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DARING TALES OF ADVENTURE

PULP RULES

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PAUL 'WIGGY' WADE-WILLIAMS

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BY PAUL "WIGGY" WADE-WILLIAMS

EDITING & PROOFREADING: DAVE BLEWER, RON BLESSING

GRAPHIC DESIGN & TYPESETTING: ROBIN ELLIOTT

COVER ART: CHRIS KUHLMANN

COVER DESIGN: ROBIN ELLIOTT

DARING TALES PLAYTESTERS: KEVIN ANDERSON, DAVE BLEWER, SIMON SCOTT, MARTIN SKIGGS, DAN TUNBRIDGE

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PULP RULES

THE CHARACTERS

This Savage Adventure contains two pulp tales based around the exploits of four pre-generated characters. The full character sheets are available for free at www.xxx.com.

The heroes have all their leveling opportunities from Seasoned (at which they begin) into Legendary mapped out in advance. Each published adventure in this line earns the heroes a fixed 5 Experience Points, guaranteeing them an advance every mission. All the players need do is tick the appropriate box and start making use of the new upgrade.

This means you can use the character sheets at conventions and run adventures of any Rank without having to create your own characters from scratch. It also means you can run these tales as pick-up games without any preparation!

Better yet, you'll know that when you buy one of our adventures, you can guarantee the adventurers will have all the skills and abilities they need to win the day!

PULP RULES

Pulp adventures require both a certain mindset from the GM and players and a few tweaks to the base rules.

The majority of these rules exist for one reason—to mimic pulp films. While player characters are virtually immortal and can face most challenges without fear of injury, the fun of pulp is playing up that fact by taking more extreme risks and performing daring stunts. GM's who want more risk should ignore whatever rules they wish.

ACTING BAD IS BAD

The heroes of our adventures are Heroes and should be played that way. Anytime one commits an evil or morally ambiguous act he loses a benny immediately. This benny counts as reducing his permanent pool for the rest of the session (it returns to full at the start of the next session). If he has run out of bennies, he can't earn anymore from any source for the remainder of the session.

The GM should always warn a player about to take a step onto the anti-hero road. If the GM is in doubt about an action, he should ask himself whether Indiana Jones, Doc Savage, the Rocketeer, or Rick O'Connell would ever perform such an act in the movies. If the answer is "no," then it's a bad act.

BENNIES

Bennies are a pulp hero's best friend. Give each Wild Card player character a benny at the start of every combat. This can't take a character above his permanent pool value, but it does mean the heroes can freely spend a single benny in every fight with the certain knowledge they'll get it back before the next encounter kicks off.

Pulp heroes will, thanks to the nature of these setting rules, generally end up with bennies left. The GM should not use the old rule that leftover bennies convert to Experience Points—the heroes get enough breaks.

CINEMATIC DEATH

In pulp stories, no one bleeds profusely despite being shot, stabbed, or punched, nor do their clothes necessarily show signs of these wounds. Anyone poisoned simply drops dead, rather than writhing while choking and gagging. People still die—it's just not a messy death (even when cut to pieces by a propeller it's just a brief spray of blood we see, not chunks of flesh being minced).

CONTACTS

In *Raiders of the Lost Ark*™ Indy gets in contact with his old friend Salah, who in turn leads him to the astrolo-

ger. In *The Mummy,*™ Rick O'Connell uses his friendship with Winston to get hold of an airplane. In a movie it's very easy for the writer to insert these allies and create a backstory of how the hero knows the person. In an RPG, having the GM create such characters takes a lot of creativity away from the players.

Although the Connections Edge could be used to represent such individuals, our pulp rules introduce a new concept just for these sorts of characters—Contacts.

Contacts, unlike Connections, are a unique individual who exists in a fixed location. Players who want allies with greater resources or who can be contacted anywhere should invest in the Connections Edge.

Limits: Once per adventure, *one* player may invent a Contact. An individual player may invent a new contact for his hero only once per character Rank. Thus, in a typical group of four players, every player gets chance to create a friend at each Rank. For smaller groups, the GM may alter or waive this rule.

The player should first seek his fellow players' approval, since they might have ideas for a Contact they wish to use as well. He must then come up with a name, a reason the hero knows the Contact, and why the contact is in the area. The GM has final approval and may tweak a few facts to better fit the adventure.

For instance, let's imagine the heroes are lost in the jungle and suffering from a lack of rations. Lady Amelia's player decides to use a Contact to get them out of trouble. She invents a missionary, Father Matthew, whose mission was funded by her father. She remembers he is currently working with a native tribe in the area.

Usage: As individuals, Contacts are not as resourceful as the Connection Edge. In general, they can provide small items (a few magazines for a gun, digging equipment, or a vehicle) or aid (information, or healing). What they never supply is an army of Extras—pulp adventures are all about the heroes. The player can ask his Contact for whatever he wants, but the GM makes the final decision on what is available.

Continuing our example, the heroes stumble in Father Matthew's mission. He provides the party with food. Since the adventurers are lost the GM wants to get the adventure back on track, he also knows the route to the ruined temple the group seeks. He might even provide a non-combatant guide.

