Avenger, and much more! This site has tons of public domain e-texts just waiting for you to download. Don't forget to check out their Action-Adventure section either!

FEMME FATALES

<http://home.sprynet.com/~beb01/femme.htm>

There were so many different kinds hero pulps, each trying to find its special niche, that occasionally a woman character would come forth—only occasionally, because this was a man's world—but these characters are as fascinating as any.

CHRISTOPHER MILLS' SUPERNATURAL CRIME

<http://www.supernaturalcrime.com/index.html>

Seven online pulp comics, two serials, an awesome image gallery, detailed bios on all of the comic's "cast members", and yep, you guessed it, an extensive collection of pulp links. One of my favorite all-around websites!

THE PULP GALLERY

<http://www.pulpgallery.com/>

The Pulp Gallery is a comprehensive and well-indexed site containing more than 2400 covers from the classic pulps of the 1920s thru the 1950s. If you're lacking inspiration, a few minutes spent browsing these covers should help!

PRINTED POISON

<http://www.printedpoison.com/default.html>

An online pulp 'zine—check it out and download the first four issues. Oh, yes, let's not forget their huge links section either!

ADVENTURE HOUSE

<http://www.adventurehouse.com/index.htm>

Public domain e-texts, a pulp cover gallery, a history of the pulps, a glossary, a collector's guide to the pulps, and an online store where you can get pulp reprints, coffee table books, and more!

NORMAN SAUNDERS GALLERY

<http://www.normansaunders.com/>

He was renowned for his luscious palette and exciting action scenes, his sexy women and his ability to shoot from the hip when facing a deadline! Norman Blaine Saunders' illustration career was as big and successful as any artist could hope for, and no single genre could contain his remarkable talent.

THE PULP.NET

<http://www.thepulp.net/>

The Shadow, Doc Savage, and the Spider! Tons of links, an online forum, and a well-indexed can all be found at this website!

THE HOLLOWAY PAGES

<http://home.comcast.net/~cjh5801a/Pulp.htm>

Looking for info on Doc Savage? How about John Carter or Flash Gordon? Heck, this guy even covers Tailspin Tommy, Sheena, Ka-Zar, and G8 and his Battle Aces!

DALE COLZORT'S ALTERNATE HISTORIES

<http://members.aol.com/dalecoz/dale2.htm>

This page features over a dozen alternate history scenarios, an alternate history newsletter, book reviews, alternate history links, some hype for my alternate history fiction, and some favorite alternate history stories. Browse. Read. Enjoy!

AMERICA IN THE 1930s

<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~1930s/front.html>

For those whose campaigns are set in the USA during the Great Depression, the University of Virginia hosts a thoroughly useful site concerning America in the 1930s. Browse lists of radio programs, news stories, films, and a year-by-year timeline

THE DAVID RUMSEY HISTORICAL MAP COLLECTION

<http://www.davidrumsey.com/index.html>

The collection categories include old and antique atlas, globe, school geography, maritime chart, state, county, city, pocket, wall, children and manuscript maps.

FLOORPLANS GALORE

<http://www.historicaldesigns.com/>

Finding the perfect floorplan online can simplify the process of fleshing out an adventure. Authentic Historical Designs has a collection of floorplans for American Victorian houses.

Of course there are hundreds more websites out there dedicated to the classic pulp genre. What I've given you is just a small taste to get you started. Any one of the sites featured in this column lists many more such sites in their individual links sections!

As always, if you find a website that you think might be of interest to other Savages, please send it along to us for inclusion in a future installment of *Savage Dot Com*. Just include the link and your name in an e-mail and send it to editor@sharkbytes.info. Until next time, keep it Savage!

QUEST FOR EL DORADO

A Savage Tale Set on Ravaged Earth®

By ERIC AVEDISSIAN

The year is 1936, but this world is different from our own. Strange, dark forces manifest across the globe, darkening the hearts of some men and spawning vile creatures and corrupt magic. It is a time for heroes: bold adventurers, stalwart magicians, super-humans and daring explorers. In Quest for El Dorado, your heroes investigate the fabled legend of the "Golden Man" in the sweltering South American jungle and what starts out as an innocent treasure hunt turns into a confrontation with an ancient evil.

BACKGROUND

Francisco Pizarro and his conquistadors began plundering the New World in 1530 and made contact with the Inca civilization in Peru soon thereafter. After Pizarro captured the Inca emperor Athahualpa, he noticed that the royal chambers were covered from floor to ceiling with gold objects, statues and jewelry. In their greed they murdered the emperor and began to scour the land for more gold.

Around 1535, Sebastian de Belalcazar, one of Pizarro's men and founder of the city of Quito in modern Ecuador, met an old Inca who told him the tale of an emperor who sprinkled himself with gold dust and boarded a regal boat. The emperor was rowed out into the middle of a sacred lake from which he then entered the water to swim. The king was called "El Dorado"—the Golden Man. These tales fired Belalcazar's imagination and he organized an expedition to find this fabled king, but a search of the surrounding Andes Mountains proved fruitless.

In 1536, Jimenez de Quesada led an expedition of almost 1,000 men into the thick jungles to search for El Dorado and the mountain lake supposedly filled with treasure. The expedition was difficult but de Quesada made it into modern day Columbia, a land inhabited by the Chibcha Indians. The Spaniards ransacked the small villages dotting the plateau, encountering slight resistance from the local natives. De Quesada was told that the gold he sought lay to the north near the head of the Apure River. There, the Spaniards found several tiny green gems near the village of Sogamoso, near a temple to a sun god. The temple held the mummies of several Chibcha kings with gems in their dead eye sockets and wearing gold breastplates. The Indians claimed they got the treasures from a nearby tribe living near a lake several days march to the east. The Spaniards learned the fabled tribe to the east lived near a lake called Guatavita, and boasted a king who covered himself with gold dust before swimming. The gold dust washed off into the lake while holy men threw gold statues and amulets into the water, which seemed to radiate with a golden glow.

When de Quesada arrived at the fabled lake, he found the place deserted. Little evidence of a civilization remained. There were some crude dwellings and tools, but no people. The Spaniards were surprised to find another expedition, led by Sebastian de Belalcazar, approaching from the south. Another party, led by German Nicolaus Federmann, surprised the Spaniards.

The three groups wandered the jungles and mountains for years searching for the fabled El Dorado before forming an alliance in 1539. Alas, their expeditions proved fruitless and they split up, taking whatever treasure they could and sharing it with their colonial governments.

In 1568, Quesada, by then an old man, got approval from the Spanish crown to undertake another expedition to search for El Dorado. His force of over 2,000 men left Bogotá and searched for three years before abandoning the expedition.

Intrepid English explorer Sir Walter Raleigh heard tales of El Dorado and started his own expedition in 1595. He found a large lake in Guiana, Lake Parma, but no wealth of riches.

In the early 19th century, explorers, fueled by tales of El Dorado, began exploring the northern nations of South America. Disease, hostile natives, and wild animals prematurely ended such expeditions.

In 1898, a company called Contractors, Ltd. was formed by a British national named Hartley Knowles. The company spent thousands of pounds to drain Lake Parma to recover the treasure. In 1912, Knowles succeeded in draining the lake, but the lakebed hardened, trapping the riches within. An excavation team freed about \$5,000 worth in gold and gems, but financial hardship struck and the company went bankrupt in 1929.

No one has tried searching for El Dorado since.

SCENE ONE: SHOOTOUT AT THE MISSION

A Sacred Duty

The adventure begins in March 1936 at Channing College in Long Island, NY. The party assembles in the library's great hall, summoned there by Archeology Department Dean Noel Joseph Campbell. Campbell makes the introductions, and then tells the heroes they have been assembled together as a special exploratory team due to their individual talents. If they would like to work for the college on their latest mission, Campbell informs them they will each receive \$1,000 once their mission is complete. He tells the heroes to meet him that night at 7 p.m. at a specific old crypt in the cemetery on the far edge of campus.

The Explorer's Guild

The Explorer's Guild is headquartered in a crypt built into the side of a sloping wooded hill in the cemetery at the far end of the campus. At the appointed time, Campbell meets the heroes here. The barred gates are locked, but Campbell produces an ornate old key and unlocks them. Everyone descends a flight of stone steps and finds themselves in front of carved wooden doors depicting figures from ancient history. A marble lion's head glowers from over the door. Campbell wraps gently three times and opens the door. The heroes are ushered into a dimly lit circular chamber with a marble-tiled floor and Corinthian columns. A statue of Zeus dominates the room. Painted portraits adorn the walls, depicting Columbus, Sir Francis Drake, Lewis & Clark and Stanley Livingstone. Alcoved doors lead in a few directions; one to the west leads to a private museum filled with artifacts from Egyptian, Roman, Greek and other cultures; another door leads to

Campbell's private office, another to a plush lounge, and another to a formal meeting room.

Campbell directs the party into the lounge, a comfy room with a fireplace, bookshelves, divans, a billiard table and a bar. An odd collection of men occupies the room. There is a bearded Middle Eastern man in a fez with a hook for his right hand, a stout elderly Englishman with a monocle and handlebar moustache, another well-dressed Englishman with military medals on his smoking jacket, a soused Scotsman in a kilt, a burly Texan in a Stetson, a lanky African man with a gold tooth and a white tuxedo, and a few more bookish Eastern university types. Dr. "Lucky" Jack Nelson is also here. Campbell introduces the men as the Explorer's Guild, and then asks if Nelson could accompany the party to Campbell's office.

Once the group has made introductions with Nelson and moved to Campbell's private office, the dean begins by relating the backstory above. Once the heroes have an idea of the history of El Dorado, Campbell gives them the clincher:

"In 1570, on de Quesada's second journey, he took along a Spanish friar, Pedro Gutierrez, who recorded the search for El Dorado in his journal. One day, so it goes, a group of Chibcha Indians took Gutierrez deep into the jungle-covered mountains where no white man had stepped before. There, he witnessed the ritual of El Dorado. The crafty friar recorded everything he'd seen, supposedly even directions on how to get to the site. When he made it back to civilization weeks later, Quesada had abandoned his quest. Gutierrez eventually headed north to Mexico where he died an old priest in 1627. His personal affects, including his journal, were placed in the Saint Maria Mission in modern day New Mexico. The keeper of that mission, Father Jose Diego, recently contacted the college after reading an article by Dr. Nelson on treasures of South America. Father Diego agreed to sell the journal to the college for \$1,000. Your assignment is to get to that mission, make contact with Father Diego, and buy the journal. With it, we hope to learn the true location of El Dorado."

Dr. "Lucky" Jack Nelson (Wild Card)

Nelson is handsome, but shy in his college class. When he's on the high road to adventure, he usually sports a leather jacket, Stetson and bullwhip.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d10, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d10, Guts d10, Climbing d8, Knowledge (Archeology) d12, Knowledge (History) d10; Knowledge (Hieroglyphics) d10; Knowledge (Mythology) d10; Shooting d10, Riding d8, Survival d10, Notice d12; Investigation d12; Stealth d10; Streetwise d10; Swimming d10; Taunt d10; Throwing d8; Tracking d10.

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Charisma:** +4; **Toughness:** 9

Hindrances: Heroic, Curious, Code of Honor

Edges: All-American*; Attractive; Fast Healer, Improved Block; Improved Dodge; Nerves of Steel; The Ol' One-Two*; Scholar; Treasure Hunter*; Lucky

Gear: Stetson, leather jacket, Colt .34; bullwhip, knapsack, canteen, compass, pocketknife, \$2,500

the end of this adventure for details of these new Edges

The party is scheduled to leave the next day. Allow the characters an opportunity to purchase equipment they feel they might need. Their plane leaves New York and lands in Santa Fe, New Mexico, where they hire a car to drive four hours south to the village of San Maria.

There isn't much in San Maria—an old hotel, a telegraph office, a general store and the Saint Maria Mission, a crumbling adobe structure that's seen better days. The population has dwindled to a few dozen people and families—the town is nearly deserted.

At the Mission, they are greeted by Father Diego and his young ward, a boy named Paco. After introductions are made, the party enters the church, where Father Diego agrees to make the sale. He offers the heroes something to eat and drink and sends Paco to fetch tortillas and water when the real action begins.

