



Signs & Portents Roleplayer

51

WARS

The final, last, ultimate part of *Soul and Steel*

Spycraft 2.0

Start brushing up on your James Bond voice – we've got gadgets and guns

CthulhuTech

Holy pants! It's finally here! 🌟

Plus legendary swords for *RuneQuest*, a selection of useful
NPCs for *Elric*, *Voralans* in *Glorantha*, the world's strangest
Conan advertisement, and more...

S&P Roleplayer 51
December 2007
MGP 5551R
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Merry Christmas! I love Christmas, me. I'd love it more if the snow wasn't hypothetical these days¹ and if my Dad wasn't so difficult to buy presents for² but there's something about Christmas lights, a bite in the air, carols on the wind, and rampant commercialism that puts a spring in my step.³ On the subject of rampant commercialism, I'd just like to draw your attention to some of the fantastic products we at Mongoose are selling this December:

CthulhuTech – Much more than just 'Cthulhu meets giant robots', yet still retaining everything that makes both Cthulhu great *and* that makes giant robots great.

Blood of Orlanth – You've waited a long time for this one⁴, but it's finally here. And it's brilliant. It's everything a Glorantha campaign should be. Hell, it's everything a fantasy campaign should be – it's got fearsome warriors, scheming sorcerers, dragons, ancient horrors and big consequences.

Spycraft 2.0 and World on Fire – I can't even look at the outside of these books without thinking of the James Bond theme. That's how espionage-y they are.

Lone Wolf 3: The Caverns of Kalte – It's a perfect Christmas gift. It's got snow, high adventure, and when you open it you discover a single, tiny, yet vital piece is missing.⁵

So there you go. A quintet of roleplaying greatness for your Christmas stocking (although you might need reinforcement for Spycraft 2.0 – it's a hefty beast). Between them they cover every genre, every size, and most colours, making them easy to co-ordinate with your Christmas party outfit. What more could you want?

Chris

¹ Problems with global warming: less snow, more sunburn, fewer places for polar bears to stand – and *that* means that they might start standing in your living room. Think on that, the next time you leave the lights on.

² 'Here Dad, a one-of-a-kind head-sized jewel, wrested from the iron grip of a treacherous cult in the darksome jungles of Swindon. Many good men lost their lives to bring you this gem, and the tale of its retrieval is an epic and hair-curling story of high adventure.'

³ 'Thanks son. It'll look nice next to the other one I bought last week.'

⁴ Christmas food takes the spring *out* of my step, but only because I tend to scarf down my own body weight in Christmas pudding.

⁵ Not as long as for CthulhuTech though. Ho ho ho.

⁶ New versions of the book have section 192 exactly where it's supposed to be. If you have one of the duff ones, contact us at Mongoose and we'll sort you out with a replacement.

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CONTENTS



THE SAGA OF CTHULHUTECH 5
From concept to printing, the story behind The Product That Didn't Want To Be.

THE STATE OF THE MONGOOSE 8
Matthew Sprange looks at where we are and where we're going. Also, there is a picture of a hat.



I DIDN'T REALISE THAT VIOLIN WAS LOADED 15
How to design gadgets in Spycraft: from the ever-popular bladed hat to a motorbike that turns into a suit.



LEGENDARY SWORDS 21
Excalibur got all the press, but there are plenty of other swords of legend that your characters can emulate or steal.



KIZEN, PART 3 26
The last part of the epic serialisation of Soul and Steel. The very last kizen tree: Matter Creation.



THE VORALANS 34
The third and final aldryami addendum looks at the fungus people of Glorantha. 'Fungi' puns are welcome.



A YOUNG KINGDOMS DIGEST 42
Non-Player Characters for Elric, started up and ready to die on the end of your big black sword.



DEBRIEFING 54
The paranoia doesn't have to end when the mission does; now you have to *account* for your actions.



ONCE MORE INTO THE BREACH 59
Spycraft combat examined and explored. You might want to bring that bladed hat from earlier...

EYE ON MONGOOSE 4

WRITE FOR THE MONGOOSE 32

ROLEPLAYING GAMES PRODUCT LIST 67

MAIL ORDER FORM 72

EYE ON MONGOOSE

CthulhuTech: Dark Passions

At Your Doorstep.



The Aeon War rages outside. The Migou encroach on the heart of civilization from Alaska. The Rapine Storm throws itself against failing lines in China. Dark things awaken in the forgotten corners of the world. All the while, sinister cults erode the New Earth Government from within.

Fight fanatical suicide bombers dedicated to the fall of civilization – and the destruction of our “alien” brethren. Face your own inner fortitude in the face of overwhelming temptations of forbidden physical pleasures. Sleep fitfully in the fear that something out there is intent to ravage your dreams.

All in your neighborhood. Down the street. Even next door.

Nowhere else will you find a setting like CthulhuTech.

Inside this book you will find:

- A detailed discussion of cults within society, their influence, and how they are dealt with by the New Earth Government.
- Four pieces of unusual fiction to help portray the ugliness of cult influence.
- Eight unique and insidious minor cults, including the Congregation of the Earth Mother, a nearly destroyed fertility cult with much darker origins, the Empty, a lost “group” of the homeless and hopelessly deranged, and the mysterious Scions of Forever, who seem to know the streams of time and just how to manipulate it.
- Guidelines and ideas for creating cult games or for integrating them into your already existing CthulhuTech game.
- Story starters and hooks, to bring minor cults into your game now.

This book is meant to be used with the CthulhuTech storytelling game and requires the Core Book.

THE SAGA OF CTHULHU TECH

AS TOLD BY MATTHEW GRAU

There are a whole lot of people out there who call *CthulhuTech* vapourware, a term that implies a product promised but never delivered. Since I now hold one of the first printed and bound copies of the *CthulhuTech* Core Book, I speak with authority when I say it is not vapourware. Now that the book is released, let me tell you our long and sordid tale so that you too might understand our incredible journey.

CthulhuTech was an accident. I'd been out of game design for years. But as any adventure game professional knows, game designers are like addicts – sooner or later we relapse. So one rainy day in Seattle, I was hanging out at my friend Aron Anderson's comic and game store, the Dreaming. We were talking about the usual stuff like comics, games, movies, and the inevitable tentacles of something Lovecraftian. I was looking around at the action figures and toys he has displayed around his store and it hit me. No one had combined true Lovecraftian-style horror with good old fashioned anime-style mecha, so I shouted out, 'I've got it! We combine Lovecraft and mecha and call it... CthulhuTech!'

Frankly, I thought the idea was pretty stupid. We had a good laugh. But then we both stopped and thought about it for a second. Aron got this look on his face and said, 'You know, that's not a bad idea. See what you can do with it.' What I left out is at that point Aron was also part of Eos Press, a small start-up game company in Seattle who had published the roleplaying game *Godlike*.

I went away and it just started coming out of me. By the end of the week, I had the basic universe and rules designed and I brought them to Aron. He liked what he saw and we started talking about Eos Press publishing the newborn *CthulhuTech*. It was originally supposed to be only two books, *CthulhuTech* and the *Companion*, and each was only supposed to be 128 pages and priced as an impulse buy. I called my long-

time friend and gaming partner Fraser McKay and pitched him the idea to see if he wanted to do some writing for the book and Aron hooked me up with Mike Vaillancourt to do some art and art direct.

The first draft of *CthulhuTech* didn't take us all that long. However, something happened along the way. The more it came into being, the more we realized that



it was much more than we'd initially thought. Eos Press requested that we make the book bigger and add more of what we'd been developing. Our initial release got pushed back as *CthulhuTech* got a product line behind it and as the Core Book got a lot more meaty.

We'd created several playtest groups and internet forums by this point and had already established a fan-base. Most people knew what was going on and were happy to wait based on what they'd already seen of the property. Then we hit our first big hurdle. Eos Press got a hold of the *Weapons of the Gods* license from China. At that time, Eos Press was a small company with limited resources and *Weapons of the Gods* was a product that had a built-in franchise and audience. After several long conversations with the guys, we all agreed that it would be best if we took *CthulhuTech* solo while Eos Press spent their time, effort, and money to support a license they knew would be a solid release. (As an aside, *Weapons of the Gods* was originally built on my *Framework* system and you can still see its ghost in that game's current rules.)

Now we'd gone from a group of guys essentially contracting to make a game for a publisher to a group of guys self-publishing. We could handle that, but we needed someone else to handle the actual sale of the product line. Enter Osseum Entertainment, run by a group of ex-Wizards of the Coast and ex-TSR employees, several of which I had come up with in the adventure games industry. They were slick, smart, on the ball, and fun to go drinking with. Osseum Entertainment gave us great advice and helped us on our way. We thought we weren't far from release, only about a year off of what we would have under Eos Press. The fans were still with us.

Enter the next hurdle. Mike Vaillancourt was still on active duty with the Navy. The military decided that it was time for him to go on deployment to Japan.

Suddenly, our concept artist and art director was going to a foreign country where he would have limited contact with us, unreliable internet service, and not a whole lot of time to work. This set the book back six months on its own.

Mike finally returned in time to run smack into hurdle number three – the demise of Osseum Entertainment. No one saw it coming, or at least no one that was telling us. Years after we started this project we were back at square one business-wise. We had a manuscript, a stack of concept art, and no publisher or sales/distribution partner. This gave us a lot to think about.

We were forced to take the next year to set-up what we were going to do. There were lots of meetings with the SBA, conversations about finance, and research about other sales and distribution organizations. During this time, Mike was sent out on deployment again and I decided that since we were just hanging back I was going to basically rewrite the entire Core Book because I thought it could be better. Plus, I moved from Seattle to Los Angeles. And yet, somehow the fans were still talking about us. A lot of other people were not saying very nice things about us or *CthulhuTech*, but they were still talking about it which meant there was still interest. I'd Google *CthulhuTech* and was stunned by what would show up.

I'd starting writing the book that was to become *Dark Passions* by this point and had pages of notes for the book that was to become *Vade Mecum*. I'd created a complete metaplot, release schedule, and even had a pilot episode written for a television show (I'm a screenwriter for my day job). But honestly, I'd given up. We'd worked so hard and smacked into so many obstacles that I just figured the universe was trying to tell me something. And then one day it hit me like a ton of bricks. I loved this intellectual property and



I owed it to my partners and our fans to resuscitate *CthulhuTech*. We started talking about it avidly again and were re-committed to making our dream real.

Not long after that, something special happened. Someone on rpg.net outright called *CthulhuTech* vapourware. Mike Vaillancourt got on there and told the story of what had happened and where we were at, for no other reason than for people to understand. A couple days later we received an e-mail from Matthew Sprange at Mongoose Publishing that basically said, 'Let's talk.' A few months later, we had a publisher and *CthulhuTech* was alive and kicking again.

Now we had to move into production. It was time to sink some serious cash into getting final art, a final cover, and the interior layout done. And then the government decided that it was time for Mike to go back to Japan again. Sigh. And I broke up with my live-in girlfriend and ended up without reliable internet access for two months. This is all beside the fact that we discovered that many freelance illustrators would drop a start-up like us like a hot potato if they get video game work, no matter how close to deadline they were.

This brings us to the beginning of 2007. Mike came back, Fraser was developing the business relationship with Mongoose Publishing, and I was coordinating production. Soon we had a web-site (which is a whole other story) and new forums. And suddenly, there were the fans. I couldn't believe it. People who'd been following us for years as well as new people who'd just discovered *CthulhuTech* started talking on the official forums. If there was one moment that made me realize that we'd made the right choice to push through all the hurdles to get *CthulhuTech* into the hands of the public, this was it. After everything, there were people who were still waiting and were still excited.

And now we're here. GenCon 2007 was amazing. We brought a print-out of the book that was at the printer and ran demos non-stop. We met a whole lot of really cool people who are into *CthulhuTech*, whether they've been into it for a while or just discovered it. Just about everyone who came and talked with us walked away with a smile on their face and a couple cool bookmarks to remind them. We tried like heck to have published copies at the show, but alas we hit our last hurdle – printer troubles.

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

When Matthew talks here about 'printer troubles', he is being generous. *Every single thing* that could have gone wrong with the colour printer went wrong. Every grinding noise that shouldn't come from a printer came from the printer. Every warning light lit up, sometimes simultaneously. Our software rejected *CthulhuTech* for no reason known to man. But no more! After long hours on the phone, several engineer visits, two black magic rituals, mysterious tinkering by Nick the Greek and half an hour of threats and swearing from a screwdriver-wielding senior editor who wishes to remain nameless, the printer... prints.

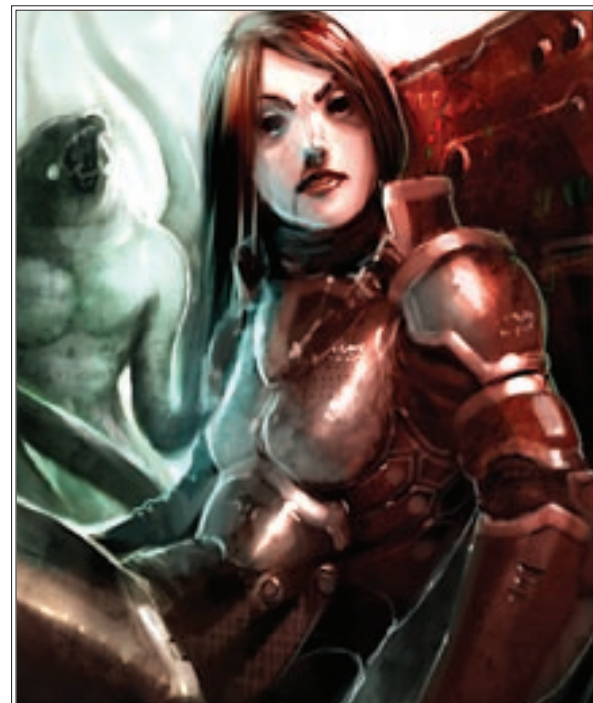
Those problems are solved now. As I said earlier, I hold a fully printed and bound copy of the Core Book in my hands. The game is real. It will be in stores very soon, if it isn't already by the time this is printed. It is vapourware no more.

What I'd really like you to get from this is that this book is for the fans. We hit more than our fair share of hurdles, many the kind that make most people give up and go home. If I was the kind of person that only answered to myself, I'd have given up and moved on. But every time I wrestled with calling it quits, I'd turn around and be reminded of all the people that had

fallen in love with just the little they'd seen and were still waiting for *CthulhuTech*. That's powerful and something that couldn't be denied. I can't wait for all of you to finally have this book in your hands and I can't wait to hear from you all the crazy adventures you create for yourself from it.