In short, Contacts exist to provide a useful piece of gear or information, and to help parties who are struggling to solve clues.

HENCHMEN

Sometimes a Wild Card is too much of a threat and an Extra not threatening enough. In these instances, the GM should use a Henchman. Henchmen have three wound levels just like a Wild Card, but they don't have a Wild Die or get their own bennies.

HEROIC COMBAT

Did Doc Savage or Indiana Jones ever die or lose a limb? Of course not! They may get beaten to a within an inch of their lives, but they *always* come back for more. As such, several special rules apply in pulp games.

Extras' Damage: Wild Cards are expected to mow down swathes of Extras without pausing for breath. In order to make Extras less of a threat and the heroes more heroic, Extras' damage rolls *never* Ace. That's right, the best a Nazi soldier with an SMG (2d6) can do is cause 12 damage, which equates to a wound or two at most.

Soaking: Pulp characters are expected to risk life and limb and escape *virtually* unharmed. Whenever a player character Wild Card Soaks *all* the damage from an attack, his benny is instantly returned. While there are no guarantees in life, this rule helps encourage the heroes to remove single wounds as quickly as possible before they accumulate into bigger penalties and without worrying too much about benny expenditure.

The GM should work within the framework of the story to describe how these "wounds" were actually near-misses or left a hero's jacket with a new hole or his favorite hat badly crumpled.

Nonlethal: *All* damage inflicted on a player character Wild Card is treated as being nonlethal. Characters can die, but it requires a villain to perform a deliberate Finishing Move. Such dastardly curs deserve what is coming to them.

Rapid Recovery: Every Wild Card hero recovers one wound automatically at the start of each new Act. Unconscious heroes wake up with 2 wounds just before the Act begins. No one is ever left out of a new Act or carrying round crippling wound penalties from the beginning of the adventure.

Injuries: While characters still suffer injuries, they are never lasting ones. A hero only ever suffers the effects of rolls on the Injury Table until the wounds are healed, as if he rolled a success on the Incapacitation Table. In short, heroes are never left with injuries for long even if they roll a Failure or Critical Failure on the Incapacitation Table.

NEVER ENDING AMMO

At the end of every Scene, the heroes recover all their spent ammunition and Power Points. This means the heroes are never short of bullet and spells.

OBSTACLES IN CHASES

Rather than simply listing Obstacles as a category with a fixed modifier and having a collision as the only occurrence, many of our Chase scenes include a table of events. The text will tell you when these rules apply.

When a participant draws a Club as his first initiative card, you just check the card value against the table and run the mini-scene. The number in parentheses after the card value is a modifier to the driver's initial Trait roll that round.

Failure can lead to no additional effect beyond not gaining any ground due to the failed roll, cause a hero to lose Range Increments, being Shaken, or taking damage, depending on the nature of the Chase. Success and raises are generally handled as normal, though sometimes there are additional benefits.

This type of expansion to the Chase rules will be a recurring part of our pulp adventures and is something the GM can easily work into his own tales.

POLICE INTERFERENCE

No matter how much gunplay is involved, the cops never turn up. The same applies if they borrow a vehicle. OK, that's not entirely true. So long as the characters strive to foil the dastardly plot and aren't murdering innocent bystanders, the cops leave them alone. Pulp heroes rarely have to explain themselves to the police.

PULP FISTED

Pulp heroes often take on sword-wielding cultists or knife carrying thugs with their bare hands and win. To simulate this, Wild Card characters using their bare hands *never* count as Unarmed Defenders.

RECURRING VILLAINS

Pulp villains have a habit of coming back (though rarely more than once). In order to ensure a villain survives the GM can use a few tricks.

First, all villains the GM wants to return for a sequel are treated as having the Harder to Kill Edge with 100% chance of survival. Even a villain seen to fall into lava may survive and return, albeit with hideous scars and a terrible thirst for revenge.

Second, by spending a benny the villain may guarantee his escape. He doesn't suddenly vanish into thin air, but he ignores all die rolls and action limits. What he can't do during this time is perform actions he was normally incapable of taking (like running move than his Pace + running die) or make any attacks—it's escape or nothing. For example, Doctor Destructo might sprint his full Pace plus running die maximum, start his rocket-powered airplane, and blast off into the sky before the heroes can react. Heroes on Hold cannot interrupt this escape.

This second technique is especially useful during the early stages of an adventure, when the villain might make a brief appearance but *must* escape to fight the heroes in the climax.

SURRENDERING

To some gamers surrendering is a form of defeat. In pulp games, it's often a vital part of the plot and leads the story forward.

As such, anytime the heroes surrender at the dramatically appropriate spot and go along with the villains demands (it's usually obvious because of the number of Extras present or the villain holding a gun to someone's head and shouting, "Drop your weapons!"), they earn a benny.

WEIRD SCIENCE TWEAK

Rocket boots and jet packs are a staple of pulp adventures. As such, Doc Davenport has the *fly* power before reaching Veteran.