A Gift from Chicago

The party has been followed by members of Al Capone's gang. They know something is up involving El Dorado and this Mission, and "Scarface" Al wants the gold. He's sent a few of his goons to secure the journal and has a translator waiting in their car. Their orders are that once the translator reveals the contents of the book, the goons will wire Capone in Chicago. The gangster boss will then decide what to do next.

There are six goons in all, each perspiring in the desert heat in their suits. They drove a Ford and parked it outside the Mission. They each sport Tommy guns. After barging in and telling everyone not to make any false moves (they should have The Drop on the heroes), they demand the journal from Father Diego.

At first the priest won't cooperate, but when the thugs threaten Paco, the Father has no choice. He'll hand the gangsters a tattered, yellowing book in Spanish. The goons take the book and head back to the hotel.

After the gangsters are gone, Father Diego tells the party he actually tricked the gangsters—handing them the diary of a Spanish naturalist who described the desert foliage and animals in a long-winded treatise. He produces the real journal and gives it to the party.

The gangsters don't like being tricked. When the translator begins reading on the way back to the hotel, the mobsters realize they've been had and return to the Mission, guns blazing. The heroes should just be coming out of the church when this happens. All six mobsters position themselves behind some cover and shoot it out with the heroes.

Mobsters

These gangsters are rough-looking thugs wearing neatly-pressed suits and fedoras and sporting Tommy guns.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d6, Intimidation d8, Shooting d8, Taunt d6.

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty, Mean, Loyal (Al Capone), Vengeful (minor)

Edges: Dodge

Gear: Tommy guns, Beretta 1934 pistols, suits, \$150

Once the gunfire has died down, Nelson (if present) or Father Diego will translate the real journal [give the players the handout]. It tells of a sacred lake in a mountain jungle the natives use for their ceremonies. According to legend, the diary says, the lake is haunted by a demon. The natives pacify the demon with gold, making it safe for the Golden Man to enter the water. This lake was never found by any white man—not even Knowles found it. Nelson said the largest city to the alleged El Dorado is Bogotá, Colombia. Nelson (if present) or Father Diego proposes that the group drive back to the airport in Santa Fe and charter an aeroplane for Bogotá.

SCENE TWO: JUNGLE JOURNEY

Welcome to South America

Bogotá is a busy city, the capital of Colombia. The airplane lands in an airstrip outside of town. The place has a sort of gloominess about it, probably because of the soldiers patrolling the streets. Nelson, if present, suggests the party get settled into a hotel first. There's a nice one, the Casa de Pizzaro, near the center of town. Once everyone is comfortable, Nelson suggests they meet a contact from the Museo Nazionale, Eduardo Sanchez, an antiques expert and guide. If Nelson is not present, have the PCs receive a cable from him in New York informing them of this contact.

Museo Nazionale

The National Museum is filled with rare artifacts and exquisite works of art including paintings and sculptures. Sanchez wears a white suit and Panama hat, sports a thin mustache and smokes cigarettes. He warmly greets the party and then escorts everyone into an office at the rear of the museum. Sanchez appears crestfallen when shown the journal, and falls silent as he reads it. He then says to the group:

"Si, I am familiar with these jungles. Very, very dangerous the route is. The good padre who wrote this journal made it, and so shall we. Many men have gone mad and lost their fortunes or their lives searching for El Dorado. I believe I can help you find what the conquistadors and others failed to acquire, my friends."

With that, Sanchez says he'll make the arrangements to have the party travel by train from Bogotá to Pasto in the south where they will board a steamboat that will wend down the Putomayo River through the rain forest. He says the trip will take about a week.

Unknown to the players, Sanchez is a ruthless villain who sees this as an opportunity to enrich himself and become a national celebrity. He intends to betray and murder the heroes once the treasure is found. Until that time, he will always present himself as a reliable and agreeable ally of the characters.

Vandalized

The heroes can spend the evening however they want. Many cantinas and saloons offer gambling and entertainment. However, when they arrive back at the hotel, they find their room vandalized; overturned furniture, suitcases opened with personal items strewn all over the room, etc. The room was vandalized by Sanchez' men, who were looking for the journal and didn't know the heroes brought it with them to the museum to show Sanchez. Let the characters wonder about this.

If any of the PCs stayed in the room, have Sanchez' men try to knock them out before they vandalize it. If they fail, they flee into the night city streets.

Setting Out

Next morning, the party meets at the train station. Sanchez booked passage to the end of the line, and the whole trip takes just under ten hours to travel the full 300 miles.

The heroes are being watched on the train route. Sanchez has a few of his men on board, monitoring the heroes' every move. These hirelings will not reveal their presence to the party, under orders from Sanchez. Sanchez doesn't want the journal—yet. He just wants to be sure that the heroes have no suspicions about his real motives. Sanchez is confident the heroes will lead him to the treasure, so he's biding just his time and making sure his secret is safe.

Once the party arrives in Pasto, they settle in to a hotel. Pasto is a small river town. Docks line its front street, and most of

the buildings are crude shacks with only a few stone structures. A majority of citizens are indigents or farmers and the place has a distinctively Third World feel. There's a hotel, a tavern and a government office that handles everything from the mail to policing the town. The docks are lawless; a haven for smugglers and lowbrow profiteers of every stripe.

Sanchez charts a small steamboat on the Putumayo River, and hires several porters (loyal to him) and supplies for the journey. If no trouble arises during the night, the party sets off at dawn the next day.

Rolling on the River

The first day passes uneventfully. The captain is Dominic Andros, who has Boating skill at d10. Each day, make a Boating roll for the captain. A success means the day's piloting went smoothly. A failure means the boat hit a snag and must be pulled from the mud or some other peril. He steers the boat east, heading upriver. Once in mountainous terrain, the party is heading towards the lush rainforests. They notice their surroundings changing from sparse rocky outcroppings to lush vegetation. At night, Andros pulls the boat over to one bank and the native porters tie it to a tree. A campsite is cleared and the party rests for the night. The night passes uneventfully.

On the second day, the boat continues its trek eastward. The currents are getting a little rougher and the jungle a lot thicker. Around mid-day, the party comes across another boat heading toward them. The Red League, a covert communist group, commands it, but they don't advertise this fact. To the party, they're simply heavily armed thugs. The Red League has a camp in the jungle where they're training guerillas to seize control of the country.

Their leader is Pablo "Enrico" Mendoza, a charismatic figure picked by the Red League to train the communists. The thugs demand to know what the party is doing in this part of the country—and a monetary tribute to continue upriver. The thugs ask for \$100. If the party pays up, the Red League lets them pass. They don't want to waste good bullets on fighting with explorers. If the party refuses, the thugs attack. There are five thugs, plus one boat captain.

Red League Thugs

These are a rag-tag assortment of secret communist soldiers. They are mostly unshaven and wear peasant clothing but are heavily armed.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Shooting d8, Taunt d6, Knowledge (Politics) d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: Poverty, Delusional, Communist Partisan*

Edges: Dodge

Gear: Enfield (.38) revolvers; Enfield 1917 rifles; daggers (Str+1)

If the thugs are defeated, a raise on a Search roll finds a hidden compartment on their boat. Inside the compartment is a Red League communist manifesto, outlining the group's plans for world domination. It's in Russian with the Soviet hammer and sickle on the front cover. This book would be worth a lot to any law enforcement agency, or even to the FBI back in the states.

The boat continues on for another six hours until nightfall. Then the party ties the boat and camps on a river bank.

On the third day, it begins raining heavily. The party starts heading east, and the morning is miserable with hard rain falling and the river churning rougher. In the afternoon, the water turns to rapids and Andros has trouble steering the boat, which roughly

strikes a fallen tree blocking the river. The boat begins taking on water. Nelson or Captain Andros suggests everybody abandon ship and swim toward the northern bank. The porters grab what possessions and supplies they can and hit the water.

The currents are rough and require Swimming rolls by all characters. Due to the hazardous conditions, it takes two successful Swimming rolls to make it safely to the bank. Andros drowns and so do a few porters, their bodies carried by the current downstream. The party makes it to the bank drenched and soaking. As a final kicker, once they make it to shore, it stops raining. After consulting the journal, Nelson suggests the party should head northwest through the jungle.

Jungle Hazards

The South American jungles are thick with vines, trees, exotic plants and animals. Dangers are plentiful here and the sound of thousands of native creatures buzzing, hissing, chirping or roaring around them can be heard. For random encounters in the jungle, use the table below:

D4 Encounter

- 1 **Quicksand!** The characters run into a patch of quicksand. It takes a raise on a Strength roll to free characters from the quicksand. Failure means slow suffocation as they're pulled under.
- 2 **Bats!** A swarm of bats attack, swooping low from the jungle canopy. Use the Swarm statistics in the *Savage Worlds* rulebook for these creatures.
- 3 **Snake!** A large constrictor encounters the party and attacks a player character. Use the snake, constrictor statistics in the *Savage Worlds* rulebook.
- 4 **Pit Trap!** The heroes stumble into an old native hunting trap. The pit trap is five feet square and four feet deep, covered by twigs and dirt. It takes two raises on a Notice roll to spot it before falling in. Any heroes falling into the trap suffer 3d6 points of damage from the razor sharp sticks inside.

The party wanders in the jungle for a day after losing their boat. Late in the day, the path opens up into a clearing. Suddenly, the group is ambushed by a tribe of tall, muscular women in leopard skin loincloths! The women, remnants of the Amazon tribe, sport a mish-mash of weaponry; bows and arrows, rifles, blowguns, etc. There are maybe 20 women in the hunting party. They motion for the party to follow them. If anyone resists, more Amazons jump from the trees and throw a large net around the group and drag them to their village.

Amazon Warriors

Well-disciplined warriors from the lost Amazon tribe, these women know how to defend themselves.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Shooting d8, Taunt d6, Persuasion d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: Outsider, Cautious, Bloodthirsty

Edges: Attractive, Berserk

Gear: Bow and arrows, blowgun, or old flintlock rifle

The Amazon Tribe

The hunting party travels for an hour through the dense foliage until they come to a rope bridge suspended over a deep ravine. The Amazon's village is a collection of wooden and grass shacks in a massive clearing of the jungle on the other side of the ravine. A large bonfire is at the center of a village, near which a stone statue of the Amazon's goddess stands majestically. Several women are already in the village when the hunting party returns; they are wearing a mixture of primitive and modern dress; a few pregnant ones are weaving baskets, cooking or tending a herd of wild goats.

The heroes are brought to the center of the village and the Amazonian Queen approaches them. She's a burly woman with trousers, boots, a cotton undershirt and a baseball cap. A leather holster slung around her waist contains an automatic pistol, and her raven black hair is pulled back in a ponytail.

She tells the posse she is Ramona Diaz, Queen of the Amazons. Her tribe is descended from the original tribe that has existed here for centuries. She explains that the tribe uses men for breeding then promptly executes them afterward. If a male child is born, he is put to death. Only females are allowed to live. No such fate will befall this party, she says. They will be given the opportunity to prove themselves useful in a particular task she has in mind.

Ramona tells them many of her warriors have been attacked and killed by a giant bat that lives high in the mountains. Since she doesn't want to risk any more of her warriors, and men are considered expendable by the Amazons, Ramona orders the party to kill this bat and bring her proof of the creature's demise or she'll have the party summarily executed. Her warriors (three per player character) will follow the group to make sure they have completed this task. If they prove successful, the Amazons will allow them safe passage through their lands.

If the heroes try to skip out on this mission, the Amazons who follow them will attack the party, though one will rush back to report this fact to the queen. Henceforth, Amazons striking from ambush will constantly dog the party throughout their voyage. These raiders will start by killing off the party's porters, then will attempt to kill the characters one by one.

Bat Hunt

The giant bat lives in a cavern in a heavily-wooded hill. Throw a few more dangers on the jungle dangers table as the heroes make their way to the bat's lair. When they get to the cavern, they notice the pungent smell of bat guano (a LOT of it!). A successful Vigor roll is needed to keep the heroes from vomiting.

They notice the monstrous bat is not present; it's gone hunting and will return shortly. This gives them a chance to set up an ambush, if they so desire. If the party becomes impatient and leaves, they encounter the bat returning with a dead goat in its sharp talons.