No matter who you are, if you play storytelling games I invite you to take a look at *CthulhuTech*. And don't worry, because the *Core Book* isn't all there is. We're currently in final production on *Dark Passions*, a dark little book about cults, and the manuscript for *Vade Mecum: the CthulhuTech Companion* is pretty much complete. I think that now that we're rolling, we're in for quite a ride.

Welcome to the Aeon War. Nice to finally see you.



THE STATE OF THE MONGOOSE

OVERVIEW

As the year draws to a close, with Santa bringing prezzies for good children and the turkeys start fearing for their feathers, it has become something of a tradition for us to look back on the past twelve months to see how we have done, and look ahead to what awaits us in the coming year. We also have a look at the way this great hobby is going though, of course, we can only give our perspective on things. Your mileage, and all that.

PRINTING FACILITY

2007 has been a period of consolidation and reorganisation for Mongoose, not least because of the introduction of our new printing facility. The facility represents the single greatest investment Mongoose has made in one project and though we have only now really started full production, many things are already clear. Things always end up a little more expensive than you plan (obvious), time is required to get all the components working together (again, obvious) and, one day, every publisher our size will be producing books in this way.

Setting up the facility meant that, for the first four months of 2007, we released no titles at all, relying wholly on our back catalogue sales to support the company as we built up the facility to go into operation – it is a credit to our strong lines that we were able to do this, and there are perhaps only a handful of other companies that could have done the same thing without chopping staff or projects.

There are a number of other hobby games publishers that have been producing their own books for quite some time (and, in fact, they form their own sub-community within the industry!), but I believe we are the first to be able to do hardbacks, and do them in large quantities. About 50,000 books have been produced by our facility so far, and that number is rising by thousands every month as we bring new titles on line and old out of print titles back into production. Talking of original plans, we had banked on producing about 6,000 books a month through our facility, but with a number of titles taking off pretty much all at once, we are averaging well over 8,000 a month and peaking at nearly 10,000 – and we haven't brought our back catalogue into play yet!

The investment in a printing facility like this is huge for a company of our size – over half a million Dollars, once you have factored in all the equipment, materials, the learning process and so on. However, now we have it all up and functioning, everything becomes very modular. If we need to increase the number of books we produce in a week, we simply need to add another staff member and a couple of (relatively) inexpensive machines. If we want to branch out into cards or comics, again, that is just one extra machine needed for either, and so on. Now we have the basics, expansion becomes quite easy.

The advantages can be felt throughout the company, on many different levels. Editors can print a single book out to see how it looks away from the screen (there is

OUR ILLUSTRIOUS LEADER SPEAKS

something about a monitor screen that hides errors). We can do limited editions as prizes very, very easily (we have already done some personalised books with the owner's name on the cover!). And we are running an almost completely stockless system – we still have our older titles warehoused at the moment (though we are entering a process of trimming many titles, particularly those with a D20 badge), but all new books and those brought back into print are produced purely to order. Even the paper, card, glues and other materials needed to produce books are ordered on a 24 hour basis, meaning we keep very little in storage. Which keeps the accountant happy!

The effects of this have already been felt by our customers. No longer trapped in a set pricing matrix by a traditional printing house (we can work quite easily in multiples of 2 pages!), our editors are suddenly free to do what they want with a book, rather than be constrained by page count. Writer got passionate about a book and over-written a few sections? No problem, we will just add a few more pages (see *Dragonewts* for a good example of this). Just put together the first book of a brand new game line and need to tell a new audience about *Signs & Portents*? No need to chop back gaming material, we can just add another page.

We have also brought back into print some books (such as the first *Drow War* book) that we would never have reprinted through traditional means. Beyond that, we can do lots of exciting things in 2008 – compile

the Quintessentials into a mighty tome or two (our page limit is somewhere in the region of 1,000 for standard size books), offer print versions of Signs & Portents, offer limited edition colour versions of black and white books, and so on. Then there is the Grand Project, whereby gamers can 'build' their own rulebooks, clicking on a web site to decide exactly what they want to include in their own personalised copy ('Introductory scenario, check, realistic combat system, check, Late 16th Century equipment list, check. . .'). And then have it delivered to you, looking as if it had been mass produced in a run of thousands. . .

That is still someway off, but the possibilities are there.

FLAMING COBRA

We have been deluged by studios and other publishers wanting to have their books printed through our facility though, so far, we have turned most away. The fundamental problem (aside from the heavy workload our book makers currently have, making their way through the backlog caused by not releasing any books for four months) is that it will always be better for us to produce our own books rather than someone else's, and so it only makes sense if we have spare capacity in the production cycle – at the moment, we do not.

Except when it comes to Flaming Cobra, of course. Flaming Cobra is a programme we started about a year ago, and we have spent 2007 refining it and gathering new partners. At its core, it is a very simple arrangement; a studio or publisher approaches us with a book ready to go to print. We print, distribute and market that book, all at Mongoose's own cost – the publisher does not pay so much as a Pound when going through Flaming Cobra. When books are sold, Mongoose recovers its costs and the remainder (the profit) is split between the two parties. Very clean, very easy. And utterly without risk.

Well, that is not exactly true, of course. The studio must make its own arrangements to pay for its writers, artists and layout guys (though if they have come up through the PDF route, this is likely to have already been paid for). We take a risk by printing and distributing the books. However, we only print to order, and the costs of the facility (beyond the costs of individual books themselves) are carried by the production of our own books.

Basically, it is a no lose proposition for both sides, so long as both walk into the arrangement with their eyes open. When spec'ing their books in terms of content and page count, we always advise our Flaming Cobra partners as best we can, based on our experience in the market – our stated aim is to make Flaming Cobra publishers as rich as possible (!). However, the final decisions are always theirs.

We have had a few titles released through Flaming Cobra so far, but many more are on the way. As I write this, Cthulhutech is being printed, and initial orders have been the highest of any Flaming Cobra book, making it a front runner in our own catalogue. We expect similar things of Spycraft, and we have other lines waiting in the wings for 2008.

SIGNS & PORTENTS

At Mongoose, we have always been a little bemused by Signs & Portents. It started life as a full colour print magazine, and stayed that way for about two years. It rarely sold more than a couple of thousand copies, and we took a little loss on most months, but it was easy to justify – filing the costs under marketing, we were producing something that regained at least most of the outlay, and it gave us something physical to plonk in front of a new customer, retailer, or distributor and say 'this is us.'

The time came, though, for us to review this idea – as a marketing effort, it was just a little clumsy, and not targeted at all. When we decided to turn it into an online production (instantly eliminating the biggest cost associated with it – printing), many said that was a sign of failure.

In truth, we could have done nothing better for it. We split the magazine into two editions for Roleplayers and Wargamers, both at the same size as the original print edition. Within two months, we were seeing over 12,000 unique downloads. Today, a few years later, we have well over 60,000 unique downloads, and it is rising almost month on month.

It is a little ironic that, with our printing facility, we are now looking at bringing back a printed edition for those who like to feel paper between their fingers.1

The biggest change in Signs & Portents over the next year, however, will be a subtle shift in approach. In the past, Signs & Portents has been used to support our older games, and highlight our latest releases. We are going to start taking a far broader view of the magazine over the next few months.

Which brings us neatly on to. . .

2008

If 2007 has been a time of consolidation, reorganisation and planning, 2008 is where everything is set into motion. There have been a lot of changes to the company behind the scenes this year with new faces appearing and solid systems put into place. We have invested in several new areas, and will be looking to capitalise on them come the New Year.

For example, aside from Signs & Portents and some tortured writings on the Internet (like, well, this one),

Mongoose has never done any marketing. Ever. We have always, in effect, let our books sell themselves – which works up to a point, but a glass ceiling is hit with every good seller.

In 2008, we break that ceiling. We have a number of stated aims – revenue will increase by 40-50% in the first six months of 2008, for example. In 2009, we will be employing roughly twice as many staff as we do now (between 40 and 50 full-time staff, depending on what we call ‘Special Projects’).

So, what does this mean for you, the gamer? Well, if you have ever wanted a career in hobby gaming, we will be employing! From writers and artists to bookmakers and admin staff, Mongoose already looks to give its staff more than just another job. The difference is, we are now laying down a solid system whereby someone can look at having a serious career in their chosen hobby.

Roleplaying hobby dying? Don’t know what you are talking about, mate. . .

You will also be hearing a lot more about Mongoose. This goes from relatively simple things like getting a window on the day-to-day life in the office via the Planet Mongoose blog, to a greater presence in retail stores, via promotional materials and access . This will start in our strongest markets (the UK and Europe) but quickly spread to the US and other territories. You will also see more comprehensive support of our lines, going far beyond the free Signs & Portents.

These changes reach into other departments as well. For example, we have recently experienced a huge increase in the demand for our miniatures, to the extent where it has rapidly exceeded supply. New systems are being put into place to make current production more efficient, and also make it easier to expand, which will be essential

in 2008 with the coming of new miniatures lines. There will be smaller changes too – a new mail order system that does not require our poor Russell handwriting every address, and Amazon-style card wraps to better protect our books in transit. All of this is designed to give you easy and ready access to Mongoose products, wherever you shop, be it in your local games store (still the best place to go!), online retailers or direct through us.

Exciting times are ahead!

ROLEPLAYING

The roleplaying hobby has had some bad press over the past 2-3 years. People have been talking about D20 gluts, about shrinking markets and retailers closing their doors. Print runs are locked solidly in the hundreds, and anything that passes the thousand mark (let alone the two thousand point) is practically a breakaway hit. The nightmare of the three tier system, the lack of new blood in the hobby.

As with everything else in this world, some of this is true, some is not. Some publishers have had a very hard time (and some of those have, unfortunately, succumbed) . Others less so – they have adapted to the changing market (it changes all the time, of course), and positioned themselves with new lines, and new ways of doing business.

For example, the creation of our printing facility was driven, in part, by the knowledge that if Mongoose were ever hit with the shrinking sales we knew some other publishers were suffering, a new way of producing books would be required. POD printers were charging way too much for a sustainable business model in a company of our size (20-odd full-time staff spread across two continents). However, by doing it ourselves, we could theoretically have our sales reduced to just a

few hundred books of each title sold, and still retain our current staffing levels for at least the next five years. So, it was as much about security as efficiency.

Fortunately, we have not had to test that theory – we have been able to prove, consistently, that sales runs of 10,000 units and above are still achievable in the roleplaying market. Now, one publisher in the past accused me of taking the Kool Aid by saying this (whatever that means, being British, I really have no idea), but it all comes down to what titles are being produced. Not every book can hit those levels (I’d be driving an Aston Martin right now if they did!), but you can certainly plan for them. Conan, RuneQuest, Babylon 5 and Paranoia are all extremely good sellers, and all have achieved that elusive term of being ‘evergreen’, that is, having the ability to sell good amounts, month in, month out, rather than hitting the market in a blaze then dying.

Sometimes though, you are taken by surprise. I’ll give another example, though it is a wargaming one. We released Victory at Sea last year, an easy to play World War II naval battle game – targeted at the smallest of niches. It was done as a fun ‘private’ project on my part, the sort of book you release when you run a gaming company (!) simply because you want to. We figured it would sell a couple of hundred copies, at best, when released, and then dribble maybe a dozen copies a month for the rest of its life.

Instead, it sold over 2,000 copies in the first six months, and then did another 1,000 in the next six months. Not what you call a barnstorming hit. It made no one rich overnight. But remember; Victory at Sea is a World War II naval game.

Clearly, you cannot plan for everything. Sometimes, you just hit the right nerve at the right time.

The big thing in 2008 will, of course, be D&D 4e. I'm not going to go into whether it will bring a new flood of books to the market, whether it will create a resurgence in roleplaying, and so forth. But there are a few things worth inspecting for the smaller publisher.

First, will we support it under the OGL? Well, it does not look like they will make things easy as things stand. As I write this, we have no idea of whether there will be early copies of the SRD for publishers to release books at the same time as their initial releases (I wouldn't if I were them), and it looks like there will not be an official D20 logo (for our part, not required). If all else is equal though, yes, there will be support from Mongoose. We have a new setting in the wings that works very well with D&D (because of the relative power levels and influence of magic). I could see us revising the epic Drow War campaign too, which was very popular when released. However, we will not need to make ourselves reliant on the OGL, as we did when we started a little more than six years ago.

Anyway, enough of the RPG industry at large – let's take a look at some specific lines Mongoose will be running with throughout 2008.

TRAVELLER

We are expecting big things with this game, and it has already gained a great deal of interest. Our initial playtests have blown away everyone in the office, and we are all doffing our caps to designer Gareth Hanrahan. His character creation system retains all the flavour of Classic Traveller, but adds so much more in terms of group dynamics and history. You do not simply roll up a character's abilities and skills – you get a complete background thrown in for good measure!

This is good for a generic Traveller game, but for licensed settings, it will quite simply be awesome. In

Starship Troopers, for example, you might find your character narrowly avoided death during the Klendathu invasion, or maybe he earned the ire of a Fleet officer during shore leave, or perhaps he was part of the first contact mission with the Skinnies. And all of this before you actually start playing!

Traveller itself will be split into several lines. The first will cover the 'core' books, such as the rulebook and supplements that will be applicable to most, if not all, settings. These will include familiar titles such as Mercenary and High Guard, as well as some new ones detailing Psionics and small 'tramp' freighters that can appear in most galaxies. One of my favourites is 760 Patrons (we had to go the whole hog and make it ten times 'better' than the original!), which will surely give a Games Master an almost inexhaustible supply of scenarios to work from during a campaign.

The other lines will concentrate on settings, the first being the Third Imperium, or our first era of the Original Traveller Universe. During 2008, you can also expect to see Strontium Dog and Starship Troopers making an appearance, and a Babylon 5 sourcebook is very likely at some point. Judge Dredd using the Traveller rules system is another game that will certainly happen, though we are currently waiting for a few other things to happen in the Dredd universe before we return to Mega-City One, guns blazing!

There will be a much tighter integration between Traveller games than there is with, say, RuneQuest spin-offs. A small freighter or hand weapon or alien will be just as applicable to the Third Imperium as it would be to Starship Troopers, meaning you can take advantage of entire universes in your games, no matter what you are playing. The settings themselves will have their own sub-systems and exceptions (no Arachnids in Babylon 5, for example, while new rules will be added for jump

gates and instant interstellar communications) that will give them the flavour but at the micro level, a lot of material will be transferable.

Speaking of Starship Troopers, we have already started sketching out the game, based on Gareth's current work with the core Traveller rules. Fleet characters will be appearing from the outset, while MI characters can range from the poor Light Armour troopers, to the elite Pathfinders and Exosuit troopers – just don't expect to go through many terms of service without extensive cybernetics!