Monstrous Bat

This giant bat has a hunger for meat, and uses its sharp teeth and claws to tear into its victims.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d10, Guts d10, Intimidation d10, Notice d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 9

Special Abilities:

Bite: Str+2

Talons: Str+3

Sonar vision: The bat can "see" in pitch blackness.

Size +2: This bat is as big as a horse!

SCENE THREE: THE GOLDEN MAN

Heroes Triumphant

If the heroes manage to slay the monstrous bat and bring evidence of this (i.e., its head, fangs or the whole cadaver) back to Ramona, she praises and thanks them for their service to the tribe. Everyone in the party are given a feast and a promise they will not be harmed in Amazon country.

Ramona has been queen for years but doesn't know anything about El Dorado or the Chibcha Indians. She said her tribe tangled with local natives in the past, but that was over 70 years ago and the jungle has remained quiet since.

She does tell the party they'll find remnants of tribal roads to the north. It takes the party another day of traveling through the hot, wet rain forest before they stumble upon the ruins of an old temple in the high country.

Chibcha Temple

Various crumbling stone statues of past princes and gods surround this small pyramid temple. It takes a raise on a Notice roll to find a door in the pyramid, strangled with vines and overgrown plants. There is evidence of a small village outside the temple, now overgrown with vegetation. The whole place looks like it was ransacked centuries ago. A winding path leads north from the temple and village, up a sloping hill where a 20-foot tall statue proudly stands.

Inside the temple, heroes find a chamber with unique hieroglyphics. It takes a raise on an appropriate Knowledge skill roll to decipher them. Nelson, if present, will assist, adding +2 to the players' rolls. The writing depicts several noble figures watching the skies of heaven opening, and an animalistic figure descending holding a sacred mace. The message reads: "Behold, the sacred Temple of Thomagata, god of thunder. He who fails praise will be transformed into beasts and not men." A small altar is inside the temple, on which are several shattered clay urns and remnants of burned incense.

There's nothing of value here. The place was vandalized by the Spanish years ago and the people driven out. The more interesting location is at the top of the hill.

Pointing the Way

Crowning the hill is a 20-foot tall stone statue. An appropriate Knowledge skill roll reveals it is Bochicha, the Chibcha's sun god. The statue wears unusual headgear and a regal ceremonial dress common of Chibcha warriors.

Once the party reaches the hill's zenith, they see a jungle-covered valley below and another hill, obviously a dormant volcano, rising in the distance.

According to the journal, once the sun rises Bochicha will show the way to El Dorado. The party may wish to camp atop the hill or near the temple. If they stay near the temple, have everyone sleeping there make a Spirit roll. It takes a raise to have a good night's sleep. Anyone not making it is troubled by vivid nightmares of monsters and demons lurking around them.

When the sun rises over the jungle and hits the statue of Bochicha, the statue casts an immense shadow down in the valley to the northwest, straight toward the distant heavily wooded hill they saw earlier.

A partially hidden path is cut in the forest following where the shadow falls. The party will have to hurry and take the path shown by the shadow or risk being lost in the jungle. A great quicksand swamp lurks nearby and a series of fissures, hidden by the thick jungle growth, mar the jungle floor. Anyone falling into one of these fissures plummets to their death. The only way to avoid these pitfalls is to follow the path shown by the shadow (this

requires a Tracking roll if following the shadow. Apply a -4 penalty to the roll if the shadow is not present). The trip from statue hill to the dormant volcano takes about an hour.

Private Lake

A few statues grace the base of the dormant volcano, and a flight of carved stone stairs choked with vines ascends 20 feet up to a landing. A fallen stone statue blocks the entrance and will require two Strength checks with two raises each to move it.

Entering the mountain reveals a twisting passage that curves to the right, and then opens up into a large grotto looking out over an underground lake. At the center of the lake is a small island choked with vines and plants. Rising from the center of the island is a small stone pyramid. Two smaller passageways branch from the grotto. One heads east, and the other west.

The eastern passage leads to a room containing clay jars filled with a gray powder used in a religious ceremony, and powdered makeup for the ritual. A few dried woven shawls are here as well, brittle with age.

Off the western passage is a room with two strange elaborately carved rafts, with equally elaborately carved oars. These were the rafts used during the Golden Man ceremonies. A pile of human skulls adorns one wall of this chamber. These are from past sacrificial victims who gave their lives for the king.

The Lake's Little Secret

This is the secret lake where the Golden Man legend was born. It survived because the king's trusted aides spread rumors about the lake being in other locations. When the Spaniards were running roughshod over the land, the natives panicked and started throwing their gold in various lakes. This gave rise to rumors the El Dorado ceremony was performed in lakes far away from this dormant volcano, thus protecting the Chibcha's legends.

One day, a Chibcha guide escorted a young Spanish priest up the stairs and into the sacred grotto. When word got back to the Chibcha king, he became furious. He had the Indian guide murdered, but the priest was long gone.

The king realized the damage had been done; the remote location of the holy lake was compromised. He reacted by ordering all of his gold to be stored within the pyramid, then having the Indian holy men stay behind while the rest of the tribe fled into the jungle, never to return.

For a solid week, the holy men performed an elaborate ritual designed to fortify the lake against any invaders. The king foresaw his own demise and ordered them that when the time came they should mummify him and cast an everlasting life spell on his remains. When the king died of starvation a week later, the holy men did as they were told.

Now the sacred lake is a cursed place. Anyone going into the water confronts the fear that drove the Chibchas to throw gold offerings—a water demon!

The demon won't attack unless someone enters the water either by swimming or by a boat. If something made of gold is thrown into the water, the demon won't attack at all. If attacked, the creature fights to the death.



Water Demon

This creature was originally a princess who drowned and was cursed by the gods. She transformed into a hideous demon and acts as sentry for the temple in the middle of the lake.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d10, Intimidation d10, Notice d10, Swimming d10

Pace: 6 (10); **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 9

Special Abilities:

Bite and Claws: Str+2

Fear -2

Size +2

Immunity: Immune to attacks by normal weapons.

Aquatic: Cannot drown; Pace in water is 10.

To the Island!

After the water demon has been dispatched or pacified, Sanchez suggests taking the two rafts out to the island to explore the temple. Nelson readily agrees, and rows the rafts, along with Sanchez and the hired porters, out toward the island. The island itself isn't large; only 100 feet by 50 feet and mostly covered with a crumbling stone pyramid and vines and overgrown plants. Stone figures representing various animals (jaguars, monkeys, serpents, etc.) crown the pyramid. Finding a safe spot to land on the island is tricky and requires a raise on a Notice roll to detect a sliver of rocky outcropping the rafts can be dragged up on.

Ascending the pyramid isn't hard; stone steps lead straight to the top. There's no way into the pyramid save an opening at the top covered by a stone slab. Removing the slab takes a raise on a Strength roll. Once the slab is removed, the heroes see only darkness within. If anyone thinks to drop a torch below, it falls about 100 feet down and lands on the dusty stone floor. If he's present, Nelson agrees to climb down into the pyramid using a rope tied to one of the stone figures at the pyramid's summit. He will ask the heroes to accompany him. Sanchez suggests he should stay above with the porters and watch for any danger.

If your players are chicken and don't want to enter the pyramid, they can wait with Sanchez. Just keep in mind that this will have consequences later.

- **Main Chamber:** The primary chamber of the pyramid is square. The walls are decorated with Incan glyphs of past kings, great battles and fierce animal deities. Two openings exist here; one to the north, the other to the south.
- **Treasury:** This is the room due south of the main chamber. It's smaller than the main chamber and boasts a few unlit torches on the walls that can easily be lit with lighting fluid and a match or lighter. At the center of the room is an awe-inspiring collection of glimmering gold objects! There are crowns, figurines, amulets, drinking goblets and gem-encrusted jewelry heaped upon the floor. Total value of this treasure is about \$15,000.
- **Funeral Chamber:** This is the room to the north of the main chamber. The first thing heroes notice upon entering this room is the mummy propped up against the far wall. It is the desiccated remains of the last Chibcha king, the one entombed here to thwart the invading Spanish. The mummy wears a brilliant gold mask, gold shin and elbow guards, gold breastplate and a gold sword. This is obviously El Dorado, the Golden Man.

Above El Dorado on the wall is an elaborate depiction of the king and his loyal subjects on the lake. The water demon lurks menacingly below, while the pyramid island is above. The king is flanked by armed warriors, while a bevy of women and children remain on the far shore.

The ground in this room is softer and made of clay bricks. At the far end of the room are six mounds of earth. Under each are El Dorado's priests, skeletons with gems in their eye sockets.

If anyone should remove the golden mask or touch El Dorado, the curse is activated. El Dorado comes to life and attacks the heroes. What's more, the king's priests burst forth from their earthen graves and attack as well. They are quite ornery having been disturbed after 500 years and fight until they are destroyed.

El Dorado, the Golden Man

This is the dried mummy of a former king. Beneath his golden mask, his skeletal face has gems in its eye sockets. The king attacks anyone it feels will abscond with its treasure.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d10, Intimidation d10, Notice d6, Stealth d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 9 (3)

Gear: Mask of the Golden Man, Armor and Greaves of the Golden Man, Sword of the Golden Man (see Relics, below for details)

Special Abilities:

Undead

Claws: Str+2

Fearless

Undead Priests

These undead Chibcha priests resemble animated skeletons with gems in their eye sockets. They wear plumed headdresses and golden necklaces and carry ornate gilded swords (Str+3).

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d8, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5

Edges: Arcane Background (Magic)

Powers: *deflection, fear, stun*

Special Abilities:

Undead

Claws: Str+1

Fearless

A Rat in Our Midst

When the heroes descend into the pyramid, Sanchez takes this opportunity to make his move. He shouts down into the pyramid, inquiring if the explorers found any treasure, and then proceeds to lower down a bag tied to a rope. Sanchez tells the heroes to fill the bag with gold, and then he'll hoist it up. If the heroes are agreeable, Sanchez warmly thanks them with encouraging words:

"We're doing great, amigos! Look at these priceless historical artifacts!"

What the heroes don't know is that after Sanchez gets his fill of gold, he will cut the rope and maroon the heroes in the pyramid. Nelson, if present, instantly understands what's going on when Sanchez cuts the rope. He's been in similar situations before.

"So this was all about gold, wasn't it, Sanchez?" Nelson asks his voice thick with contempt.

"Si, Professor Nelson," Sanchez calls from the top of the pyramid. "I told you many men lost their lives trying to find El Dorado. I'll wager you didn't think you'd be one of them!"

"Lower the rope and I'll go easy on you, Sanchez," Nelson replies.

"I'm sorry, Professor Nelson. You must remain here. I'm off to the museum where some of these priceless treasures will be preserved for all time. And some of them will be auctioned off and make me rich. In any case, I'll be a wealthy benefactor and the toast of South America, and you...well, you'll be resting with the Chibchas."

With that, Sanchez and his men depart the island.

If any of the heroes stayed topside, they are quickly surrounded by the porters, Sanchez' men, and tied up, then lowered into the pyramid and the rope severed. Sanchez didn't come this far to have his plans thwarted by anyone.

Great! So how do we get out of here?

Right now, your heroes should be in the darkened pyramid with no way of escaping. If your heroes are of the super-human persuasion and can use their powers to either fly or tunnel out, let them try. Bully for them!

If your heroes don't have super powers, there is one other way out of the pyramid. The Chibcha builders constructed a secret passage in the funeral chamber. A small wooden lever juts from the wall behind the Golden Man's funeral platform. Spotting it requires a raise on a Notice roll. Once pulled, the lever activates a trap door in the floor. Nelson (if present) and anyone else standing on the concealed trap door will unfortunately fall down a chute and experience a harrowing ride down a 300-foot slide, which spills out of a small opening at the foot of the hill. Once the lever is pulled, have everyone in the funeral chamber roll a 1d4. Whoever gets a 4 falls down the shaft.

The Chase is On

The final chase through the jungle can be as dramatic as you want it to be. Ideally, Sanchez and his men should have a substantial lead on the heroes of about an hour. The heroes easily spot footprints across the jungle floor, cut vines and trampled vegetation as they follow the trail.

Hell Hath no Fury...

On the way, Sanchez' party met up with a few Amazon warriors and, heady with one conquest, tried to have another with the Amazons. Unfortunately, Sanchez totally underestimated the brute strength and fighting skill of the Amazons and a fight broke out—a really, really bad fight, more like a massacre.