As with all our main roleplaying lines, we will be producing one large campaign every year for Traveller (and its spin-off games), starting with Beltstrike, a 'generic' campaign set in an asteroid belt that could be placed in pretty much any setting.

We have extremely long term plans for Traveller, ranging across the next decade, so expect to see it going strong for many years to come. This will be aided in part by the core mechanics being made Open Content, allowing anyone, from publisher to individual, to produce new rules and settings for the game, allowing you to adventure across many, many different universes.

RUNEQUEST

RuneQuest goes from strength to strength with the recent addition of the Deluxe rulebook, giving gamers a choice of entry points into the game – the basic rulebook for those just looking to run characters or small scale games, the Deluxe for Games Masters or those who simply must have everything! The Spellbook has been an extremely popular addition as well, building on the core rules to allow a variety of styles of play, whether you are a serious Gloranthophile or more a high fantasy kind of player.

Glorantha is beginning to be fleshed out, but we have along, long way to go. In 2008, expect to see the continuation of the races fleshed out (Ducks!), a brand new campaign in the shape of Dara Happa Stirs (Blood of Orlanth will be out before the end of the year), and a further exploration of territories. We are also going to start investigating the EWF in detail. . .

As for the RuneQuest spin-offs, there will be plenty for Eternal Champion players. Corum will likely be held until early 2009 to allow us to better support Hawkmoon and Elric, though the rumoured Multiverse book is likely to make an appearance right at the end of the year.

We will also continue our 'historical' settings, started with Pirates. Land of the Samurai is first up, appearing in early 2008, but we have many others on the cards including, yes, Vikings. If that were not enough, watch out for a new licence we are currently negotiating, based on the novels of an author known for his historical work (and one of my favourite writers to boot). These are going to be well worth waiting for, and I have a feeling that at least two of the 'settings' will get many people going dippy!

PARANOIA

We have a strong love for Paranoia here at Mongoose (I can't wait to see what new editor Charlotte makes of the first Paranoia book she is given to edit!), and 2008 will see some pretty exciting additions. We are aiming to bring you more scenarios, along with a greater depth of support in Signs & Portents, but I have to mention two books that will be coming out in the first half of 2008; The Big Book of Bots and The Thin Green Line. The first I presume needs little introduction, but whether you are looking for a character somewhat more durable than a Troubleshooter or an evil GM wanting to inflict

maximum pain on his players, the Big Book of Bots will present a staple of Alpha Complex in a variety of interesting and lethal styles.

The Thin Green Line will do for the Vulture Squadrons what HIL Sector Blues did for Int Sec. Expect the very worse moments of Platoon, Saving Private Ryan and Full Metal Jacket, mixed in with hysterical Commies, contradicting orders, and your ever-present friend, the Computer.

CONAN

We have had many fans ask whether Conan is going '4e'. Umm, no. Conan doesn't 'do' 4e. Give him beer and a willing wench, and he is well away. This RPG will remain as Old School as our favourite barbarian himself.

We'll be continuing our march across the kingdoms of the Hyborian Age, exploring each in turn – these have always been our most popular books in the Conan range. However, we also want to make actually playing Conan easier too. Ruins of Hyboria was extremely well received, so a number of follow ups have been planned, such as Cities of Hyboria, providing jump-offs and one-shots for the beleaguered Games Master. If you are looking for something with more bite, then Conan will also be getting a new full blown campaign every year, starting with Bryan Steele's Trial of Blood.

Hyborian Empires is something we have talked about for a while, allowing players to actually manage a nation (the rulers of the kingdoms tend to change on a regular basis in the Conan stories, especially when our hero arrives in town!), and this project still has the green light. However, we have something a little similar planned for RuneQuest, so we might delay it until 2009. Don't worry, this will be one worth waiting for.

BABYLON 5

The space station that changed the destiny of an entire galaxy will continue to feature in our line up and, with most of the 'core' books done, we can now start examining the setting in greater detail. We will be looking at the criminal elements of the setting, including a book on those wanting to try smuggling illegal items through Babylon 5's customs (and elsewhere), and we will be expanding the galaxy to cover those areas of the galactic map we have yet to fully touch upon. As well as the promised 'one big campaign a year,' we are also looking into the possibility of an alternative timeline for Babylon 5 that will be presented as a small range of books, plunging the galaxy into its deepest nightmares!

NEW GAMES

Understandably, we have rather a lot on our plate at the moment – curse Traveller and RuneQuest being so easy to adapt to new settings! We are unlikely to be bringing out any new RPGs in 2008, but that does not stop us tweaking with future projects (a games designer's disease).

Most interesting is Project Hyperion, a new approach to starship-based games. Currently set in the Babylon 5 universe, the current theory is that this game is based around the bridge crew. So far, so standard. However, we are looking at new ways of actually getting players to feel that they actually are their characters, at least in terms of knowledge. You know that part in science fiction TV where the Chief Engineer suddenly cries out 'But Captain if we overload the fusion dampers, we'll blow the Transmatrix!'

We want to get the players actually talking like that and, more to the point, actually understand what they mean when they say it – so, the Chief Engineer will be fully aware of all the systems on his ship, for

example, and what limits they can be pushed to. The Tactical Officer will know the capabilities of his fighter controllers and how far he can push the pulse cannon before their performance starts eroding. This is all to be achieved, of course, without requiring players to attend eight years of study at Fleet Academy.

Still working on that part. . .

SPECIAL PROJECTS

This is the catchall for projects that do not fit our traditional roleplaying and miniatures games. Chief among them at the moment are the Lone Wolf gamebooks, currently enjoying their re-release as collector's hardbacks, with mainstream softbacks to appear in book shops in 2008. They will be joined by some brand new novels set in the world of Magnamund, and this is something we will be watching very carefully, as we have always had an interest in entering the novel market – we have a set of Armageddon 2089 novels already waiting in the wings, and plenty more ideas we would like to pursue. It is far too early to speculate on where we will go next, and it will likely be 2009 before we take a serious swing at novels. Look out for them in the next State of the Mongoose!

Speaking of Lone Wolf, Mr Dever is due to start work on books 29-32, finally completing the series. Those who have scooped the Magnamund Mega-Deal will be the first to read these new books (several months before anyone else gets the chance), though they will be waiting a little while yet – Magnamund was not built in a day!

We have been discussing other projects with Mr Dever, including replica Sommerswerds. We have decided not to take a 'cheap' approach here, but instead commission the highest quality blades from a top swordsmith.

So, they will not be inexpensive, as they say – we are currently predicting a four figure price tag, but these blades will be things of absolute beauty; real stones in the hilt, intricate carvings along the blade, your own unique Kai name inscribed, marking it as your own. . . Probably not for everyone, but we had the chance to pursue this project, and just had to go for it! The swordsmith is currently researching how to produce a realistic golden blade (real gold-plating is an option – quite stunning on something as large as a bastard sword!), so stay tuned for updates. We are not expecting massive demand, but there will still be a waiting list, as we are currently looking at six months for each to be crafted. If you want the ultimate in fantasy collectibles, step forward. . .

Finally, we have also been looking at doing incredibly detailed multi-volume encyclopaedias for some time now, creating 'definitive' works based on various settings. A decent amount of writing time needs to be sectioned off for these projects, but we have already discussed the possibility of both Mega-City One and Glorantha for encyclopaedic treatment (can you imagine what a collected Gloranthan library might look like??). Anyway, something for the future. Not necessarily 2008, but sometime.

SUMMARY

And that concludes the State of the Mongoose 2007. This year has been an interesting one, as the Chinese say, but as a whole, the company has been gearing itself up to reach for the next level. In order to do so, we have had to trim a few things down and change the way we do others, sometimes in quite fundamental ways. This process is now nearly complete, and we are very excited at the possibilities 2008 will bring, in terms of both roleplaying and miniatures.

We are not batting down the hatches and preparing to ride the storm of a shrinking market – far from it. Mongoose is looking to expand, and enjoy the rich and diverse industry in which we belong.



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I DIDN'T REALISE THAT VIOLIN WAS LOADED

GADGETS IN SPYCRAFT, BY JON ANDERSEN.

'I compressed a high-glide tacticaliber parachute in the lining of my jacket. Just in case. Don't worry, though – my belt hyper-extends into a tandem sling. Just loop it around your waist; it'll hold us both.'

'Thanks.'

'You don't have to thank me. It's my job to keep you safe.'

– Marshall and Sydney, Alias

From James Bond's flashy laser watch and history's humble poison-tipped umbrella to the mobile-phone holdout pistol and the surveillance cat, gadgets are an inescapable facet of espionage. Of course, gadgetry isn't just limited to the covert duties of spies; who can forget the pulp fantasy of Dick Tracey's two-way video watch, or the plethora of improbable devices lurking in Batman's utility belt, or even Angel's spring-loaded stakes. So much of what was once science fiction has become science fact, but the fantastic allure of exotic, clandestine devices remains.

It's a guiding Crafty Games philosophy to emphasise the archetypal capabilities of *characters* over their tools. This promotes personal heroism and avoids situations in which losing a single item can leave the team at a significant disadvantage or worse, throw off the balance of the entire game. The designers also realise that players love their toys, though, and that beyond making their jobs easier, fantastic gizmos are just plain *fun*.

So, you've got your hot little hands on the brick that is the *Spycraft 2.0 Rulebook* (well, it's more like a paver, really), and you want to tackle the super-science of Gadgets. This article assumes you're already familiar with the game's default gear system: Common Items are small-scale everyday things that provide at best only minor game mechanical benefits, whereas gear picks comprise the truly useful items in each character's arsenal. Picks are further subdivided by type (Electronics, Gadgets, Resources, Security, Tradecraft, Vehicles, and Weapons), as well as Caliber (I to V). Among these, Gadgets are unique in that they aren't actually *things*, they're *effects*. It's this absence of form that makes Gadget picks particularly potent, as they give you access to *every other gear category* – but always at a cost.

'PAY ATTENTION, 007!'

As outlined in *Spycraft 2.0 Rulebook*, the gadget construction process can be illustrated with a simple formula: **Gadget = Housing + Effect**. What causes the effect is purely a matter of setting fluff; an exploding cigarette does the same thing whether it's a micro-grenade, an experimental bioform, or an angry fire elemental bound to a fetish.

Each gadget's Housing limits the number of effects it can hold – check out the chart in the Gadget section of the Gear chapter for details (*see the Spycraft 2.0 Rulebook, page 278*) – though this can be modified by certain feats and gadget-oriented characters like the Inventor (*see the Spycraft 2.0 Rulebook, page 75*). Something else

to watch for: when a gadget incorporates an existing item, it also incorporates *all* of that item's statistics, including weight and depending on the GC's leniency, possibly its mass as well. Items folded into gadgets are usually miniaturised, but not always as much as might be assumed. On the surface, you might assume you can shrink a small tank into a suit of armour to imitate Tony Stark's shenanigans, but it's not that simple. Reducing a gear item's size by 2 or more categories might reduce its weight by half, let's say, but half of 1 ton is still 500 kilograms, and in the example that's 500 kg of armour that poor old Kevin still has to try and walk around in.

The GC is the final arbiter of what you can and can't get away with, and it's entirely possible that if he's like me he'll hand-wave some or all of these restrictions to get the flavour he and the other players want. But don't count on it. Remember the following few simple rules, though, and the sky is pretty much your limit. These lessons will ensure the greatest degree of compatibility between the tables and the real fuel in the game's engine: your imagination.

'WE HAVE THE TECHNOLOGY'

As mentioned in the Rulebook, the human body is a perfectly valid Housing, and when used as such it's subject to the same restrictions that affect Gadget Mechanisms. However, what many people tend to overlook is that the body doesn't have to be viewed as a single Medium-sized object: it's can alternately be

seen as a collection of Small, Tiny, Diminutive, Fine, and even Nuisance sized *components*. This deconstructionist method can similarly be applied to other Housings, which explains how Q squeezes more than four tricky gizmos into Bond's latest car.

Let's take a look at Bond's most iconic vehicle, the Aston Martin DB5. It falls into the 'classic sports' category as a *Spycraft* vehicle and so it's a mere Caliber I Vehicle pick. The first time we're introduced to it in the films, we're told it contains the following:

- Radio telephone concealed in door compartment
- Tracking system
- Passenger ejector seat
- Armaments drawer under front driver seat
- Retractable tire slashers
- Oil slick nozzle from rear driver's side light cluster
- Caltrops from the rear passenger's side light cluster
- Smoke screen released through the exhaust pipes
- Revolving number plates ('BMT 216A,' for the UK, '4711-EA-62' for France, and 'LU 6789' for Switzerland)
- Retractable rear bulletproof screen
- Front and rear extending over-rider rams
- Two front firing .30 calibre Browning machine guns behind the front indicators

That's a hefty 12 effects we need to account for. Let's look at them in order.

First up, the 'radio phone as an advanced feature' is really a product of its time; today it's just a car phone, which is essentially just a mobile phone, and therefore a Common Item. If the game's set in the 60's, though, you'd be looking at a Caliber II Electronic pick for a satellite (backpack) radio with the car's door becoming the Housing. Alternately, you could use an Electronics pick for the radio and a separate Caliber I hidden

compartment Gadget Mechanism to store the rig in the door, allowing you to go mobile with the gear should something unfortunate happen to your car.

At either Caliber II or IV, the tracking system is simply a tracer bug Electronics pick, which gives you the receiving gear as well. The first one goes in the dashboard Housing and the receiver goes in your pocket.

The Aston Martin, being a Standard Ground Vehicle, has a crew of 1 (the driver). The *ejection seat (EJS)* quality simply describes the number of seats that can be jettisoned rather than their position, which neatly accounts for the passenger ejector seat, and this article offers a new upgrade to add this quality to most vehicles (*see page 17*).

For the armaments drawer, you have two options: either a hidden compartment to stash your personal weapon(s), or a bag full of guns Resource pick to offer that little something extra when the team's in a pinch. Of the two, I'd go with the latter simply to cover for any teammate who loses or goes dry with his main sidearm.

The oil slick, caltrops, and smoke screen all sound like distinct items, but they all perform the same mechanical function, at least in a chase – they force a Predator to make a saving throw or crash. We can pick up a vehicle defence system Mechanism with a Caliber I pick, and with three uses it nicely accounts for all three items. Stick it in the rear bumper.

Like the countermeasures, the revolving plates are somewhat counter-intuitively simple. You could go with a Caliber IV cover identity, which breaks down into 3 Caliber I versions of the same, but that option's really expensive. All this gadget really does is try to Bluff observers into believing that the silver Aston Martin you're driving isn't the silver Aston Martin they're

looking for, so all you really need is a skill check (Bluff) Mechanism with a minimum Caliber of I, housed in the number plates. Three uses, three plates in addition to the one it starts with.