One of Sanchez' men got careless and shot an Amazon warrior. Then all hell broke loose. Half of Sanchez' men were slaughtered, while the other half fled deep into the jungle. Sanchez and the gold were taken back to the Amazon village.

When the heroes continue along the trail, they find remnants of the bloody skirmish—bodies of Amazons and native guides litter the ground. Just as the heroes are piecing everything together, they are ambushed by 20 Amazons. The Amazons don't attack, nor do they answer the hero's questions. Even Nelson can't seem to get them to talk. All they want is for the heroes to go to the Amazon village.

Once at the village, the heroes see Sanchez bound and gagged, tied to a wooden stake. Ramona is there, along with the rest of her tribe. Ramona relates how Sanchez attacked her warriors and that she's will keep a portion of the gold looted from the pyramid as tribute for her fallen warriors. She also reserves the right to deal justice to Sanchez. Diplomatic heroes may try to

barter with Ramona, making Persuasion rolls at -2 to convince her to hand Sanchez over to them. The gold is non-negotiable.

If the heroes want to fight it out, they have a long battle ahead of them, and Nelson, if present, knows it. He prefers to lose some treasure and leave Sanchez to the Amazons. If the heroes truly want Sanchez to suffer, they'll agree with Nelson.

Ramona says Sanchez will be used for breeding purposes with the entire tribe. Just as a lurid smile creeps upon Sanchez' face, Ramona adds he shall be put to death immediately after mating with each warrior, as befitting Amazon custom. As the party takes their leave of the village, they hear Sanchez' anguished screams reverberate throughout the jungle.

A Well-Deserved End

The heroes must now make it back to Bogotá. Whether they encounter the Red League or other deadly jungle pitfalls is entirely up to the GM. If you wish to go easy on the group, they can arrive in Bogotá safely a few days later and take a flight back to New York City.

Once back at Channing College, Nelson contacts Campbell and a meeting of the Explorer's Guild is convened. Nelson and the heroes present the gold mask and other El Dorado artifacts to Campbell, who nearly salivates with excitement. He commends the heroes on a job well done. The rest of the guild likewise praises the heroes for their fortitude and magnificent achievement. True to his word, he rewards the players with \$1,000 each.

Campbell then invites the heroes to become initiated as members of the Explorer's Guild. If they agree, the initiation ritual involves elaborate costumes, masks and pantomime that resemble a theatrical show. After the histrionics and eccentric toast songs, the guild welcomes the heroes as one of their own.

ADVENTURE NOTES

NEW HINDRANCES AND EDGES:

Communist Partisan (Minor)

Long Live the Revolution! You believe socialism is the way to a utopian world. This adds +1 to all Intimidation rolls against Americans and other anti-Socialists, but you suffer a -3 penalty to Charisma rolls among all non-Communists due to your rabid fervor.

All-American (Social)

Requirements: Novice

Your hero is a true-blue Yankee and proud of it. When fighting an enemy from a hostile country, you get +1 Parry. You also get a +1 bonus on all attempts to Taunt such enemies. Of course, if agents from an enemy nation get wind of your hero's exploits, you're a prime target for assassination.

The Ol' One-Two (Combat)

Requirements: Novice, Agility d8+, Strength d6, Fighting d8+

Your hero packs a pugilist's wallop. Your hero may make two attacks per round at no penalty if the only weapon he's using are his bare fists. Both attacks receive a +1 bonus to damage.

Treasure Hunter (Professional)

Requirements: Novice, Agility d8+, Knowledge (Archeology) d8+

Treasure Hunters are not your average archeologists—they actually plunder tombs and burial sites to bring back treasure. Though profits are on their minds, they also do it for somewhat altruistic reasons: the preservation of history. Treasure Hunters

may resent being lumped into the category as grave robbers, but that's essentially what they do. Success for Treasure Hunters means identifying the lost relic and formulating a way to get it while at the same time avoiding the inevitable traps and pitfalls. Treasure hunters receive a +2 to Climb and Notice rolls, as well as to Knowledge rolls appropriate for identifying ancient ruins or relics.

RELICS

The Mask of the Golden Man

Beaten gold mask, adorned with gems, valued at \$10,000; +3 to all Intimidation rolls when mask is worn.

The Armor of the Golden Man

Plate armor of beaten gold, valued at \$1000; +3 torso armor.

The Greaves of the Golden Man

Plate armor of beaten gold, valued at \$350 each; +1 armor to legs and arms.

Sword of the Golden Man

Beaten golden sword with a one-sided sharpened blade, adorned with jaguar symbols, valued at \$2,000; Str+d6 damage.

Note: Uncovering the treasures of El Dorado attracts media attention and celebrity to whoever uncovered them, not to mention envy and scorn from certain archeological circles.



Journal of Fr. Pedro Guitierrez

1570

June 15

I have been here for over a year now, and Señor Quesada has not yet abandoned his quest. All seems hopeless. The men are starving or dying and many have contracted fever in the jungle. I pray to God to deliver us.

I will meet a few natives later today. They offered to meet with me only because they trust my gentle nature.

June 20

The natives are from the Chibcha tribe and were very friendly towards me. We exchanged gifts and they told me about the legend of the Golden Man again. They offered to show me exactly where El Dorado was – if I accompanied them alone. I agreed, and so we went deep into the jungle, taking the river over 200 miles from Pasto Village. We disembarked and made our way 50 miles north, carefully avoiding the tribe of women called Amazonas. We discovered the remnants of a temple to one of their pagan gods, then saw a majestic statue overlooking a hill. The savages took me up on the hill and told me the statue shall point in the right direction when the sun rises. I shall rest tonight among the villagers here.

June 21

Early the next morning, my native guide roused me from my slumber as the sun rose. The great statue's shadow cast down low on the valley, and pointed to a nearby hill. The natives said that is how we must go – following the path of the shadow through the jungle. If we did not follow the shadow's path, we might be lost forever, or fall into deep holes or traps, never to be seen again.

We made our way carefully to the mountain, and climbed the steps that led within. There, we were greeted by serious-looking warriors and clerics who said today was the day El Dorado would be lifted from the common man to the house of the heavenly beings. I stood in the back of the crowd and remain silent, lest I be discovered.

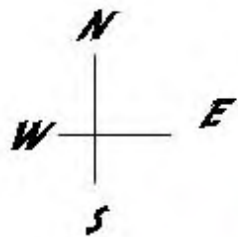
A regal-looking man I assumed was the king came into the cavern. He was completely naked and covered with gold dust. He wore a crown of plumes and his priests wore jaguar skins, underneath which they too, were naked and covered with gold dust.

Incense burned heavy and the place smelled rich and heavy. The procession descended to the lake and tossed golden objects into the water; amulets, jars, small statues and jewels. The king then boarded the raft and the priests rowed him into the lake. I am told the lake is haunted by a demon and the gold pacifies it. The king left the raft for the water and swam about until the gold dust washed off. He then climbed back onto the raft, which was paddled out to a temple at the lake's center. He ascended the temple and dressed in a robe of leopard skin and a gold mask and armor. He held a gold sword over his head and the priests began chanting.

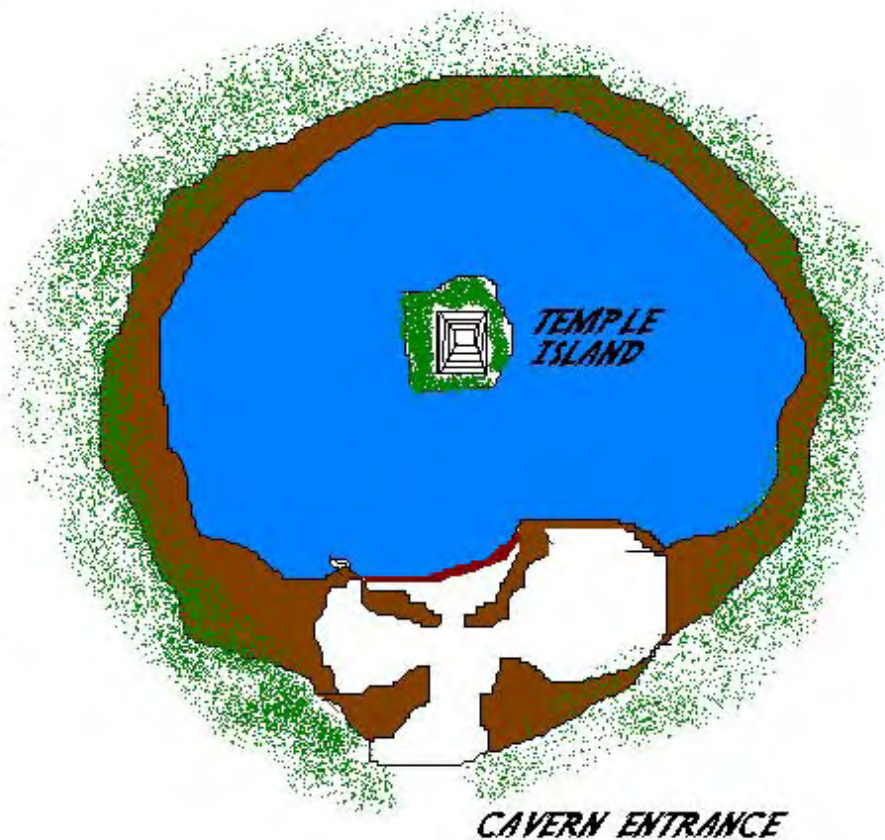
My native guide escorted me away from that place. I left trembling.

July 6

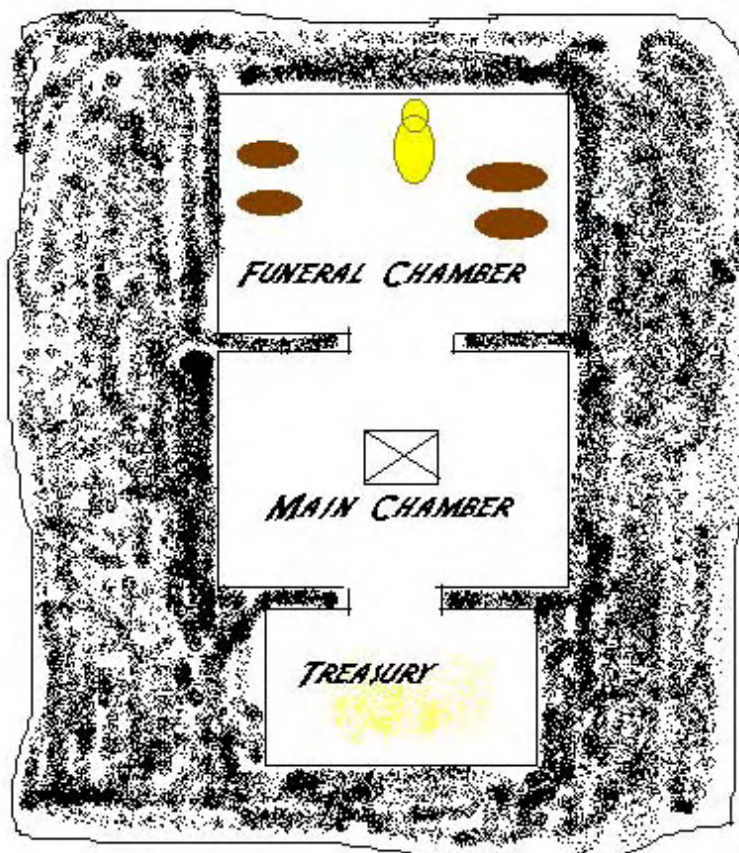
I returned from my journey. Señor Quesada abandoned his search, I am told. I shall not whisper a word to anyone, and pray to God to spare the heathen natives from a fate the Spanish will give to them.



*DORMANT
VOLCANO*



*ISLAND
TEMPLE*



Infernal Books, Dusty Volumes, and Mystical Tomes

Required reading for occult bookworms, by Theron Seckington

Most good horror adventures and many an eerie pulp yarn have featured infernal books, dusty volumes, and mystical tomes full of knowledge Man Was Not Meant To Know. Often, such texts are the focus of an adventure. Sometimes they just seem to pop-up at the most inopportune time. Whatever the case, the following selection should prove useful to GMs who need an arcane book or two to use in their adventures.