We can cross off two more with a single device: the bumper and the rear bullet proof screen are both essentially covered by the emergency service package (police) upgrade, which takes up two upgrade slots and costs just one Caliber I Vehicle pick. There is, however, an alternative. Look at the way the chase Conflict works (*see the Spycraft 2.0 Rulebook, page 364*) – specifically, we're interested in the Impact and Defence Advantages, which correspond to the over-rider ram and bullet shield, respectively. The former item is meant to reduce the damage of a collision while the latter makes it less likely for the driver to suffer an attack; similarly, the intended effect of tire-slashers lines up nicely with the Crisis Advantage. The effectiveness of all these options depends on the result of a Drive check, so we can go with the skill boost (Drive) Mechanism. Though a more expensive option than the upgrade, this is potentially more desirable for low-level characters whose GCs enforce result caps, as a happy side effect of the Mechanism boosting your ranks in the skill is that it also raises the cap. Also, with a mere four points granting each additional Advantage beyond the first, even an additional +2 to the result or +5 to the cap could be vital to victory. Unless your chases are astoundingly long, the 10-minute duration ensures the effects apply for the whole Conflict. House this one in the car's chassis and we can move on.

Finally, we have the machine guns, which is simple: install a Caliber I hidden turret Mechanism in the front of the car and use it to contain a Caliber IV Miniaturised Browning 30-06.

So, at an absolute bare minimum, our signature vehicle

contains three Caliber I, two Caliber II, and one Caliber IV Gadget Mechanisms, as well as three Caliber I Vehicle picks. This can be further decreased to two Caliber II and two Caliber IV Gadget Mechanisms, plus one Caliber IV Vehicle pick, due to the previously mentioned exchange rate of one Caliber IV pick for 3 Caliber I picks in any category. While that might look like a lot of big numbers, especially at Level 1, it's easily achievable in the right game.

For instance, in a campaign featuring the *big budget* campaign quality (see the *Spycraft 2.0 Rulebook*, page 406), the Caliber of each pick each character gains increases by 1. With this in hand, a Faction Wheelman with a Charisma of 12 could score his sweet ride at Level 1. All he'd have to do is devote the two points of Wealth he gets from his class and Charisma bonus to Possessions, which would give him a score of 3, or a base of one Caliber III, one Caliber II, and three Caliber I personal gear picks. *Big budget* increases this

EJECTOR SEATS (NEW VEHICLE UPGRADE)

This upgrade applies the *ejection seat (EJS)* quality to any non-animal vehicle that possesses seats. This upgrade may be applied to a vehicle any number of times, up to the number of seats it possesses.

When applying this upgrade during a mission, the following statistics apply.

Cost: 2
Street Value: \$12,000 (ground vehicles), \$15,000 (air vehicles), or \$12,000 (water vehicles)
Time: 2 days/×2 (all vehicles)
Complexity: 20/+1 (all vehicles)

to one Caliber IV, one Caliber III, and three Caliber II picks (enough for all the Gadgets save one Caliber I or II pick), and assuming an (average) Caliber III mission the remaining picks are handled with the Wheelman's Charisma pick from Faction and class-granted Vehicle pick, the latter of which is improved by one Caliber due to the *custom ride* ability (see the *Spycraft 2.0 Rulebook*, page 50).

Increasing your starting Charisma to 14 or higher changes everything (and really, who doesn't think Bond's Charisma is at least 14?). This allows you to pour more Wealth points into Possessions so more and more of those picks can be covered before you hit the briefing table. Things get even easier if there's an Intruder on the team and he's willing to use his *gear prep* ability to make the vehicle a reality. Like *custom ride*, *gear prep* increases the Caliber of a single pick by 1, but unlike *custom ride* it may be applied to a pick from any gear category (see the *Spycraft 2.0 Rulebook*, page 37).

The Intruder also makes an excellent option for a character looking to score the gadget-laden Aston; in fact, it makes a slightly better choice as its class-granted mission gear pick is from the Gadget category, which frees the character up to be freelance if he likes (as Vehicle picks are available to both Faction and freelance characters). This build denies you the *driven* core ability, but scores you *dextrous*, which is almost as good (the Drive skill's key attribute is Dexterity, and double action dice will help when making ranged attacks with that machine gun). Fortunately, the Intruder also shares a number of the Wheelman's class skills; Drive being the most important, of course, but Electronics and Mechanics are helpful for maintenance, and Acrobatics, Athletics, and Tactics come up more often in vehicles than you might think. Plus, you can always multi-class into Wheelman come Level 2, a transition made painless by *Spycraft's* lack of multi-classing penalties.

There you have it! Affordably slick, Bond-esque badassery straight out the door!

'MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE'

The Aston Martin is a reasonable example of a significant gadget package, but for all that it's still a relatively straightforward project to assemble. Let's take a look at the next step in Gadget complexity – the Proteus modification. It's the *Spycraft* mechanic that lets you pull off things like Bond's roadster-come-submarine, Scaramanga's flying car, the signature vehicle from *Viper*, and the amazing conversions from *M.A.S.K.*, *Transformers*, and *Robotech*. Though shape-changing mecha is somewhat outside the scope of the core rules, we can still work with concepts they represent – one vehicle or thing becoming another.

The Proteus Mechanism's Caliber is equal to the highest of the forms, so if you had a Caliber III vehicle that could shift into a Caliber I vehicle, the package would consist of a Caliber III Gadget pick and a Caliber I vehicle pick. The core espionage rules don't allow for shifting between Size categories (so a Huge plane can become a Huge helicopter, but not a Large one), but there's nothing restricting the transformation to just one category.

Let's take a crack at making ourselves a set of Cyclone Veritech Ride Armour, the signature human technology from *Robotech's* Third Generation (otherwise known as *Genesis Climber Mospeada*). For those new to the concept, it's a motorcycle that transforms into powered armour. At its absolute simplest implementation, we're looking at a touring motorcycle (Caliber I Vehicle pick) as the Housing and a set of riot armour (Caliber IV Security pick) as the Proteus modification. However, this doesn't really do full justice to the Cyclone concept, so let's consider a more elaborate take on our gadget.

Picking the Cyclone battlesuit apart, we find the rider dressed in a body-stocking upon which are mounted chest, groin, forearm, and lower-leg armour pieces, along with a full-face helmet, which gives it the look of a Spartan from *Halo*. We can get the same effect with a suit of moderate armour: a Caliber III Security pick for some modular tactical armour and the limb guards, plus an additional upgrade cost of 4 for personal tailoring, weight reduction, and camouflage (although not strictly necessary, these are highly recommended). That translates to a total of one Caliber III and two Caliber I Security picks.

By comparison, the motorcycle is a simple Caliber I Vehicle pick. Though the speed of a racing bike is attractive, you're slightly better off picking up the touring bike instead, since it comes with a free upgrade. Complement the base model with an off-road suspension, camouflage paint scheme, and four extra loads of fuel, and you're looking at an upgrade cost of 3, for a total cost of 3 Caliber I Vehicle picks.

Then there's the helmet, with stays the same regardless of form. A Caliber I Security pick gives us a modern ballistic helmet and a set of tactical glasses to represent the faceplate. Install a miniaturised headset radio (with a Caliber I, III, or IV Gadget pick, though we'll go with the lowest of those for this example), a $\times 1.5\text{--}4$ thermal sight (with a Caliber I Gadget pick), and an emergency (police) services package (an upgrade acquired with a Caliber I Vehicle pick), which gives us a video recorder, limited satellite radio, and limited radar.

The riot armour remains the highest Caliber gear in the package (at IV), so it determines the Caliber of the Proteus modification. All told, the package requires one Caliber IV Gadget pick, one Caliber III Security pick, three Caliber I Security picks, two Caliber I Gadget picks, and one Caliber I Vehicle pick. With pick conversions,

this can drop to one Caliber IV Gadget pick, two Caliber III Security picks, two Caliber I Gadget picks, and one Caliber I Vehicle pick. More difficult to acquire than the Aston, but still possible under the right circumstances.

'WHERE DOES HE GET ALL THOSE WONDERFUL TOYS?'

Most players and situations aren't likely to require wildly capable cars or transforming cycles; most of the time, one or two discreet, single-function gadgets are plenty. For those who just want a few new affordable toys for their war chest, here are a few possibilities.

Auto-Lock Pick, Electronic: This is perhaps the signature item of the modern techno-thriller, a gadget capable of bypassing or disabling complex security devices at the touch of a button.



Housing: Common item, typically a mobile phone or jewellery.

Mechanism: Skill check (Electronics/Disable) (Calibers I-V)
Additional Rules: Using this gadget requires contact with the lock, either by placing the device's Housing against it or using jumper leads, per the GC's discretion. The character suffers no penalty for using this gadget without an Electronics kit.

Auto-Lock Pick, Mechanical: This real-world brute force device quickly hammers through mechanical locks, making it a favourite of law enforcement professionals and high-end criminals.

Housing: None (pistol-grip version) or Common Item (pen version)

Mechanism: Skill check (Security/Disable) (Calibers I-V)
Additional Rules: Using this gadget requires direct contact with the lock. The character suffers no penalty for using this gadget without an Electronics kit.

Bad Apple: Modern chemistry makes it a simple process to lace any edible item with a wide variety of powerful toxins.

Housing: Common item (food)

Mechanism: Acid attack (Calibers I-V)

Additional Rules: The victim suffers the gadget's damage 1d4 minutes after he eats the gadget. Damage inflicted by this gadget is applied directly to the victim's wound points.

Bag, Escape: You know how it goes – you're minding your own business, stealing someone else's secrets when their goons take exception and suddenly there's all manner of sealed exits and gunplay. This innocuous backpack disguises a diverse collection of gadgets gathered for just such an occasion. The bag's material blocks extra-low and extra-high frequency EM radiation,

shielding the wearer from x-ray and heat sensors, and rip cords positioned at the bag's bottom allows the agent to release caltrops to slow down foot pursuers. A grapple gun hidden within a pocket along the top of the bag allows for easy access by simply reaching over one's shoulder, and though the bag's interior appears normal, a Tiny pocket is located in the lining where purloined objects and documents can be hidden (or if the agent is captured, destroyed).

Housing: Common Item (backpack)

Mechanism: Grapple gun (Caliber III miniaturised Security pick), hidden compartment (Caliber I), low-grade incinerator (Caliber II), sensor mask – x-ray and heat (Calibers I or IV), vehicle defence system (Caliber I)
Additional Rules: None

Cloak, Immolation: When you need to send a message in a hurry, there's always that old chestnut: light yourself on fire and run into a crowd. It's amazing just how scary a walking roman candle making pronouncements of inevitable doom can be.

Housing: Common Item (cloak)

Mechanism: Damage resistance (Fire) (Caliber III), skill check (Intimidate/Domination) (Calibers I–IV)
Additional Rules: The wearer can shrug the cloak off with 1 half action, suffering no additional damage in the process.

Coat, Parachute: This device is great for agents afraid of flying or heights generally, as well as those who expect to make precipitous exits from tall structures. As the name indicates, it's a parachute hidden in an unassuming coat, with a rip cord situated in a concealed pocket.

Housing: Common Item (any torso clothing of at least 1/4-in. in thickness)

Mechanism: Tandem parachute (Caliber I miniaturised Vehicle pick)

Additional Rules: None

Coat, Death: Sometimes clothes can be more than a fashion mistake. At the push of a button, this coat's lining unleashes inward-pointing jets of fire, lighting the wearer up like it's Guy Fawkes' Day.

Housing: Common Item (coat)

Mechanism: Incinerator (Calibers II or IV), remote detonator or timer (Caliber II)
Additional Rules: None

Fingerprints, Fake: Biometric security has made life a lot more complicated than it really needs to be. Where once there were only lockpicks, now agents must worry about bypassing fingerprint and retina scanners. This device is the eggheads' response: a thin layer of transparent film worn over an agent's fingertip, concealing his real print with a false one. This gadget and its cousin, the fake retina lens, are often used in conjunction with a prepared cover identity.

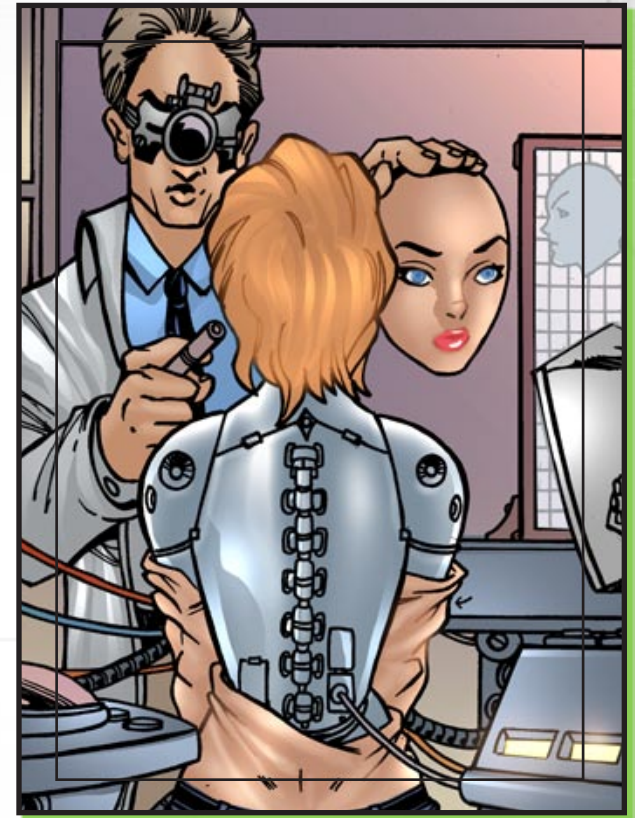
Housing: Common Item (fingerprint film)

Mechanism: Skill check (Bluff/Deception) (Calibers I–IV)
Additional Rules: None

Gloves, Stun: There's nothing quite like being able to deliver a debilitating shock without an obvious weapon on your person. Best of all, stun gloves can be disguised to go with nearly any outfit, taking the form of leather driving gloves, elegant companion pieces to a sleek evening gown, or anything in-between.

Housing: Common Item (gloves) or punch gloves (Caliber I Weapon pick)

Mechanism, variant 1: Melee stun gun (Caliber I miniaturised Weapon pick) or ranged stun gun (Caliber I



miniaturised Vehicle pick)

Additional Rules: Both versions can be installed in the same set of gloves but only one may be used for each attack. Switching between melee and ranged versions requires 1 free action.

Golden Gun: This simple-yet-stylish one-shot/one-kill weapon is notorious for its use by a certain charismatic assassin of the late 1960s. When not being used to murder hapless agents, it can be separated into a cigarette lighter (the gun's chamber), a cigarette case (the grip), a cuff link (the trigger), and a pen (the barrel), all made from gold.