All of the books described in this article are presented in the following format:



Name: The name of the tome, and translation (if any).

Language: *Skill; (Penalty) (Successes)*. A book must be read and understood to pass on any useful information to the reader. This entry lists the Knowledge skill required to translate the work. The first number in parentheses is the penalty, if any, to the skill roll. The second is the ultimate number of successes required to successfully translate the work. Each Knowledge roll represents about four hours of intense study and concentration.

A critical failure (i.e., rolling a natural 1) indicates that the reader must start over. A normal failure just indicates no headway having been made with the translation. Characters may make unskilled rolls to translate a tome in twice the time, but any three failures or a critical failure means that the reader can never translate the volume.

Fear: *(Penalty)*. Many tomes carry with them an aura of foreboding. If a number is given it represents the penalty applied to a Guts check when viewing the contents of the book for the first

time. If the Guts roll is failed, the character must make a terror roll on the Fright table. Failure also indicates that the character is too “spooked” to attempt another viewing for the next 24 hours.

Description: A short history and description of the tome itself.

Effect: The effects of a successful translation. Some tomes grant the character a new Edge or arcane powers; others may drive the character irrevocably insane. You don't always win when playing this game!

Name: *Alternate Realities*

Language: Math, Physics, or any fringe science (Non-Euclidean Geometry, etc.); (−4) (1)

Fear: None

Description: This booklet consists of 36 pages and is released every two months. It contains cutting-edge articles that utilize mathematical probability and controversial theories to support the existence of other dimensions and the beings that inhabit them. Unfortunately, those beings have managed to corrupt most of the booklets' contributors and readers!

Effect: An entity calling itself “Function” is responsible for this esoteric publication. Reading it only affects those with at least d10 Smarts (anyone can read it, and those with the correct skill can even make some sense of it, but the actual effects only set in with those who possess the Smarts for it). Translating an issue will add +1 to any Smarts related tricks and mathematics-related Smarts, skill, or Common Knowledge rolls. This effect is cumulative for each issue read, with a maximum bonus of half the reader's Spirit die. Once this bonus level is reached, Function will attempt to possess the reader. I'll leave the exact effects and motives of Function and his possession up to the GM (see **Shark Bytes #2** for one way to handle demonic possession).

Name: *Journals of the Beast*

Language: English; (−3 [cramped handwriting and strange sentence structure results in a −2 penalty even for those who speak the language]) (1)

Fear: None

Description: These journals consist of a collection of notebooks, scrapbooks, newspaper clippings, and assorted volumes detailing the insane ramblings of Aleister Crowley. There are multiple collections spread all about the planet.

Effect: The effect is totally random and up to the GM. It might provide a flash of infernal insight pertinent to the adventure at hand, it may provide the character with a bonus to Spellcasting, introduce a new arcane ritual (see **Shark Bytes #2** for Clint Black's ideas on handling rituals in *Savage Worlds*), or it may summon the Devil himself. A critical failure in translation should usually be a Bad Thing, perhaps resulting in temporary dementia and nightmares (i.e., the character temporarily gains an appropriate Hindrance of the GMs choice).

Name: *Infernious.net*

Language: English (no check is required for those who speak English); (+2) (1)

Fear: +2

Description: The web comic of one Jack Harrington (pseudonym), in reality a private investigator who has stumbled repeatedly upon Things That Should Not Be. In confronting the Night Fantastic, Jack found himself with a choice: either find some way to let others like him know they are not alone, or go insane keeping the secrets. The haunting, gory, uncompromising artwork is composed of images drawn from photographs, text, poetry, charcoal drawings, graffiti... anything to give Jack the creative and emotional release he needs. This book, and the character of Jack Harrington, would be perfect for a *Savaged Stalking the Night Fantastic* campaign (see **Shark Bytes #2**).

Effect: Regularly viewing Jack's web comic (updated twice per week) grants a night stalker +1 to all Guts checks triggered by horrific creatures. Subscribing to his listserv gives the character a +2 bonus to Investigation rolls related to tracking down information about a particular creature's methods, weaknesses, etc. as people share their knowledge and experiences.

Name: *Shinigami no Chie* (Death's Wisdom)

Language: Japanese; (−3) (2)

Fear: −1

Description: A strange book with a stranger reputation, *Death's Wisdom* is a work of fiction recounting the encounter of several ancient Japanese philosophers with Death, conversing on the purpose of life... at a café in Hollywood, California in 1933. Though it can be read for amusement and philosophical enjoyment, there are deeper meanings in the tome that become apparent to any true student of the language or the history of Japan.

Effect: Successfully translating the work and all of its intricate *entendre* leads to a startling revelation: the conversation actually took place in the café it describes, a shop that still exists. Death is still a regular there. Departed souls actually show up at that café for a few hours and chat it up daily. Game effects vary, although the wisdom of the dead can be invaluable, and if one can get Death to talk they find he knows a great deal indeed. *Note:* Obviously, to extend its usefulness, one may wish to change the time of publication and town in which it was penned.

Name: *Liber Obscurati Itineris* (The Book of the Hidden Path)

Language: Latin; (−2) (4)

Fear: −2

Description: A leather-bound volume with a raised spine resembling human bone. It is also padlocked, and the lock shuts itself after being closed—odd for a book from the 16th century. It details the departure of souls from this world to the next, and hints at the existence of “Old Ones Beyond Time.” Legend states that transferring one's soul, following the instructions within, allows contact with these Old Ones.

Effect: Successful translation offers one of a few things, determined by the GM:

1. The character has learned to directly attack the souls of living beings. He has learned the powers *puppet* and *bolt* at d4, as well as gaining 10 Power Points to use these spells.
2. The character has become an expert on the afterlife. Add +4 to all Knowledge (Religion) checks involving this subject.
3. The translator becomes enamored with death and souls. Got a Major Quirk there, buddy!
4. Contact with the Old Ones has imprinted wisdom beyond time to the translator. Raise Smarts by one die type but suffer a −2 Charisma penalty because of it.
5. Contact with the Old Ones has darkened his soul, but left him stronger because of it. Lower Spirit by one step, but raise Vigor by two steps. Suffer a −2 Charisma penalty due to a newly creepy aura.
6. Nothing happens. The character either lucked out or failed, depending on their view.
7. Contact with the Old Ones has tainted the character. Those with great faith in God feel uncomfortable about them, and animals and children shy away. He's gained the Outsider Hindrance, and a strange desire to find other copies of the book.

Name: *Harthertzens erschrocklicher Wahrheiten* (Dr. Hardheart's Collection of Terrifying Truths)

Language: German; (−1) (2)

Fear: +1

Description: Currently a small paperback folio of around 110 pages in length. There are actually five versions in print, with varying page counts between 100-150 pages.

Effect: Anyone who translates this book successfully becomes a true believer in the presence of the metaphysical in daily life. Effectively, this removes the Doubting Thomas Hindrance, if possessed. *Note:* In many campaigns, the Forces That Be have banned this book entirely; its print run, even in Germany, was tiny and largely viewed as heretical (although ironically, it does much to prove the existence of God... or at least a transcendentalist Oversoul of some sort).

Name: *Le Vin et l'Art d'invoquer les Fantômes* (Wine and the Art of Summoning Ghosts)

Language: French; (+1) (4)

Fear: None

Description: This tome is both a means of communing with spirits and a guide to fine wines. Many people regard this as a satirical way to compare wine, the finest thing in life, to death...you know, the afterlife.

Effect: Dual effects. One is a +2 bonus to all rolls involving wine and fine dining in general, carrying with it a +1 Charisma bonus when hobnobbing with the upper crust. The other allows a drunken person to commune with spirits. And the spirits love alcohol. A successful Persuasion roll when drunk nets the spirits' prophecies and wisdom. As long as the character gets drunk every night, he reaps the benefits of the Luck Edge (this effect stacks with both the Luck and Great Luck Edges). This behavior should ultimately impose the Habit (major: alcoholic) Hindrance on the character.

Name: *Noroi jiten* (Dictionary of Curses)

Language: Japanese; (-6) (5)

Fear: -4

Description: This tome is actually a strange device, roughly a six-by-ten-by-six-inch glistening gold, bronze, and nickel assembly of gears, cogs, and wheels. A soft green glow emanates from something deep within the center of the object. Blocking the glowing center is a series of seals, each with a riddle printed atop it. Opening each seal requires a series of sliders to be moved around in a certain combination to answer the riddle.

Effect: When all the riddles are solved and the middle is reached, the tome's secrets are unlocked to the mind of the seeker. It details the knowledge of several ancient sorcerers and priests, and immediately grants the character the Death Touch special ability (per the "Liche" entry in the *Savage Worlds* rulebook). Each consecutive month of study sends him further down this particular path of knowledge. As the character gains more insight into the afterlife they lose touch with this world and the human condition. Exactly how this is handled is up to the GM, but should include gaining spells, Edges, powers, and Hindrances. Eventually the "Undead" Monstrous Ability, as described in the *Savage Worlds* rulebook, should be gained.

Name: *Les Fleurs du Mal* (Evil Flowers)

Language: French; (0) (3)

Fear: None

Description: This book of surreal poetry, laced with sexual images and perverted metaphors about sin and pleasures of the flesh, gives the reader unique insights into the minds of those individuals who are normally considered sociopathic.

Effect: A useful device in analyzing serial killers, especially those motivated by the coming Apocalypse or some other strange world-threatening Mythos. This text may offer occasional hints and insights into their perverted machinations, eliminating penalties up to -2 involved with profiling or coaxing information out of expert witnesses—a certain cannibalistic doctor springs to mind.

Name: *Obscurum Kultiem*

Language: Latin; (-2) (2)

Fear: -2

Description: A glossy red leather book, always slightly damp to the touch. This tome describes various cults' deities, behaviors, and activities. Many of these groups are still active and are probably not keen on having their secrets revealed.

Effect: A character with a thorough understanding of the book has an easier time tracking down information related to the occult and especially cults in general. This knowledge grants a +1 bonus to Investigation, Knowledge (Cults or Occult), and Notice rolls related to cults or cultists. The Notice roll for instance, could be used to see through a suspected cultist's alibi when he explains where he was on the night of the sacrifice, but not to discover his hiding spot. Critically failing a roll that uses this bonus results in the cult somehow learning of the unlucky character's interest in their activities.

Name: *The King in Yellow*

Language: French; (+2) (1)

Fear: None

Description: A yellow folio by an unknown playwright, this French play is beautifully written, intriguing, and quite possibly the most dangerous script on the face of the earth.

Effect: Reading the entire play drives the reader mad. They get a Spirit roll at the end of Act I to resist. If they throw it away in some fashion which disposes of it for good, then the danger is past. Otherwise, they finish it and spend their lives in adoration of Hastur, the King in Yellow. In game terms, the character gains either the Delusional (major) or Obsession Hindrance (see **Shark Bytes #2**, *Blood in the Water*, for details of the new Hindrance "Obsession").

Name: *The Necronomicon of the Mad Arab Abdul Al-Hazrad*

Language: Arabic, Latin, French, and German; (0) (5)

Fear: -4

Description: There are several versions of this tome and it is theorized that the Mad Arab also made several revisions throughout his life. The end result is the same: Anyone with an interest in these sorts of things can guess the location of sites of worship for various Cthulhu cults throughout history, learn dark incantations, and the True Origins of life on this planet.

Effect: The game effects are largely up to the GM. It might add a die to Knowledge (Cthulhu Mythos) skill, grant new powers and/or be a source of additional Power Points. Critically failing this translation drives the reader mad for a number of months, during which time he will wander the earth in search of the mysteries posited in the book.

Name: *Códice de Artes Negras* (Codex of Black Arts)

Language: Spanish; (-2) (4)

Fear: 0

Description: There are 666 of these books available—seemingly a lot, but they have been spread throughout the world since they were first penned in the 1500s. They are simple books, sporting a black metal cover with gold border. The inside is beautifully illustrated in the style of Renaissance Spain. “Black Arts” is simply a term for supernatural abilities of any kind in this case. According to the Codex, these powers don’t come from the Devil, but rather from one’s own mind. The arts described in the Codex are only as evil as the wielder.

Effect: Anyone with Smarts and Spirit of at least d6 may spend a leveling opportunity to purchase the Arcane Background (Psionics) Edge.

Name: *Gesichte der werdenden Welten* (Visions of the Becoming Worlds)

Language: German and Danish; (0) (3)

Fear: None

Description: A religious text detailing the Kingdom of Heaven after Armageddon and the unfortunate final fate of Earth, where the sinful and other unbelievers are left to be torn apart by the “shells of the departed and judging faithful.”

Effect: No effect on devout Christians, who we assume will ascend into heaven come the Rapture. In other readers, while it may not necessarily convince someone to turn their life around, it will add +2 to Guts checks once the zombies (aforementioned “shells”) arrive, as they’ll be prepared for the contingency.

Name: *Das Buch der Schwarzen Künste* (Book of the Black Arts)

Language: German, Portuguese, or Latin; (-4) (4)

Fear: -2

Description: This book just looks evil. Black leather, contorted to look slightly like a human face, and seeming to draw the light of the room within itself, the *Book of the Black Arts* has a fearsome list of victims and souls it has claimed.

Effect: The most generic arcane tome ever created, it allows one to purchase the Arcane Background (Magic) Edge at the next leveling opportunity, provided the character possesses a d6 in both Smarts and Spirit. However, only one power is selected at this point. Additional spells require the New Power Edge in addition to another translation of this book. The spells must all have “demonic” trappings. Critically failing a translation roll summons a demon, who is usually more interested in a soul contract than killing the summoner. Usually.

Name: *Libris Ex Mortis* (Book of the Dead)

Language: Sumerian; (+1) (3)

Fear: -2

Description: Bound in human flesh, and inked in human blood, the *Book of the Dead* has been a tool of arcane power throughout much of human history. The Book also has developed a feral intelligence of its own, wanting to change hands as often as possible. Wars have been fought over it in the past, and more will be fought for it in the future.

Effect: Successful translation teaches the reader one of two things, depending on why they are reading the book in the first place.

If they are using the book out of a genuine thirst for knowledge of ancient Sumeria, or out of desperation to stop the evil powers of the book, then they learn the *dispel* power, which may be cast with a simple Spirit roll.

Anyone using it for more sinister purposes learns the *zombie* power, cast with a Spirit roll at -2. In either case, the translator gains 6 Power Points with which to use their new power.

Critically failing the translation summons a Khandarian demon (refer to the “Zombie, Raimi” entry in Butch Curry’s *Savage Beasts* for details of this creature). Most schools of thought consider this a Bad Thing.

PULP ADVENTURE SEEDS

Eight reasons for your characters to set off in search of fortune and glory...

*In keeping with the recurrent themes of this issue of **Shark Bytes**, namely that of classic pulp adventure and the use of OGC in your Savage Worlds sessions, this article presents eight pulp adventure seeds by James Stubbs. This content was originally released by Expeditious Retreat Press as OGC and is excerpted from their publications Pulp Seeds and Pulp Seeds II. I hope by now that you can see how using OGC can save you much time and effort. Like I've always said, why reinvent the wheel if you don't have to?*

The Fang of Klinjira

Professor Artemis Smoake of the now-famous Smoake Expedition has returned from Africa and is preparing to unveil a large museum exhibit of the strange and wondrous items he recovered and has, so far, been very tight-lipped about. However, only moments before the exhibit opens, Frank Downs, a museum curator, is found dead in Smoake's office and Smoake himself is nowhere to be found. The cause of death was poisoning by a venomous snake of unknown origin.

Characters that investigate will find themselves the target of native warriors who have inexplicably shown up in the city while they follow the trail of bodies consisting of Smoake's loved ones and colleagues—all dead from snake bite.

The characters will eventually run into Mulari, a native shaman who is leading the warriors. She will explain that Smoake's theft of The Fang of Klinjira, a cursed totem that contained the spirit of a snake demon, has unleashed the demon's curse. She fears that the demon has possessed the man and is determined to return the totem to her village.

This possession can be true or the professor can simply be a crook who is using a snake he captured to eliminate anyone who can rat on him. The Fang itself is jeweled and worth a tidy sum, after all.

High Altitude Holdup

The characters are either passengers or are hired on as security for the inaugural flight of the airship Majestic. All of the other passengers are either wealthy or famous in some way.

The business of air travel and cargo transportation has suffered as of late due to a rash of air piracy. This trip is no exception. The Majestic is too rich and tempting a target!

A group of female pirates calling themselves the "Ebon Valkyries" board the airship and begin to relieve the passengers of their valuables. They are courteous but firm in their demands and promise that no harm will come to anyone so long as they cooperate. These pirates are lead by a woman known as Duchess Isa Romanov. She claims to be a deposed Russian princess, but that has never been proven.

One of the passengers is Doctor Victor Schnell, who has with him secret plans that he has stolen from Germany. He is on his way to make contact with American agents who will ensure his safety. Schnell panics and pulls a pistol

during the robbery. It is obvious, however, that he is more of a danger to everyone else with his shaky nerves and apparent lack of skill with firearms.

Just as things reach a boiling point, German rocket men arrive, determined to recover the plans Schnell has even if it means destroying the Majestic and everyone aboard in the process.

The Cult of the Scorpion

An old acquaintance who works in a high-level position at the city bank asks the characters to investigate a recent oddity. A large number of the city's most affluent inhabitants are withdrawing large amounts of money from local banks.

This wouldn't normally be suspicious but many of them can't realistically continue their lifestyle after removing the amounts they have. He suspects blackmail but is at a loss as to how they all could be ensnared. Looking into the matter, the only common thread seems to be that the young members of these families all frequent the same nightspot, The Emerald Club, and that their parents are extremely tight-lipped, if not outright hostile, about the matter.

The Emerald Club currently hosts the exotic dancing of Kroua Zadeh, an Arabic enchantress who entices the young men of the club to partake of the many exotic drugs offered to the club's patrons. She then introduces them to the mysterious Abbas Al Faraj. Under the suggestive influence of Kroua's narcotics, Faraj brainwashes them into joining his cult. They willingly surrender their worldly wealth to him and he, in turn, uses them to further his own ends.

Mechanical Terror

Commercial shipping is in a state of panic. The Navy is being pressured to provide warship escort to all passenger and cargo ships. Several have already been sunk with large loss of life.

Survivors all speak of giant mechanical monsters that attacked their vessels. A major newspaper has received a message from someone going by the moniker "The Black Wolf". This individual claims responsibility for the attacks and demands a payment of ten million dollars in return for ceasing his predations. He also demands to be recognized as the "King of the Atlantic". The characters are called in by the government, either because of their past exploits or connections they have, in an effort to contain widespread panic.

The Black Wolf is actually Doctor Finnegan Walls, a scientist who was spurned by the academic world for his theories on aquatic propulsion. Walls has taken his theories and created speedy robots capable of traveling underwater. He is terrorizing shipping simply to get money as compensation for his “ruined” career and as vindication of his ideas. Dr. Walls is hiding out on a small uncharted island from which he remotely controls his robots.

Taking a Dive

Leon “Killer” Kroger was a heavy favorite to retain his boxing title against Tyrone “The Tank” Smith. That belief bit the dust when Kroger was kissing the canvas in the third round of his last fight. Bookies across the city made a small fortune. This would have been bad enough if Kroger wasn’t found dead in his car a week later.

Kroger’s former manager contacts the characters, wanting them to investigate what he believes was a deliberate dive by the champ. He suspects that someone got to Killer somehow and was either blackmailing him or paid him off to take a fall.

To complicate matters, Kroger had a heavy bet riding on him by Mario Vintori, the head of the Vintori crime family, and he suspects that the rival D’Amico family got to the champ. As a reprisal, he has made threats against Tyrone the Tank, his trainers and anyone associated with the D’Amico’s.

The truth of the matter is that Kroger was already working for D’Amico as a minor leg breaker and got in over his head. The characters need to untangle the whole mess while trying not to wind up on the bad side of either family.

The Thing in the Swamp

A monster that is killing livestock terrorizes a small country town. Recently one of the local girls has also gone missing. The townsfolk fear that something is in the swamp preying on them. Larger newspapers are printing the story with the slant that the “monster” is nothing more than the imaginations of a bunch of “stupid, superstitious country bumpkins.” The State Police feels that wild animals are to blame for the livestock and the girl is probably just a runaway. The local sheriff, however, begs the characters to investigate. While he is skeptical as well, he isn’t as willing to discount what is said and seen by the citizens of his town.

Investigating will be difficult as most of the families live in isolated farmsteads and the main town, which is mainly a general store, has no telephone. The best bet for the characters is to go into the swamp. There they will encounter “Swampy John”, a hermit who is convinced that the thing is the spirit of an Indian medicine man who was hanged there by white men over 100 years ago.

There is also the old Crenshaw estate, where the descendants of the original founders of the town reside in self-imposed isolation. There are plenty of dark rumors

about the Crenshaw’s being involved with dark magic and scandalous debauchery.

Is the Thing in the Swamp some foul beast, an Indian spirit, or simply someone out to deceive and frighten the town for some other dark reason?

The Curse of Amon-Ka

The characters are members of an expedition to Egypt under Professor Theodore Russell. The professor has located an untouched tomb and has just breached the seal on the entrance.

The party enters the tomb. It is dark with twisty passages and the only illumination is by flashlight. An assistant carelessly triggers a trap that collapses the entrance, sealing everyone inside. The professor believes that there might be another way out, such as old workman shafts or a weak wall that they could dig through. It will, however, involve a lengthy exploration of the tomb.

What the characters are unaware of, however, is that the trap also triggered a magical spell that has awoken the mummy of Amon-Ka and his zombie retainers.

A seditious priest, who found it amusing to curse Amon Ka to eternal life rather than to allow his spirit to pass into the afterlife, placed this spell on his master after he was entombed. Now Amon is compelled to kill anyone who breaks into his tomb.

Grasp of the Houngan

A small coastal town is gripped in fear. Fishing has gone sour and a strange illness is sweeping the citizens. More terrifying is the fact that some people have just gone missing in the night. The superstitious fishermen claim that a curse has been laid upon the town and are on the brink of just abandoning their homes. The mayor, familiar with the character’s exploits and reputation, begs them to come and try to find out what strange afflictions is ruining the place where he grew up.

The locals have no problems telling the characters all about the mysterious illness or how once prosperous fishing grounds have almost dried up. Characters with occult knowledge will realize that the level of power needed for such a powerful curse would mandate that the magician reside in or be very close to the town.

The villain here is a man named Peter Corbin. He used to be a sailor who was shipwrecked in the Caribbean and rescued by natives when he was nearly dead. He learned voodoo even though he was mentally unbalanced from his ordeal at sea. A passing ship eventually picked him up and the citizens of the town provided a small shack for him to live in out of pity. He currently “works” as a beachcomber, picking up whatever he thinks he can sell from the shore. Lately, however, his mental state has drifted to paranoia and he is using the dark rituals he learned in the jungles to terrorize his “enemies.” Corbin even has a few zombies at his disposal for when the characters confront him.



Join us now for a preview of RunePunk: Steam & Shadow, an original campaign setting for Savage Worlds (and Green Ronin's Mutants & Masterminds) coming in 2005 from Reality Blurs. Chock full of strange denizens, steampunk tech and dark magic, RunePunk promises to offer unique urban fantasy adventure at it's finest.

Imagine a nightmarishly immense City, sprawled out as far as the eye can see and covered in a perpetual layer of soot-grey fog and filth. Take a closer look at it. Imagine its grotesquely ornate buildings huddling against one another and jutting defiantly into the heavens, bedecked with ornate metalwork gone mad. Once upon a time, it was the greatest metropolis in the Empire. Got it? Good. Now, envision great sections of this city shattered as though the very hand of God had passed judgment upon its residents and buried them beneath their metal sins, drowning them beneath stone and madness.

How did things become this way? It began in a time called the Umbrian Age, the Age of Shadow, when rune magic and steam technology ground against each other in a rough symbiosis. The RuneCasters and Scientists who governed the Empire lived in relative harmony, until such time as the Scientists' "Great Breakthrough" promised to shift the balance of power. A fearful cabal of RuneCasters unleashed secret magics the likes of which the world had ever seen, crushing the scientific revolution with their terrible RuneStorms and sealing the City's fate.