Housing: Caliber I kit (personal grooming appliances)
Mechanism: Proteus modification (Smith & Wesson Ladysmith (Caliber II miniaturised Weapon pick with detailing upgrade)
Additional Rules: None

Hat, Chakram: Another staple of 60's espionage fiction, this headgear has been responsible for countless unexpected decapitations.

Housing: Common Item (bowler)
Mechanism: Laser attack (Calibers I–V), battery life boost (Calibers I–III)
Additional Rules: The hat doesn't emit any energy; the laser damage is merely the best way to achieve the desired effect for this iconic weapon.



Playing Cards, Razor: In Soviet Russia, you don't cut cards, they cut you! Each slice of this lethal deck is stamped on a ceramic plate that's perfectly balanced for throwing.

Housing: Common Item (deck of cards)
Mechanism: Shrunk (Caliber II miniaturised Weapon pick with four reloads, as well as the ceramic and wicked upgrades)
Additional Rules: None

Sword, Ancestral: Beautiful and deadly, this weapon inspires all who witness its exquisite precision.

Housing: Calibers I–IV Weapon (commonly a sword)
Mechanism: Skill boost (Resolve/Morale) (Calibers I or III), custom handle, deadly precision, and detailing upgrades
Additional Rules: Though not a classic gadget in the espionage sense, this item is a great example of how the gadget rules can be used to simulate a variety of other effects in play.

Tattoos, Yakuza: Being a made man sometimes means being a marked one too. The more elaborate the tattoo, the higher your rank – and inherent danger.

Housing: Self (tattoo)
Mechanism: Skill check (Intimidate/Domination) (Calibers I–IV), skill check (Impress/Influence) (Calibers I–V)
Additional Rules: Another example of the gadget system supporting concepts outside super-science.

Watch, Garrotte: This highly useful assassination weapon houses a spool of wire around the inner case, the end usually disguised as a false button or knob. Near future versions may utilize monofilament wire to sever rather than choke.

Housing: Common Item (typically a watch)
Mechanism, variant 1: Garrotte (Caliber I miniaturised Weapon pick) or laser attack (Calibers I–V miniaturised Weapon pick)
Additional Rules: None

Watch, Laser: A perennial favourite, this gadget has saved the life of many an agent. It should be emphasised that this item is usually a *tool*, not a weapon – or so the home office says.

Housing: Common Item (typically a watch)
Mechanism, variant 1: Skill check (Athletics/Smash) (Calibers I–V), skill boost (Security/Disable) (Calibers I or III), battery life boost (Calibers I–III); alternately, laser attack (Calibers I–V), battery life boost (Calibers I–III)
Additional Rules: None

Wardrobe Malfunction: Sometimes sudden, inexplicable humiliation is enough to get the job done. One push of a button and with a harmless flash, the wearer's entire ensemble vanishes, leaving them stark naked. For best effect, use in crowded areas away from podiums.

Housing: Common Item (clothing)
Mechanism: Self-destruct (Calibers II or IV), remote control (Caliber II)
Additional Rules: None

Alias: 'The Abduction' written by J.J. Abrams, Alex Kurtzman-Counter and Roberto Orci.

LEGENDARY SWORDS

Blades of legend, statted up for RuneQuest. By Carl Walmsley

There are certain swords which are so iconic as to almost define the very notion of a magical blade. From Arthur's Excalibur to Beowulf's Hrunting, they are the swords of kings and heroes.

Presented here are histories and characteristics for some of the most famous of mythological swords. For each weapon, details are provided to allow the weapon to be used in a *RuneQuest* setting. If you are running a historically based campaign, some of these swords may be used directly – they may even slip between time or across worlds to come into the possession of your player characters. Alternatively, they may become the inspiration for new weapons, unique to the world in which you are currently adventuring.

Caladbolg

The sword of the Irish hero Fergus mac Roich, Caladbolg was reputed to have the power to slice through anything it struck. According to one legend, it cleaved through the tops of three hills with a single swing.

A mighty great sword measuring almost six feet in length, Caladbolg leaves a trail of rainbow hued light whenever it is swung. The blade is also able to change length as required, enabling the wielder to strike foes that would normally be out of reach.

Caladbolg is an Exquisite Quality sword (+15% skill modifier), with the ability to alter the length of its blade with only a thought from the wielder. This enables a warrior using Caladbolg to strike up to three targets with a single attack, as long as they are all within 3 metres of where he is standing. This attack may Dodged or Parried in the usual way.

Caladbolg's razor sharp edge can slice through armour, greatly reducing its efficacy. All attacks from this weapon ignore 2 AP when determining the amount of damage inflicted on a target.

Excalibur

Perhaps the most famous weapon in western mythology, Excalibur is the legendary sword of King Arthur.

Over the centuries, the tales surrounding the nature and origin of the sword have become increasingly muddled. Where most legends agree is that the sword was presented to Arthur by the wizard Merlin. The king then carried the sword for a number of years, using its

power to unite the disparate tribes of Britain. When Arthur was mortally wounded in battle with his son (or nephew, in some tales), Mordred, he surrendered the sword to one his knights, Sir Bedivere, and it was returned to the Lady of the Lake.

Excalibur was first and foremost a symbol of power and kingship. He who wields the sword commands respect from all who behold him. In addition, certain legends talk of Arthur's enemies being blinded whenever Excalibur was drawn due to a bright light that burned within the blade.

The scabbard of Excalibur was also attributed miraculous powers, said to prevent the wielder's injuries from bleeding.

A weapon of Heroic Quality craftsmanship, Excalibur provides its wielder with a +25% skill modifier. In addition, it carries the Baleful (double damage), Parrying (+1 AP) and Swift (-10% penalty on attempts to Parry Excalibur) weapon effects.

Weapon	Skill	Damage	STR/DEX	ENC	AP/HP
Caladbolg	2H Sword	2D8	13/11	4	5/20
Excalibur	1H Sword	2D8	9/7	2	5/14

The scabbard of Excalibur bestows 2 AP to all areas of the wielder's body. This unique protection may not be circumvented with a precise attack. In addition, because the scabbard prevents its wearer from suffering wounds that bleed, his limbs may not be severed. They may, unfortunately, still be crushed and maimed. If the character suffers a Major Wound, the amount of time he has before dying from shock and internal bleeding is twice as long as normal – in other words, *equal* to the character's CON+POW, rather than *half* this total.

When Excalibur is drawn, it releases a shimmer of light. This may be used to illuminate an area in the same way as a torch or to dazzle enemies. If the latter effect is employed, all adversaries within 5 metres of the sword must pass a Resilience test or suffer a -20% penalty on all sight-based actions for 1D4 combat rounds. This includes Attacks, Dodges, Parries, and so forth.

The wielder of Excalibur receives a +20% bonus on all Oratory and Influence tests due to the air of authority that the sword bestows upon him.

Hrunting

Hrunting was the magical sword given to Beowulf when he was about to go and fight Grendel's mother. The weapon was a gift of sorts from the coward, Unferth – a man lacking the courage needed to wield the sword himself. In the Anglo-Saxon warrior society in which the two men lived, the relinquishing of Hrunting was a shameful act.

Legends describe Hrunting as an iron sword, the blade decorated in swirling patterns and tempered

Weapon	Skill	Damage	STR/DEX	ENC	AP/HP
Hrunting	1H Sword	1D8+1	10/7	4	5/12
Joyeuse	1H Sword	1D8+1	10/7	2	5/15
Kusanagi	1H sword	1D8+2	9/7	2	5/14

in blood. More than this the sword would respond to its wielder's need, increasing in power according to the difficulties he faced. However, when used against Grendel's mother, even the blade of Hrunting was insufficient to pierce her skin. Discovering another sword in the monster's lair, Beowulf was able to use this to defeat her. In the act, this second sword's blade was melted by Grendel's mother's corrosive blood. This has led to speculation that Hrunting may possess an awareness of its own and was acting to protect itself.

Hrunting is a Keen (+1 damage), Surpassing Quality longsword that ignores 1 AP when determining how much damage it inflicts with an attack. However, the skill bonus provided is not automatically +20%, as it would normally be for a Surpassing Quality item. Instead the sword responds to the circumstances in which its wielder finds himself.

At the start of each combat, the Games Master must determine how challenging a fight is likely to be and then award a skill bonus between +5% and +20%. In a simple combat that the character is likely to win easily, Hrunting will provide only a +5% bonus. In a deadly battle where the wielder will struggle to be victorious, the full +20% bonus would be provided.

Joyeuse

The sword of the legendary paladin, Charlemagne, was forged by the master smith, Galas, requiring three years to make. The sword's golden hilt is

reputed to contain the tip of the 'Spear of Longinus' – the weapon that pierced the side of the crucified Christ. In so doing, the lance was dipped in holy blood and received some portion of the Lord's divine power. It was for this reason that the sword was named 'joyous'.

In battle, Joyeuse is a terrifying weapon. Legends talk of it beheading a Saracen warrior with a single stroke. The blade shimmers with holy power, changing the colour of the weapon some thirty times a day.

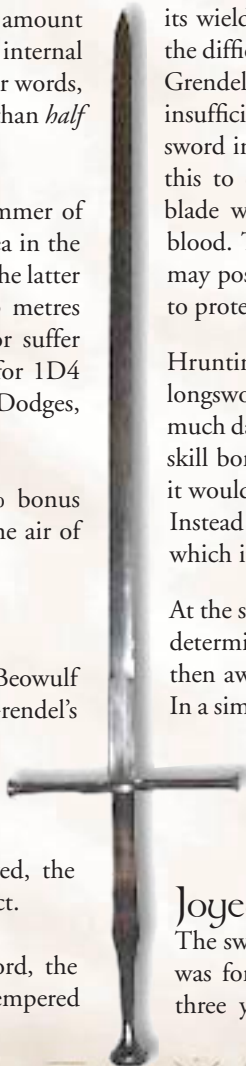
Joyeuse is a Heroic Quality longsword (+25% skill modifier). It benefits from the Keen (+1 damage), Parrying (+1 AP), Penetrating (-10% penalty on Parry tests against Joyeuse) and Swift (-10% penalty on Dodge tests) Weapon Effects.

If the wielder of Joyeuse is a person of pure faith – a righteous holy warrior – the sword grants him immunity to fear (magical or otherwise) and a +20% bonus on any Resilience or Persistence tests he is required to make. In addition, the sword always inflicts maximum weapon damage (any Damage Modifier is rolled as normal).

Due to its holy nature, Joyeuse will not inflict injuries upon the innocent or the righteous. Any character who tries to use it in such a way will find that the sword becomes too heavy to lift.

Kusanagi

Straddling both history and legend, Kusanagi is an enchanted sword from ancient Japan. It was originally



discovered by the God, Susano-O-No-Mikito, inside one of the tails of an eight-headed monster that he had slain.

Many years later the sword came into the possession of a skilful warrior called Yamato-Dake. Lured into a trap, Yamato-Dake would have burned to death within a blazing field had it not been for the sword. Initially he used the razor-sharp blade to cut a fire-break, providing a barrier against the approaching flames. As he did so, he discovered the sword's magical ability to control the wind, producing great gusts each time he swung the blade. Using the sword's power he threw back the flames, driving them towards the lord who had betrayed him, ensnaring him within his own fiery trap.

Kusanagi is a Heroic Quality (+25% Skill Modifier) war sword, imbued with two Keen Weapon Effects (+2 damage).

The sword itself functions as a Rune of Air, and a character may integrate with it as normal.

When making an attack with the blade, the wielder may elect to cast the spell *Extinguish*. This requires no extra actions but does use up 1 of the character's Magic Points. The wielder may select between Magnitude 1 and 3 for the effect of the spell. Note that he still uses only a single Magic Point irrespective of the Magnitude chosen.

If the wielder of Kusanagi does not employ the Extinguish effect, he may elect to produce a fierce gust of wind instead. This takes effect in a 5 metre long, 90 degree arc in front of the character. Items with ENC 5 or less will automatically be blown back by this wind, travelling 1D6 metres directly away from the character.

Creatures caught in the gust must pass a (Brute Force) Athletics test or suffer the same fate. Attempting to resist this effect counts as one Reaction.

Shamshir-e Zomorrodnegar

Spoken of in Persian legend, Shamshir-e Zomorrodnegar (The emerald-studded sword) first belonged to King Solomon himself.

According to legend, the sword was jealously guarded by Fulad-zereh – a monstrous, horn-headed demon. Fulad-zereh's mother had cast a spell upon him, making him immune to the touch of all weapons except Shamshir-e Zomorrodnegar. Accordingly he went to great lengths to keep the sword safe and hidden.

It was said that wearing the sword provided great protection against harmful magic. In addition, wounds inflicted by the blade could only be healed through the administering of a special potion made from rare ingredients that included the brain of the demon, Fulad-zereh.

A Marvellous Quality scimitar, Shamshir-e Zomorrodnegar bestows a +15% Skill Modifier when wielded in combat. It also benefits from the Keen (+1 damage) and Swift (-10% penalty on attempts to Dodge attacks made with this weapon) Weapon effects.

Wounds inflicted by this sword will not heal naturally. If magical healing is employed, there is only a 25% chance that it will take effect. The only guaranteed

way to heal wounds caused by this sword is to drink a rare magical potion, the principal ingredient of which is a piece of brain from the demon, Fulad-zereh. Once imbibed, injuries inflicted by Shamshir-e Zomorrodnegar will heal instantly.

When carrying Shamshir-e Zomorrodnegar, a character benefits from its protection against baleful magic. Any tests normally allowed to resist the effects of a spell may be re-rolled if failed. The character may select whichever of the rolls he chooses when determining the effects of the spell.

Tyrfing

Featuring in a series of Norse legends, Tyrfing was a powerful magical sword named for the God Tyr, whose domains included swordsmanship. Fing was an ancient word for *fang*: hence Tyr's fang – the sword of the ultimate swordsman.

In the early tales of Tyrfing, it was Svafrlami – Odin's grandson and king of the Garariki – who carried the blade. The sword was made for him by Dvalin and Durin when, according to the legend, the king trapped the two dwarves after they ventured out of the rock where they lived. At Svafrlami's command, the dwarves forged a golden-hilted sword that would never miss a stroke, never rust and could cleave through iron and stone as easily as if it were parchment. The fashioned blade shimmered with the flames of the furnace in which it had been tempered and the king was most pleased with the weapon that had been crafted for him.