The very fabric of space and time was torn asunder. Millions were killed. During this period, the City was shaken to its very foundations and all but the mightiest towering buildings toppled to the ground. The worst areas of destruction left only vast dunes of rust that heave and sigh like great desert sands. Foul things dwell in those barren DarkLands, where not all secrets of the past rest easy.

Over time, the RuneStorms ebbed and flowed, each wave of reality-warping fury washing new people through from different times and places and each wave taking some away again. The people called this period the Time of Madness and few, if any thought anyone would survive the chaos. Then the ingenious Ferren arrived and erected their incredible Stabilizers.

Separated across the great zone of destruction now called Scatterpoint are the RunePoints, urban areas that somehow survived the greatest of the RuneStorms that nearly destroyed the City, the Tempest. These thirteen areas are still built up, to heights exceeding 400 feet in some instances. Each provides sanctuary for up to a million people. A rail system and the amazing Dream Portals of the Ferren connect the distant RunePoints.

Here's a brief description of some of the many residents of the blasted ruins of ScatterPoint:

- **Humans:** The dominant race of ScatterPoint is Man. Luckily, humans possess a remarkable ability to adapt to the changing conditions of their new world. All humans have a natural affinity for Inventions or Runes. Humbled by their change in fate, most try to remain oblivious to anything outside of their mundane lives.
- **Andari** ("Shifters"/"Ghosts"): The Andari are small population of altered humans whose lives were forever changed by the Tempest. Whether caught in the Flux when the Stabilizers first went into place or, a subsequent casualty of a rare Dream Portal failure, they possess strange powers from being stuck "in-between".
- **Ferren:** Pulled into ScatterPoint during the Time of Madness, the Ferren are an intelligent, slender rat-like people with claws, fur, and tails. They are physically weak compared to other races, but they compensate for this with their mastery of all things mechanical. They understood the workings of RuneStorms and managed to establish the Stabilizers.
- **Malakar** ("Storm Children"): The Malakar are the half-human offspring of the Talus, the Demon Folk. Their skins are of varying colors and shades, but they are most often grey-skinned. They have inherited the Talus immunity to the effects of the RuneStorms, and possess a limited ability to conduct magical energies through their bodies.
- **Overwrought** ("Cogs"): Hulking unions of machine and man, the Overwrought are the labor caste of ScatterPoint. They are generally of average human height, but the addition of gears, metal chassis, and other mechanized parts make them extremely bulky. Their facial features retain their human uniqueness, but their bodies are different patchwork combinations of metals, gears, and tools that reflect their primary labor function.

The Top 100 Things I'd Do if I Ever Became an Evil Overlord

An Internet Classic, by Pete Anspach

This Evil Overlord List grew out of the exchanges on what is now the *Star Trek* mailing list "shields-up@spies.com", beginning in 1994 (when it was still "startrek@cs.arizona.edu"). We were kicking around clichés that appeared on *Deep Space 9* at the time, and I started to compile a list of classic blunders they were making. The list came to about 20 or so items. In 1995, I decided to try to make it into a Top 100 List. I attached a copyright notice, some friends of mine posted it to a few newsgroups, and the contributions quickly poured in. In 1996 I revised the list entries to their current form, the web page went up, more contributions were solicited, the list expanded beyond 100 and I had to open up a dungeon. I continued to contribute items; my total is around 40 or so. So while I am the originator, editor, and principal contributor, I certainly did not write the majority of the items on the list—as may be seen by the sheer number of individuals who are listed as contributors. Around 1997, as the final contributions were coming in, a couple contributors mentioned that this was similar to a list of things not to do if you capture James Bond that had appeared on a sci-fi newsgroup. I'd never heard of or seen this list, so I assumed it was parallel development or perhaps something I had inspired.

On November 12, 2002, I exchanged some emails with Jack Butler, who has a [list on his website](#). Sayeth Mr. Butler: "This list has its origins on the now-nonexistent FidoNet Science Fiction and Fandom (SFFAN) email echo, in a discussion regarding a sketch seen on an episode of Saturday Night Live sometime in 1990. In the sketch, several Bond villains were appearing on a talk show touting their new book, "What Not To Do If You Capture James Bond". The discussion on SFFAN was specifically regarding what advice might be found in that book. The instigator of the discussion was Alesia Chamness; other contributors included Jason Welles, Brian R. Williams, Merideth Knepper, and Alexi Vandenburg. I was also one of its contributors. When I originally posted this list to the Internet in 1994, I did so without any awareness of Mr. Anspach, the *Star Trek* mailing list on which his version of the list appeared, or (later) his website."

Apparently both lists were compiled during overlapping periods of time. Comparing the two, some items appear on one list but not the other. Other items appear identical to those on this list; since many are the result of my writing or editing, I believe they were taken from this list and posted to that list without permission. But other items on that list appear identical to contributions I received before I edited them. Those items may have been taken from that list and submitted here under false pretenses, or they may have innocently been submitted to both lists by their originators. It appears that as a result of this "cross-contamination", the two lists have arrived at a point where they are variations on each other and it is probably impossible to untangle them. (I would still like to talk with Alesia Chamness. If you know her, please ask her to email me.)

I believe Jack Butler when he says the list on his website is the current form of the James Bond Villain list, and I thank him for helping to clarify matters. Let me state that I had nothing to do with the FidoNet SFFAN list which is firmly in the public domain, and I lay no claim to it. The copyright statement attached to my list applies only to this list, in the form it appears.

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1. My Legions of Terror will have helmets with clear Plexiglas visors, not face-concealing ones.
2. My ventilation ducts will be too small to crawl through.
3. My noble half-brother whose throne I usurped will be killed, not kept anonymously imprisoned in a forgotten cell of my dungeon.
4. Shooting is *not* too good for my enemies.
5. The artifact which is the source of my power will not be kept on the Mountain of Despair beyond the River of Fire guarded by the Dragons of Eternity. It will be in my safe-deposit box. The same applies to the object which is my one weakness.
6. I will not gloat over my enemies' predicament before killing them.
7. When I've captured my adversary and he says, "Look, before you kill me, will you at least tell me what this is all about?" I'll say, "No." and shoot him. No, on second thought I'll shoot him then say "No."
8. After I kidnap the beautiful princess, we will be married immediately in a quiet civil ceremony, not a lavish spectacle in three weeks' time during which the final phase of my plan will be carried out.
9. I will not include a self-destruct mechanism unless absolutely necessary. If it is necessary, it will not be a large red button labeled "Danger: Do Not Push". The big red button marked "Do Not Push" will instead trigger a spray of bullets on anyone stupid enough to disregard it. Similarly, the ON/OFF switch will not clearly be labeled as such.
10. I will not interrogate my enemies in the inner sanctum -- a small hotel well outside my borders will work just as well.
11. I will be secure in my superiority. Therefore, I will feel no need to prove it by leaving clues in the form of riddles or leaving my weaker enemies alive to show they pose no threat.
12. One of my advisors will be an average five-year-old child. Any flaws in my plan that he is able to spot will be corrected before implementation.
13. All slain enemies will be cremated, or at least have several rounds of ammunition emptied into them, not left for dead at the bottom of the cliff. The announcement of their deaths, as well as any accompanying celebration, will be deferred until after the aforementioned disposal.
14. The hero is not entitled to a last kiss, a last cigarette, or any other form of last request.
15. I will never employ any device with a digital countdown. If I find that such a device is absolutely unavoidable, I will set it to activate when the counter reaches 117 and the hero is just putting his plan into operation.
16. I will never utter the sentence "But before I kill you, there's just one thing I want to know."
17. When I employ people as advisors, I will occasionally listen to their advice.
18. I will not have a son. Although his laughably under-planned attempt to usurp power would easily fail, it would provide a fatal distraction at a crucial point in time.
19. I will not have a daughter. She would be as beautiful as she was evil, but one look at the hero's rugged countenance and she'd betray her own father.
20. Despite its proven stress-relieving effect, I will not indulge in maniacal laughter. When so occupied, it's too easy to miss unexpected developments that a more attentive individual could adjust to accordingly.
21. I will hire a talented fashion designer to create original uniforms for my Legions of Terror, as opposed to some cheap knock-offs that make them look like Nazi stormtroopers, Roman foot soldiers, or savage Mongol hordes. All those were eventually defeated and I want my troops to have a more positive mind-set.
22. No matter how tempted I am with the prospect of unlimited power, I will not consume any energy field bigger than my head.

23. I will keep a special cache of low-tech weapons and train my troops in their use. That way—even if the heroes manage to neutralize my power generator and/or render the standard-issue energy weapons useless—my troops will not be overrun by a handful of savages armed with spears and rocks.
24. I will maintain a realistic assessment of my strengths and weaknesses. Even though this takes some of the fun out of the job, at least I will never utter the line "No, this cannot be! I AM INVINCIBLE!!!" (After that, death is usually instantaneous.)
25. No matter how well it would perform, I will never construct any sort of machinery which is completely indestructible except for one small and virtually inaccessible vulnerable spot.
26. No matter how attractive certain members of the rebellion are, there is probably someone just as attractive who is not desperate to kill me. Therefore, I will think twice before ordering a prisoner sent to my bedchamber.
27. I will never build only one of anything important. All important systems will have redundant control panels and power supplies. For the same reason I will always carry at least two fully loaded weapons at all times.
28. My pet monster will be kept in a secure cage from which it cannot escape and into which I could not accidentally stumble.
29. I will dress in bright and cheery colors, and so throw my enemies into confusion.
30. All bumbling conjurers, clumsy squires, no-talent bards, and cowardly thieves in the land will be preemptively put to death. My foes will surely give up and abandon their quest if they have no source of comic relief.
31. All naive, busty tavern wenches in my realm will be replaced with surly, world-weary waitresses who will provide no unexpected reinforcement and/or romantic subplot for the hero or his sidekick.
32. I will not fly into a rage and kill a messenger who brings me bad news just to illustrate how evil I really am. Good messengers are hard to come by.
33. I won't require high-ranking female members of my organization to wear a stainless-steel bustier. Morale is better with a more casual dress-code. Similarly, outfits made entirely from black leather will be reserved for formal occasions.
34. I will not turn into a snake. It never helps.
35. I will not grow a goatee. In the old days they made you look diabolic. Now they just make you look like a disaffected member of Generation X.
36. I will not imprison members of the same party in the same cell block, let alone the same cell. If they are important prisoners, I will keep the only key to the cell door on my person instead of handing out copies to every bottom-rung guard in the prison.
37. If my trusted lieutenant tells me my Legions of Terror are losing a battle, I will believe him. After all, he's my trusted lieutenant.
38. If an enemy I have just killed has a younger sibling or offspring anywhere, I will find them and have them killed immediately instead of waiting for them to grow up harboring feelings of vengeance towards me in my old age.
39. If I absolutely must ride into battle, I will certainly not ride at the forefront of my Legions of Terror, nor will I seek out my opposite number among his army.
40. I will be neither chivalrous nor sporting. If I have an unstoppable super weapon, I will use it as early and as often as possible instead of keeping it in reserve.
41. Once my power is secure, I will destroy all those pesky time-travel devices.
42. When I capture the hero, I will make sure I also get his dog, monkey, ferret, or whatever sickeningly cute little animal capable of untying ropes and filching keys happens to follow him around.
43. I will maintain a healthy amount of skepticism when I capture the beautiful rebel and she claims she is attracted to my power and good looks and will gladly betray her companions if I just let her in on my plans.