Weapon	Skill	Damage	STR/DEX	ENC	AP/HP
Shamshir-e Zomorrodnegar	1H Sword	1D6+2	7/11	2	5/15
Tyrfing	1H Sword	2D8	11/8	3	6/16

However, Dvalin and Durin had secretly placed a curse upon the blade, in revenge for their treatment at the hands of the king. Every time the sword was drawn it was compelled to kill a man. It was also destined to be the cause of three great evils. Finally, the curse was designed so that the sword would one day lead to the death of Svarflami himself.

When Svarflami learned of the dwarves curse, he tried to kill Dvalin but the dwarf fled back into his rock. In frustration, the king drove Tyrfting deep into the rock, but failed to slay his target.

King Svarflami was eventually killed in battle with the berserker, Arngrim. The berserker took the sword as his prize and presented it to his son, Angantyr. The curse of Tyrfting had not ended, however and, in turn, it led to the death of Angantyr, his eleven brothers and to several other warriors who inherited the blade.

There is a powerful enchantment upon Tyrfting which means that its aim will always be true. If its wielder makes a skill test that would normally result in a miss, it is instead treated as a successful attack. Note that Tyrfting may still be Dodged or Parried, but that attempts to do so suffer a -10% penalty.

Tyrfting need not be sharpened or cleaned: the enchantment placed upon the blade when it was forged means that its edge will never rust or dull.

So sharp is the blade of Tyrfting that it ignores 5 AP when determining the damage inflicted with a blow. It also benefits from the Baleful Weapon Effect, doubling the damage a longsword would normally cause.

Powerful as the sorceries upon the blade might be, there are none more potent than the curse woven into

Weapon	Skill	Damage	STR/DEX	ENC	AP/HP
The Will of Heaven	1H Sword	1D8	9/7	2	5/14

the magic by the angry dwarves when they were forced to create the weapon against their will. Whenever Tyrfting is drawn, it may not be re-sheathed until it has taken the life of a sentient being. If the un-scabbarded weapon does not taste blood within one hour, it will compel its owner to take the life of the next person he sees. Only through sheer force of will (a Difficult (-20%) Persistence Test) may allow this compulsion be resisted from round to round once this time has elapsed.

Each time that Tyrfting is wielded in combat, there is a 1% chance that the second aspect of the curse will activate. This chance increases by a further 1% in each subsequent combat until the curse takes effect.

Once this occurs, Tyrfting will turn mercilessly upon its owner. He will find it impossible to successfully strike an opponent with the weapon, regardless of his skill with a blade. Only if he passes a Nearly Impossible (-80%) Persistence test will he be able to relinquish Tyrfting and take up another weapon or retreat from combat. This test may be taken once each combat round.

The Will of Heaven

Le Loi was a Vietnamese king, famed for driving back the invading Chinese army. In his efforts to free his people, he carried a mystical blade



that came into his possession in two steps. The jade hilt of the sword, Le Loi found in a banyan tree; the blade itself was recovered from a lake and later stumbled upon by the young hero. The two pieces fitted together perfectly, forming a mighty weapon engraved with the words The Will of Heaven (or Heaven's Will).

According to some tales, the sword enabled Le Loi to grow immensely tall and was said to give him the strength of many men. More than this, the sword is associated with Le Loi's rightful sovereignty of Vietnam.

The Will of Heaven is a Marvellous Quality weapon (+15% Skill Modifier). At will, the weapon enables its wielder to instantaneously increase his SIZ and STR by between 1 and 10 points. This increase in SIZ and STR leads to a corresponding increase in Hit Points and Damage Modifier. Thanks to the magic of the sword, any clothing and armour worn by the character increases in size to accommodate his new stature.

Opponents looking to hit the enlarged sword-wielder receive a +1% Skill Modifier for each point of increase in SIZ and STR.

The wielder of this sword also benefits from an air of authority. This confers a +10% bonus on Influence tests.



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WARS: Kizen, Part 3

Part 13 (the final part!) of the unreleased supplement, *Soul and Steel*. Written by Greg Lynch

Quantum Creation

'Do you actually mean to tell me we came all the way here for nothing? We flew across millions of kilometres, got chased by everyone from the Quay to iCom, fought our way through all those warbots you swore weren't operational, nearly died when our hull breached, spent a week lost in these damn caves and now that we're here you're telling me we can't go on because you forgot to bring the case we need to hold that stupid thing? I swear men simply can not pack. And I swear there's no way I'm going through all that again. Give me a minute and I'll make something you can put this new toy of yours into. How much did you say we were getting for this again?'

– Janis 'Toolkit' Guerra, Quantum Creator

The First Law of Kizen states that no kizen power can create something from nothing – as mysterious and magical as these powers appear, they cannot directly contravene the laws of physics. Until the nature of the kizen and the zero point energy spewing from the Mumon Rift was better understood, however, it seemed that the creation of something from nothing was exactly when the Quantum Creation tree was doing.

A short but exceptionally useful kizen tree, Quantum Creation allows the kizen to create items out of what seems to be thin air. In fact, the kizen is merely harnessing the quantum foam flooding the Solar

System, using its energy to form solid shapes. The items created by Quantum Creation are ephemeral – once the manifestation of power that created them ends, they dissolve back into the seeming nothingness from which they came.

While in existence, the items created by the Quantum Creation tree function as any similar item made of normal matter would – a club formed of quantum foam is just as dangerous as an actual wooden club, for example. However, Quantum Creation can only be used to create simple items – a box with a hinged lid is about as complex as this tree can manage. Items with multiple moving parts, or those which require a chemical or energetic catalyst to function, such as guns, cannot be created with this tree, or with any other.

Though the kizen can freely create and dismiss items with the Quantum Creation tree, the powers listed here give him no direct control over them. For example, the kizen might create a knife out of quantum energy, but the only way he can hurl it at an enemy is if he picks it up and throws it by hand. In order to remotely control any item created with this tree, the kizen must use the Telekinesis tree (see the *WARS Roleplaying Game* core rulebook).

For reasons that as yet remain unclear, items created with the Quantum Creation tree are immune to the effects of the Matter Density Control tree.

Sense Quantum Energy

Type: Energy (active)

Favoured: Gongen, Shi

Tree: Quantum Creation

Prerequisite Power: None

Level: 1

Range: Personal

Saving Throw: None

Dominant Attribute: Wisdom

Point Cost: 1

Action: Standard

This power allows the kizen to see, touch and begin to manipulate the quantum energy of the Mumon Rift. It also allows him to perform a sort of crude psychometry upon the energy; with a successful Wisdom ability check (DC 15), he can determine if anyone has used the energy in the area for the Quantum Creation tree within the past week. A secondary Wisdom ability check (DC 20) will tell him exactly how long ago this was done and exactly what was created with the foam.

Manifest Item I

Type: Energy (active)

Favoured: Gongen, Shi

Tree: Quantum Creation

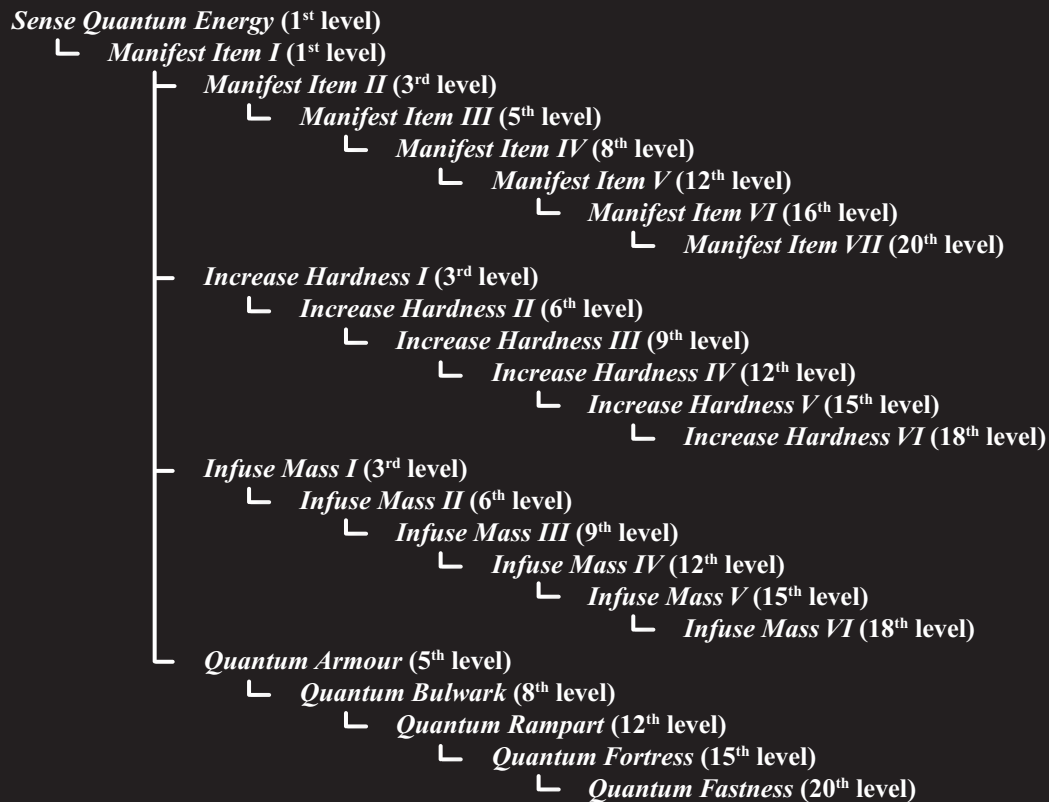
Prerequisite Power: *Sense quantum energy*

Level: 1

Range: Personal

Saving Throw: None

Quantum Creation Tree



Dominant Attribute: Constitution
Point Cost: 2
Action: Standard

This power allows the kizen to create a single solid item out of the quantum energy surrounding him. This item must be Diminutive or smaller in size. The item has a hardness of 1 and one hit point. The item

can be almost anything the kizen can imagine, from a knife to replace the one taken away by the bouncer at the front door of the bar to a wall sealing off a small access port.

Items created with the *manifest item* powers have no apparent mass, a fact that has caused a great deal of consternation among those who study kizen, as these

items are undeniably solid. A weapon that has no mass is less effective than its normal, mundane version. Any 'weightless' weapon used in melee does damage with the next smaller die that its normal counterpart (a weightless combat knife does 1d4, a weightless katana does 1d8 and so forth). A weightless thrown weapon does no damage at all.

Items created by the *manifest item* powers may be transparent, translucent or opaque white, depending upon the kizen's whim when he *manifests* the item. The 'default' is translucent, giving the item the appearance of being made out of pale smoke. These items have no colouration.

This power lasts for the kizen's Constitution bonus plus one minutes and can be sustained.

Manifest Item II

Type: Energy (active)
Favoured: Gongen, Shi
Tree: Quantum Creation
Prerequisite Power: *Manifest item I*
Level: 3
Range: Personal
Saving Throw: None
Dominant Attribute: Constitution
Point Cost: 4
Action: Standard

This power is identical to *manifest item I*, except the kizen can create an item of Tiny or smaller size. The item has a hardness of 2 and two hit points.

Manifest Item III

Type: Energy (active)
Favoured: Gongen, Shi
Tree: Quantum Creation

Prerequisite Power: *Manifest item II*

Level: 5

Range: Personal

Saving Throw: None

Dominant Attribute: Constitution

Point Cost: 6

Action: Standard

This power is identical to *manifest item I*, except the kizen can create an item of Small or smaller size. The item has a hardness of 3 and three hit points.

Manifest Item IV

Type: Energy (active)

Favoured: Gongen, Shi

Tree: Quantum Creation

Prerequisite Power: *Manifest item III*

Level: 8

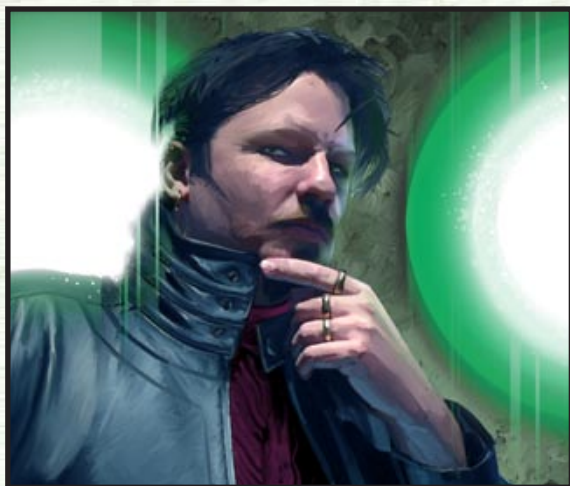
Range: Personal

Saving Throw: None

Dominant Attribute: Constitution

Point Cost: 10

Action: Standard



This power is identical to *manifest item I*, except the kizen can create an item of Medium or smaller size. The item has a hardness of 4 and four hit points.

Manifest Item V

Type: Energy (active)

Favoured: Gongen, Shi

Tree: Quantum Creation

Prerequisite Power: *Manifest item IV*

Level: 12

Range: Personal

Saving Throw: None

Dominant Attribute: Constitution

Point Cost: 15

Action: Standard

This power is identical to *manifest item I*, except the kizen can create an item of Large or smaller size. The item has a hardness of 5 and five hit points.

Manifest Item VI

Type: Energy (active)

Favoured: Gongen, Shi

Tree: Quantum Creation

Prerequisite Power: *Manifest item V*, Kizen Initiate

Level: 16

Range: Personal

Saving Throw: None

Dominant Attribute: Constitution

Point Cost: 20

Action: Standard

This power is identical to *manifest item I*, except the kizen can create an item of Huge or smaller size. The item has a hardness of 6 and six hit points.

Manifest Item VII

Type: Energy (active)

Favoured: Gongen, Shi

Tree: Quantum Creation

Prerequisite Power: *Manifest item VI*

Level: 20

Range: Personal

Saving Throw: None

Dominant Attribute: Constitution

Point Cost: 25

Action: Standard

This power is identical to *manifest item I*, except the kizen can create an item of Gargantuan or smaller size. The item has a hardness of 7 and seven hit points.

Increase Hardness I

Type: Energy (active)

Favoured: Gongen, Shi

Tree: Quantum Creation

Prerequisite Power: *Manifest item I*

Level: 3

Range: Touch

Saving Throw: None

Dominant Attribute: Constitution

Point Cost: 4

Action: Standard

This power enables the kizen to increase the hardness and hit points of any item he has created with the *manifest item* powers. *Increased hardness I* will double the hardness and hit points of any object so created. This power may be sustained.

Increase Hardness II

Type: Energy (active)

Favoured: Gongen, Shi

Tree: Quantum Creation

Prerequisite Power: *Increase hardness I*

Level: 6

Range: Touch

Saving Throw: None
Dominant Attribute: Constitution
Point Cost: 7
Action: Standard

This power is identical to *increase hardness I*, except the hardness and hit points of the created object are multiplied by three.

Increase Hardness III

Type: Energy (active)
Favoured: Gongen, Shi
Tree: Quantum Creation
Prerequisite Power: *Increase hardness II*
Level: 9
Range: Touch
Saving Throw: None
Dominant Attribute: Constitution
Point Cost: 10
Action: Standard

This power is identical to *increase hardness I*, except the hardness and hit points of the created object are multiplied by four.

Increase Hardness IV

Type: Energy (active)
Favoured: Gongen, Shi
Tree: Quantum Creation
Prerequisite Power: *Increase hardness III*
Level: 12
Range: Touch
Saving Throw: None
Dominant Attribute: Constitution
Point Cost: 15
Action: Standard

This power is identical to *increase hardness I*, except the hardness and hit points of the created object are multiplied by five.

Increase Hardness V

Type: Energy (active)
Favoured: Gongen, Shi
Tree: Quantum Creation
Prerequisite Power: *Increase hardness IV*, Kizen Novice
Level: 15
Range: Touch
Saving Throw: None
Dominant Attribute: Constitution
Point Cost: 18
Action: Standard

This power is identical to *increase hardness I*, except the hardness and hit points of the created object are multiplied by six.

Increase Hardness VI

Type: Energy (active)
Favoured: Gongen, Shi
Tree: Quantum Creation
Prerequisite Power: *Increase hardness V*, Kizen Initiate
Level: 18
Range: Touch
Saving Throw: None
Dominant Attribute: Constitution
Point Cost: 22
Action: Standard

This power is identical to *increase hardness I*, except the hardness and hit points of the created object are multiplied by seven.

Infuse Mass I

Type: Energy (active)
Favoured: Earther, Shi
Tree: Quantum Creation
Prerequisite Power: *Manifest item I*
Level: 3
Range: Touch
Saving Throw: None
Dominant Attribute: Constitution
Point Cost: 4 for one kilogram, +3 for each additional kilogram (five kilograms maximum)
Action: Standard

With this ability, the kizen can cause any item he creates with any of the *manifest item* powers to take on mass and weight. The item will retain this weight for as long as it remains in existence, though the kizen may add to it (up to the maximum of the infuse mass power) as a free action. The kizen may also drop some or all of the item's mass as a free action without further expenditure of kizen points. If the kizen wishes to add only half a kilogram (to more accurately create



a weapon's weight, for example) he may do so, but must still spend the full amount of kizen points for an entire kilogram.

Infuse Mass II

Type: Energy (active)
Favoured: Earther, Shi
Tree: Quantum Creation
Prerequisite Power: *Infuse mass I*
Level: 6
Range: Touch
Saving Throw: None
Dominant Attribute: Constitution
Point Cost: 7 for five kilograms, +3 for each additional kilogram (ten kilograms maximum)
Action: Standard

This power works exactly like *infuse mass I*, except for the higher threshold of mass that may be applied to the created item.

Infuse Mass III

Type: Energy (active)
Favoured: Earther, Shi
Tree: Quantum Creation
Prerequisite Power: *Infuse mass II*
Level: 9
Range: Touch
Saving Throw: None
Dominant Attribute: Constitution
Point Cost: 10 for ten kilograms, +3 for each additional kilogram (20 kilograms maximum)
Action: Standard

This power works exactly like *infuse mass I*, except for the higher threshold of mass that may be applied to the created item.

Infuse Mass IV

Type: Energy (active)
Favoured: Earther, Shi
Tree: Quantum Creation
Prerequisite Power: *Infuse mass III*
Level: 12
Range: Touch
Saving Throw: None
Dominant Attribute: Constitution
Point Cost: 13 for 20 kilograms, +3 for each additional two kilograms (50 kilograms maximum)
Action: Standard

This power works exactly like *infuse mass I*, except for the higher threshold of mass that may be applied to the created item.



Infuse Mass V

Type: Energy (active)
Favoured: Earther, Shi
Tree: Quantum Creation
Prerequisite Power: *Infuse mass IV*, Kizen Novice

Level: 15
Range: Touch
Saving Throw: None
Dominant Attribute: Constitution
Point Cost: 13 for 100 kilograms, +2 for each additional five kilograms (500 kilograms maximum)
Action: Standard

This power works exactly like *infuse mass I*, except for the higher threshold of mass that may be applied to the created item.

Infuse Mass VI

Type: Energy (active)
Favoured: Earther, Shi
Tree: Quantum Creation
Prerequisite Power: *Infuse mass V*, Kizen Acolyte
Level: 18
Range: Touch
Saving Throw: None
Dominant Attribute: Constitution
Point Cost: 20 for 200 kilograms, +1 for each additional ten kilograms (1,000 kilograms maximum)
Action: Standard

This power works exactly like *infuse mass I*, except for the higher threshold of mass that may be applied to the created item.

Quantum Armour

Type: Energy (active)
Favoured: Gongen, Shi
Tree: Quantum Creation
Prerequisite Power: *Infuse mass V*
Level: 5
Range: Touch
Saving Throw: None

Dominant Attribute: Constitution
Point Cost: 7
Action: Standard

By using this ability, the kizen creates a sheath of quantum energy around himself or another person that moves with the target and functions effectively as armour. The armour grants the wearer Damage Reduction energy 2/impact 2.

Like all items brought into being by the Quantum Creation tree, the armour is weightless (though the kizen may add weight to it through the *infuse mass* powers if he wishes to). As long as it is weightless, it does not add to the wearer's load or encumber him in any way.

Many kizen prefer to use this power as an additional protection on top of their own, regular armour, while others prefer to go about with no armour at all, simply summoning this quantum armour from the rift energy whenever they happen to need such protection. If the *quantum armour* is used on top of existing armour, all normal rules for layering armour apply (see the WARS Roleplaying Game core rulebook). No more than one set of *quantum armour* may exist on any single individual at any time.

This power may be sustained.

Quantum Bulwark

Type: Energy (active)
Favoured: Gongen, Shi
Tree: Quantum Creation
Prerequisite Power: *Quantum armour*
Level: 8
Range: Touch
Saving Throw: None
Dominant Attribute: Constitution

Point Cost: 10
Action: Standard

This power is identical to *quantum armour*, except the Damage Reduction of the armour is increased to energy 5/impact 5.

Quantum Rampart

Type: Energy (active)
Favoured: Gongen, Shi
Tree: Quantum Creation
Prerequisite Power: *Quantum bulwark*
Level: 12
Range: Touch
Saving Throw: None
Dominant Attribute: Constitution
Point Cost: 15
Action: Standard

This power is identical to *quantum armour*, except the Damage Reduction of the armour is increased to energy 10/impact 10.

Quantum Fortress

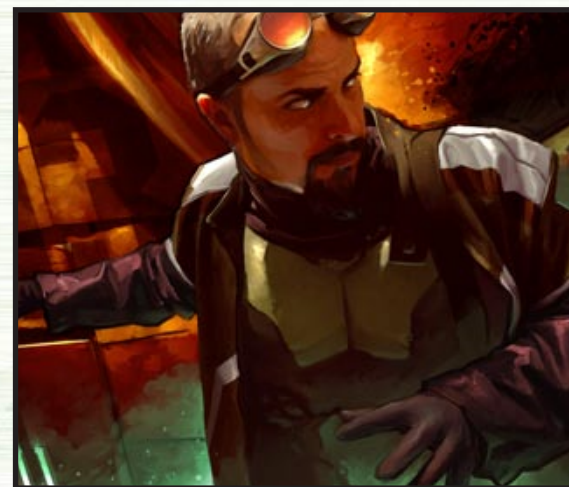
Type: Energy (active)
Favoured: Gongen, Shi
Tree: Quantum Creation
Prerequisite Power: *Quantum rampart*, Kizen Initiate
Level: 15
Range: Touch
Saving Throw: None
Dominant Attribute: Constitution
Point Cost: 18
Action: Standard

This power is identical to *quantum armour*, except the Damage Reduction of the armour is increased to energy 15/impact 15.

Quantum Fastness

Type: Energy (active)
Favoured: Gongen, Shi
Tree: Quantum Creation
Prerequisite Power: *Quantum fortress*, Kizen Master
Level: 20
Range: Touch
Saving Throw: None
Dominant Attribute: Constitution
Point Cost: 25
Action: Standard

This power is identical to *quantum armour*, except the Damage Reduction of the armour is increased to energy 20/impact 20.



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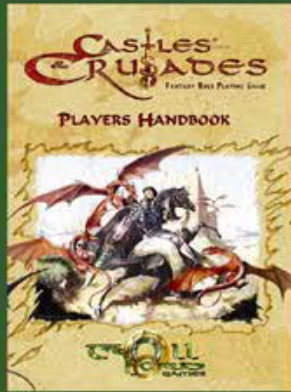


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REINVENTING THE RPG THRU BARE KNUCKLES ROLE PLAYING



THE VORALANS

Aldryami Addendum #3: Black Elfs. By Shannon Appelcline.

This article is *Signs & Portents'* third Aldryami Addenda, a series of articles complementing the material found in *Elfs: A Guide to the Aldryami*. This one describes the Voralans, a race widely known as the black elfs despite the fact that they are not true Aldryami.

Lograch on the Voralans

'Do not ask us of the Voralans, for they are not of us. They are born in death, they live in death, they die in death. They are children of the Taker.'

— Ferifil Treebridger, Aldryami diplomat

I am Lograch the Chronicler, and since you have chosen to read this short drab, I may hope that you are familiar with my master work, a treatise on the Aldryami race. Upon reading it some of my associates have expressed some confusion over the absence of the so-called black elf race, and thus I have penned this new missive as a complement to my original writings, with the intent to allay concerns and generally to set to rest once and for all this misapprehension.

First, let me state succinctly that the black elfs, known more properly as the Voralans, are not an Aldryami

race. There are definite similarities, as they are both plant-like beings, but if the Aldryami myths and legends are to be believed, the Voralans are born of the dead world, while the true Aldryami come from the world of the living.

More specifically, just as the Aldryami are mobile plants, the Voralans are mobile fungus. They are kin to the many species of leprous vegetation, including mushrooms, lichen, truffles, and various jellies and rusts. Just as there are thousands of types of Aldryami, each tied to a particular type of plant, such is the case for the Voralans as well.

As mobile fungus, the Voralans hold to the same imperatives as the lichens that gave rise to them. They are the ultimate embodiment of what the Aldryami call the Cycle, for it is the Voralans and their fungus kin which eat away at the dead to make way for new life.

Aldryami myths on the Voralans are scattered, but the most common tales tell of the 'lost seeds.' These were great seeds from Falamal himself which were caught up in the earliest winds and thus did not fall to Glorantha during the Green Age. Instead they fell over the edge of the world and came eventually to rest in Trigoras's Embrace, which is to say the Underworld.

Thus a new species of plant being was born, but this

species was wrong in every way. Where the Aldryami used death to bring new life, instead the Voralans used life to bring death. Where the Aldryami were protectors and nurturers, the Voralans were eaters and parasites. Where the Aldryami communed as individuals in a group mind through life sense, the Voralans became a group mind in individual bodies through death sense. As a result of the differences, most Aldryami claim that the Voralans changed so much in the Underworld that they became something entirely different and thus can claim no descent from Falamal.

It was the Uz who discovered the Voralans and brought them back to the surface world; at times the Aldryami tried to help the fungus beings to grow right—to find their path back to the Grower. More commonly, however, they simply disavow any connection with them, except for a few Aldryami who allow Voralans to live within their forests and do their bidding.

Voralan Biology

Biologically, Voralans share many similarities with Aldryami, explaining the common desire to classify them as one. Though my researchers' encounters with Voralans were scant, they were able to conduct some experiments, and it was their general consensus that Voralans are only somewhat more different from the Aldryami norm than Slorifings are.

'Black Elfs are creepy. They're always sizing you up like you're their next meal or something, staring at you with their unblinking eyes, not talking, just thinking.'

—Gurek Runespear, Mercenary of Safelster

Voralans are largely composed of undifferentiated fungus mass. Unlike the Aldryami they have no unique organs—or even bones. Instead their core fungus composition seems to provide all their biological needs.

The favored sustenance of the Voralans is dead beings—be they plant or animal. According to their mythology, everything is food. Some few tribes of Voralans are said to eat live beings instead. These tribes are called 'parasites' by other Voralans and they are given great respect for their strange strength.

The most stunning difference between the Voralans and Aldryami—and between the Voralans and most other life—is their strong telepathic sense. While I have already written of the Aldryami's ability to commune with their forests, the Voralans take this ability to an entirely new level. Very literally, they act as one being with many bodies. This telepathic sense can be maintained as long as a Voralan is within a half-mile or so of his fellows. My researches indicate that if cut off from their tribe, most Voralans become catatonic. I estimate that less than 1 in 100 is able to think on its own.

Much like the blue elf Alim, the Voralans self-reproduce. They are either entirely unaging or else

their reproduction produces such similar duplicates as to allow no differentiation. In either case black elves claim that some of the first Voralans, who sprouted long ago in the Underworld, still live.

Voralans hate sunlight, fresh water, and fertile soil. Even more than the Aldryami, their life seems to center on gardening their charges and kin: the fungi.

Voralan Characteristics

Voralans do not make good player characters. Like the exotic blue elves and dryads described in *Elfs: A Guide to the Aldryami* they are too tied to their individual environments to allow for much adventuring. In particular the Voralans group mindset makes an independent thinking black elf all but an impossibility.



The following rules are thus largely intended for creating Voralan NPCs, though if a player insisted, a Games Master might decide to use them as the basis of a player character as well.

Like many other elf races, the Voralans are intelligent and dextrous. However, they are also somewhat small and weak.

Strength (STR): Roll 2D6, drop the lowest die and total the remaining dice. Add 3 to the result.

Constitution (CON): Roll 3D6, drop the lowest die and total the remaining dice.

Dexterity (DEX): Roll 3D6, drop the lowest die and total the remaining dice. Add 6 to the result.

Size (SIZ): Roll 2D6, drop the lowest die and total the remaining dice. Add 3 to the result.

Intelligence (INT): Roll 3D6, drop the lowest die and total the remaining dice. Add 6 to the result.

Power (POW): Roll 3D6, drop the lowest die and total the remaining dice. Add 6 to the result.

Charisma (CHA): Roll 3D6, drop the lowest die and total the remaining dice.

Voralan Advanced Skills

The following skill is available to all Voralans:

Death Sense (INT+POW)

This is the Voralan's equivalent of Life Sense. The name itself is a misnomer perpetuated by a God Learner who studied the Voralans and liked the contrast that the name provided to the Aldryami's 'Life Sense.'