44. I will only employ bounty hunters who work for money. Those who work for the pleasure of the hunt tend to do dumb things like even the odds to give the other guy a sporting chance.
45. I will make sure I have a clear understanding of who is responsible for what in my organization. For example, if my general screws up I will not draw my weapon, point it at him, say "And here is the price for failure," then suddenly turn and kill some random underling.
46. If an advisor says to me "My liege, he is but one man. What can one man possibly do?" I will reply "This." and kill the advisor.
47. If I learn that a callow youth has begun a quest to destroy me, I will slay him while he is still a callow youth instead of waiting for him to mature.
48. I will treat any beast which I control through magic or technology with respect and kindness. Thus if the control is ever broken, it will not immediately come after me for revenge.
49. If I learn the whereabouts of the one artifact which can destroy me, I will not send all my troops out to seize it. Instead I will send them out to seize something else and quietly put a want ad in the local paper.
50. My main computers will have their own special operating system that will be completely incompatible with standard IBM and Macintosh PowerBooks.
51. If one of my dungeon guards begins expressing concern over the conditions in the beautiful princess' cell, I will immediately transfer him to a less people-oriented position.
52. I will hire a team of board-certified architects and surveyors to examine my castle and inform me of any secret passages and abandoned tunnels that I might not know about.
53. If the beautiful princess that I capture says "I'll never marry you! Never, do you hear me, NEVER!!!" I will say "Oh well" and kill her.
54. I will not strike a bargain with a demonic being then attempt to double-cross it simply because I feel like being contrary.
55. The deformed mutants and odd-ball psychotics will have their place in my Legions of Terror. However before I send them out on important covert missions that require tact and subtlety, I will first see if there is anyone else equally qualified who would attract less attention.
56. My Legions of Terror will be trained in basic marksmanship. Any who cannot learn to hit a man-sized target at 10 meters will be used for target practice.
57. Before employing any captured artifacts or machinery, I will carefully read the owner's manual.
58. If it becomes necessary to escape, I will never stop to pose dramatically and toss off a one-liner.
59. I will never build a sentient computer smarter than I am.
60. My five-year-old child advisor will also be asked to decipher any code I am thinking of using. If he breaks the code in less than 30 seconds, it will not be used. Note: this also applies to passwords.
61. If my advisors ask "Why are you risking everything on such a mad scheme?" I will not proceed until I have a response that satisfies them.
62. I will design fortress hallways with no alcoves or protruding structural supports which intruders could use for cover in a firefight.
63. Bulk trash will be disposed of in incinerators, not compactors. And they will be kept hot, with none of that nonsense about flames going through accessible tunnels at predictable intervals.
64. I will see a competent psychiatrist and get cured of all extremely unusual phobias and bizarre compulsive habits which could prove to be a disadvantage.

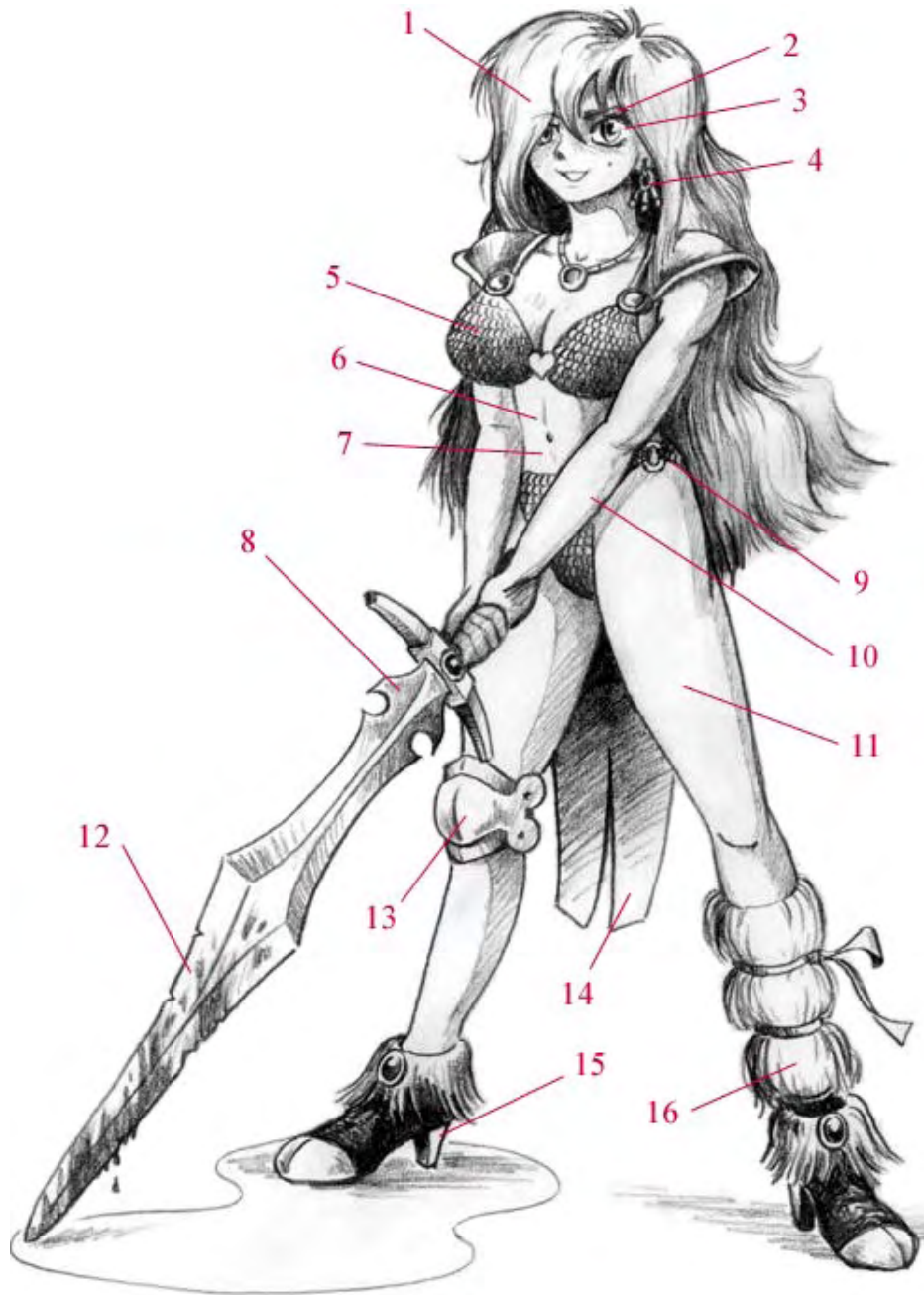
65. If I must have computer systems with publicly available terminals, the maps they display of my complex will have a room clearly marked as the Main Control Room. That room will be the Execution Chamber. The actual main control room will be marked as Sewage Overflow Containment.
66. My security keypad will actually be a fingerprint scanner. Anyone who watches someone press a sequence of buttons or dusts the pad for fingerprints then subsequently tries to enter by repeating that sequence will trigger the alarm system.
67. No matter how many shorts we have in the system, my guards will be instructed to treat every surveillance camera malfunction as a full-scale emergency.
68. I will spare someone who saved my life sometime in the past. This is only reasonable as it encourages others to do so. However, the offer is good one time only. If they want me to spare them again, they'd better save my life again.
69. All midwives will be banned from the realm. All babies will be delivered at state-approved hospitals. Orphans will be placed in foster-homes, not abandoned in the woods to be raised by creatures of the wild.
70. When my guards split up to search for intruders, they will always travel in groups of at least two. They will be trained so that if one of them disappears mysteriously while on patrol, the other will immediately initiate an alert and call for backup, instead of quizzically peering around a corner.
71. If I decide to test a lieutenant's loyalty and see if he/she should be made a trusted lieutenant, I will have a crack squad of marksmen standing by in case the answer is no.
72. If all the heroes are standing together around a strange device and begin to taunt me, I will pull out a conventional weapon instead of using my unstoppable super weapon on them.
73. I will not agree to let the heroes go free if they win a rigged contest, even though my advisors assure me it is impossible for them to win.
74. When I create a multimedia presentation of my plan designed so that my five-year-old advisor can easily understand the details, I will not label the disk "Project Overlord" and leave it lying on top of my desk.
75. I will instruct my Legions of Terror to attack the hero en masse, instead of standing around waiting while members break off and attack one or two at a time.
76. If the hero runs up to my roof, I will not run up after him and struggle with him in an attempt to push him over the edge. I will also not engage him at the edge of a cliff. (In the middle of a rope-bridge over a river of molten lava is not even worth considering.)
77. If I have a fit of temporary insanity and decide to give the hero the chance to reject a job as my trusted lieutenant, I will retain enough sanity to wait until my current trusted lieutenant is out of earshot before making the offer.
78. I will not tell my Legions of Terror "And he must be taken alive!" The command will be "And try to take him alive if it is reasonably practical."
79. If my doomsday device happens to come with a reverse switch, as soon as it has been employed it will be melted down and made into limited-edition commemorative coins.
80. If my weakest troops fail to eliminate a hero, I will send out my best troops instead of wasting time with progressively stronger ones as he gets closer and closer to my fortress.
81. If I am fighting with the hero atop a moving platform, have disarmed him, and am about to finish him off and he glances behind me and drops flat, I too will drop flat instead of quizzically turning around to find out what he saw.
82. I will not shoot at any of my enemies if they are standing in front of the crucial support beam to a heavy, dangerous, unbalanced structure.
83. If I'm eating dinner with the hero, put poison in his goblet, then have to leave the table for any reason, I will order new drinks for both of us instead of trying to decide whether or not to switch with him.
84. I will not have captives of one sex guarded by members of the opposite sex.

85. I will not use any plan in which the final step is horribly complicated, e.g. "Align the 12 Stones of Power on the sacred altar then activate the medallion at the moment of total eclipse." Instead it will be more along the lines of "Push the button."
86. I will make sure that my doomsday device is up to code and properly grounded.
87. My vats of hazardous chemicals will be covered when not in use. Also, I will not construct walkways above them.
88. If a group of henchmen fail miserably at a task, I will not berate them for incompetence then send the same group out to try the task again.
89. After I capture the hero's super weapon, I will not immediately disband my legions and relax my guard because I believe whoever holds the weapon is unstoppable. After all, the hero held the weapon and I took it from him.
90. I will not design my Main Control Room so that every workstation is facing away from the door.
91. I will not ignore the messenger that stumbles in exhausted and obviously agitated until my personal grooming or current entertainment is finished. It might actually be important.
92. If I ever talk to the hero on the phone, I will not taunt him. Instead I will say this his dogged perseverance has given me new insight on the futility of my evil ways and that if he leaves me alone for a few months of quiet contemplation I will likely return to the path of righteousness. (Heroes are incredibly gullible in this regard.)
93. If I decide to hold a double execution of the hero and an underling who failed or betrayed me, I will see to it that the hero is scheduled to go first.
94. When arresting prisoners, my guards will not allow them to stop and grab a useless trinket of purely sentimental value.
95. My dungeon will have its own qualified medical staff complete with bodyguards. That way if a prisoner becomes sick and his cellmate tells the guard it's an emergency, the guard will fetch a trauma team instead of opening up the cell for a look.
96. My door mechanisms will be designed so that blasting the control panel on the outside seals the door and blasting the control panel on the inside opens the door, not vice versa.
97. My dungeon cells will not be furnished with objects that contain reflective surfaces or anything that can be unraveled.
98. If an attractive young couple enters my realm, I will carefully monitor their activities. If I find they are happy and affectionate, I will ignore them. However if circumstance have forced them together against their will and they spend all their time bickering and criticizing each other except during the intermittent occasions when they are saving each others' lives at which point there are hints of sexual tension, I will immediately order their execution.
99. Any data file of crucial importance will be padded to 1.45Mb in size.

**Finally, to keep my subjects permanently locked in mindless trances
I will provide each of them with free unlimited Internet access.**

The Chainmail Bikini

A different look at a venerable gaming institution, by Jonas Nelson



1. Long hair that obscures vision and is easily grabbed by enemies while engaged in close combat.
2. Unmotivated eye shadow and make-up. Must be from Jersey...
3. Murder in the eyes.
4. Totally meaningless earrings that enemies can grab hold of in order to shred her earlobes and cause much unnecessary pain.
5. Sexy chainmail bikini. This has got to hurt the nipples.
6. Vital organs totally unprotected.
7. Impeccable figure (95-50-85).
8. Giant sword (or similar weapon) which is far too heavy for her to wield effectively.
9. No backpack or storage pouches for equipment—not even a scabbard for the sword!
10. No helmet or shield (that stuff is for wussies!).
11. More than 90% of her body is unprotected. Yet there are no visible scars...anywhere.
12. Weapon is unclean and unsharpened.
13. A meaningless armor part.
14. What's THIS for? You tell me...
15. High-heeled 'battle pumps' with heavy steel toe reinforcements.
16. Silly fur accessory that keeps sliding down around her ankle.

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