More precisely, Death Sense is a powerful telepathic connection that Voralans maintain with all other fungoid life forms. It thus differs from the Aldryami Life Sense in two ways. First, as noted, it relates to fungoid life forms not plants. Second, it is much more intimate and powerful than Life Sense. When Voralans are connected by Death Sense there is literally no differentiation between them. They act communally through the group mind as much as possible. This telepathy is particularly strong between 'siblings', which consist of an entire family tree of Voralans, all identical due to their hermaphroditic reproduction.

Following is a list of Death Sense contests:

Situation	Skill Used	Difficulty
Gaining the sense of the local fungus	Death Sense	Automatic
Gaining the sense of the local fungus, quickly	Death Sense	+0%
Communicating with the local fungus	Death Sense	+0%
Gaining the sense of a sibling in a fungus forest; Communicating with a sibling in a fungus forest; Locating a sibling in a fungus forest	Death Sense	Automatic
Gaining the sense of a nearby individual	Death Sense	+0%
Gaining the sense of a known individual in a fungus forest	Death Sense	-40%
Gaining the sense of an unknown individual in a fungus forest	Death Sense	-80%
Communicating with a nearby individual	Death Sense	+0%
Communicating with a faraway individual in a fungus forest	Death Sense	-40%
Locating a known individual in a fungus forest	Death Sense	-60%
Locating an unknown individual in a fungus forest	Death Sense	-100%

A Voralan may only use Death Sense to communicate with a group of Voralans and fungus that are all within a half-mile of at least one other member of the group.



Voralan Special Rules

The following rules describe common special abilities for all Voralans.

Fungoids

Voralans are mobile fungus. Their body is composed of undifferentiated fungoid material that is pulpy and moist to the touch. However, because they are mobile and they are vaguely humanoid, they are affected by spells that affect both plants and humanoids.

The Voralans mainly derive sustenance as symbiotes, pathogens, or parasites. They can draw sustenance from another creature over an extended period of time. They are also quite adept at drawing sustenance from the corpse of a dead plant or animal. Provided that they live in a natural environment they will have no physical needs, though living via this method requires that a Voralan spend most of its time rooted. Even when moving a Voralan still only needs one-tenth as much food as a human, provided that a living environment is available to him.

Voralans usually live in caves or in deep forests. They are Demoralised in direct sunlight (as the spell).

Night Sight

Voralans can treat partial darkness as illuminated and darkness as partial darkness.

Voralan Backgrounds

The Voralan background is solely based on their racial type; there is very little differentiation among Voralans in different areas because their communities are usually not large enough to form distinct culture. Per *Elfs*, the Voralans should be considered a rare background. They are not very appropriate for player character use.

Voralan Backgrounds

Background	Basic Skill Bonuses	Advanced Skills	Starting Money
Voralan 'Black Elf'	Athletics +10% Lore (Plant) +10% Pick Two +15% First Aid, Perception, Persistence, Resilience, Stealth Pick Two +10% Dodge, Hesh, Sling	Death Sense Language (Voralan) +50% Lore (Regional) Survival Pick One Language (Aldryami) or Language (Uz)	1D6 silver

Voralan Professions

Profession	Cultural Background	Basic Skill Bonuses	Advanced Skills
Fungus Grower	Voralan	First Aid +10%, Lore (Plant) +10%	Craft (Rock), Lore (Botany), Lore (Poisons)
Fungus Warder	Voralan	Athletics +5%, Stealth +5% Pick Two +10% Hesh, Influence, Sling, Unarmed	Lore (Poisons), Tracking

Voralan Professions

Suggested Professions: Alchemist, Healer (RQC), Priest, Scholar

Restricted Professions: Bard, Blacksmith, Herdsman, Knight (RQC), Lord, Mercenary, Militiaman, Peddler (RQC), Scribe (RQC), Shaman, Soldier, Town Guard, Woodsman

The above list of professions lists suggested and restricted professions from the main *RuneQuest* rulebooks. In addition, two new Voralan professions are included below; they are close cousins to the 'gardener' and 'warder' professions found in *Elfs*.

Fungus Grower: A Voralan gardener. This is the most common Voralan profession, and includes not just the growth and care of fungus, but also the molding of fungus into various potions and poisons.

Fungus Warder: A Voralan protector. This is a rare Voralan who is more able to interact with the outside world, be it by social or military means—though the latter is rare in a Voralan colony. Voralan warders are usually forbidden from having offspring so that they may maintain some limited sense of self and ability to think on their own.

Voralan Equipment

In general, Voralans have very little in the way of material possession. They tend to possess the tools needed for their trade and little more. Some objects they grow from fungus, much like Aldryami grow items from plants, but much more frequently Voralans trade for tools with nearby cultures. This allows them to orient their gardening to their core expertise: making potions and poisons.

Voralan Weaponry

Hesh: A peculiar Voralan weapon, the hesh is a disc-like fungus which is large and moist. It can be saturated with various fungus concoctions, many of which are described below. When it is slapped against the flesh of another creature, the fungus fluids then seep onto the target, with varying results. Each hesh can deliver 2d6+6 hits before it must be resaturated.

Sling: These are normal slings which may be used to hurl rocks or else fungus concoctions contained in small, breakable spheres called bebbles. If a fungus concoction is flung, there is 5% chance it does not break.

Fungus Concoctions

The fungus that Voralans grow has many varied and miraculous powers. What follows are some of the more common fungus concoctions that are used by Voralans in their heshes and slings. The most knowledgeable Voralan farmers can sometimes craft fungus to have even stranger and more magical results.

Death 'room Touch Not

An acidic concoction made from a foul black mushroom that eats its way into the soil around it. It does 1D6 damage, which is first applied to armour, where every

Voralan Close Combat Weapons

Weapon	Skill	Damage	STR/DEX	ENC	AP/HP	Cost
Hesh	Hesh	Special	-/-	.5	0/1	-

3 points of damage eats away a point of armour; only after the armour is gone does the damage apply to a target itself. If a death-roomed hesh is parried, it similarly eats away at the weapon's AP then HP.

Fungus Slow Down

A circulatory poison.

Type: Hesh poison

Delay: Immediate

Potency: 39

Full Effect: Applies a -4 penalty to victim's STR, DEX, and INT.

Duration: 1D10 minutes

Green Sabatth Poison

A fungoid poison that causes hallucinations.

Type: Hesh poison

Delay: Immediate

Potency: 58

Full Effect: Target sees hallucinations. Each round he must succeed at a POWx3 contest in order to take any actions

Duration: 1D6 combat rounds

Moscoso Changer

A strange, acrid-smelling brew. It does 1D6 points of damage to the location hit, ignoring armour, but those hit points are converted to magical power, immediately adding 1D6 Magic Points to the target's total; these Magic Points will disappear if not used within the next 2D6 hours.

Mushroom Venom

A painful contact poison.

Type: Hesh poison

Delay: Immediate

Potency: 62

Full Effect: 1d6 hit point damage to location struck

Duration: 4D10 minutes

White Truffle Lick

A rare fungus concoction that has healing properties. It heals 1d6 points of damage to the location that it is applied to. Voralan healers will sometimes walk behind warriors, slapping their white-truffled heshes against wounded locations. They might even sling bebbles at distant fellows.

White Zzyrot Boon

Another beneficial concoction. It gives its target +4 to CON and +4 to DEX.

Cults of Glorantha:

Mee Voralá

Overview

Mee Voralá is the maternal deity of the Voralan people. Though most Aldryami steadfastly deny any connection to the Voralans and their strange fungus, nonetheless Voralá shares many similarities to Aldrya, Murthdrya, and Slor, the maternal deities of the true elf peoples.

Mythology

Mee Voralá was the first plant that grew in the Underworld and thus the first fungus. Some say that she came from a corrupted seed of Falamal, others that she spontaneously erupted from the unwholesome elements of the Underworld, and still others that she grew upon the first corpse.

Mee Voralá was the antithesis of the plants that lived above ground. She could grow in sterile stone, was impervious to dust and cold, and reveled in the darkness about her. She partook of all the elements of death, decay, and darkness, and in this found her own life.

When the sun was slain and banished to the Underworld, Mee Voralá was badly burned and so fled to the surface as did many other denizens of that place. Here she found a new paradise, for the surface world was full of creatures that her children could grow upon and draw life from—decaying and killing that which was intact and alive. Thus Mee Voralá's children spread across Glorantha like a plague, and they were checked only when the sun returned once more to the surface world.

Now there is no good place for the Voralans, for Yelm moves through the surface world and the Underworld alike, and so today Mee Voralá's children are consigned to those unwanted places where they may find temporary respite, those dark caverns and dank sunless groves that no others want.

Nonetheless, Mee Voralá has not abandoned her people, and her greatest secrets are still their greatest strength. The powers of her fungi, so full of life and death alike, are unlike anything else in Glorantha;

there are thus few who would dare the wrath of Mee Voralá's children and chance that they may never know her bounty again.

Special Notes: Mee Voralá is the spirit of all fungus. Much like the Aldryami maternal spirits, she gives to her followers the ability to practice her worship via either spiritual or divine means.

Runes: Darkness, Plant.

Type: Ancestor spirit.

Pantheon: Voralan.

Worshippers: Mainly Voralans, but some scant trolls as well.

Worshipper's Duties: protect fungus, grow fungus, infest life.

Initiate Membership

Requirements: Voralans may join automatically upon reaching maturity.

Cult Skills: Hesh, Lore (Botany), Lore (Plant), Lore (Poisons), Stealth.

Cult Spells: Clear Path, Darkwall, Heal.

Common Divine Magic: All.

Special Divine Spells: Animate Fighting Fungus, Moulder.

Acolyte or Assistant Shaman Membership

Requirements: Standard. Candidate may choose to qualify as either an acolyte or as an assistant shaman.

Shaman Membership

Requirements: Standard.

Special Notes: Can also learn Mee Voralá divine spells.

Shamanic Abilities: Shamanic Escape, Spirit World Travel.

Fungus Lord (RuneLord) Membership

Requirements: Standard.

Fungus Priest (RunePriest) Membership

Requirements: Candidate must have been a Shaman or RuneLord for at least 20 years. He must roll POW + years served in that capacity or less on a 1d100. He must purchase the RunePriest Legendary ability.

Special Benefits

Initiates gain a +10% bonus to Athletics in full darkness. Acolytes and Assistant Shamans may communicate with any animal native to their fungal colony. Shamans, RuneLords, and RunePriests will not be attacked by any plant or plant spirit even if it is magically coerced.

Associated Cults

Falamal: Provides Fruition.

Zasara: Provides Create Shadow.

Roleplaying Voralans

Even moreso than true Aldryami, Voralans are an alien race of creatures that should not be treated as humans when played. Following are some advice on roleplaying Voralans.

The Mind: The most important aspect of Voralan physiology is their group mind. Individual Voralans are truly no more than appendages for an intellect which spans an entire tribe of peoples. There is no individuality and no difference of opinion. A group of Voralans will work together in every way possible and talking to one in a tribe is just the same as talking to any other.

The Center: Voralans' group intellect gives them a very unique perspective on the world. Even more than

other species, they believe that they are at the heart of all life, that they know and understand the world better than any else. Often this belief is at odds with the Voralans' lesser place in the modern world. However, the Voralans seem oblivious to this reality, a fact that can be seen in their arrogant belief in other races as lesser beings.

The Decay: Much like Aldryami, Voralans believe in a cycle of life and death, which they call simply 'The Decay'. For the Aldryami, the goal of death is ultimately to bring about new life, but this is not true for the Voralans. They see life and death as equally valid and appealing states.

Voralans do not try and cause death, nor do they see their fungi gardens as creating new life. Instead their goal is to blend them together. This is 'The Decay', when life and death are brought together, and each benefits from the other. Although The Decay mostly relates to the fungus life cycle, Voralans might apply it to other situations brought to their attention.

The Fungus: The Voralans' ties to the fungus they grow is much closer than even the Aldryami's with their forests. Voralans feel like their fungus is a part of them and their communal mind; there is no difference between sentient and nonsentient being.

However, this does not mean that the Voralans will necessarily ward their fungus to any greater degree than Aldryami ward their forests. This is because of The Decay. Just as it is appropriate for fungus to grow and take life from other creatures, so it is appropriate for other creatures to partake of fungus and so draw upon its strength.

Cult Spells

Animate Fighting Fungus

Cult: Mee Voralá

Duration 6 hours, Magnitude 4, Ranged

Animates a specially grown fungoid monster so that it may fight, usually to protect a Voralan fungus forest.

Fighting Fungus

This strange creature is a massive, flabby creature made entirely of fungus. Molds, mushrooms, and other fungoids grow from its soft, pulpy flesh. A central trunk sits upon its muscular base, and atop that is a stalk from which protrudes a featureless head. Four clawed arms circle the trunk and quivering stalk, while a fifth sits atop its head.

Characteristics

STR	2D6+6	(13)
CON	10D6	(35)
DEX	1D6	(3)
SIZ	10D6	(35)
INT	6	(6)
POW	3D6	(11)
CHA	1	(1)

Fighting Fungus Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-2	Base	0/35
3-5	Trunk	0/35
6-7	Lower Right Arm	0/12
8-9	Lower Left Arm	0/12
10-12	Stalk	3/24
13-14	Upper Right Arm	0/12
15-16	Upper Left Arm	0/12
17-18	Head	3/22
19-20	Top Arm	0/12

Weapons

Type	Skill	Damage
Claw (x4)	40%	2D6
Top Claw	40%	3D6

The Fighting Fungus may attack with all five claws as a single combat action, targeting up to five different opponents, but each of its reactions only allows for one parry.

Special Rules

Combat Actions: 1

Strike Rank: +5

Movement: 1m

Traits: Death Sense, Impervious, Night Sight, Spore Cloud

The following special rules also apply to a Fungus in combat:

Spore Cloud: Each turn that the Fighting Fungus is hit, it omits a poisonous spore cloud:

Type: Inhaled

Delay: Immediate

Potency: 70

Full Effect: 1 hit point damage to all locations

Duration: 1D10 minutes

Impervious: The Fighting Fungus is very hard to kill. Destroying its base only stops its locomotion and destroying an arm only stops that arm from attacking. It never loses Combat Actions from wounds nor does it bleed. To incapacitate the Fungus, its trunk, stalk, or base must suffer a Major Wound. Following such a Wound the Fungus will fight for another 2D6 rounds, emitting a spore cloud each round unless its head is

destroyed. Destroying the stalk further incapacitates the upper arms, while destroying the trunk incapacitates all four arms.

Moulder

Cult: Mee Voralá

Duration Instant, Magnitude 1, Progressive Touch

Causes mushroom, mildew, mold, smut, rust, slime, or other fungus infection to infect the touched object. Each point of magnitude will infect up to 20 SIZ of creature or plant or up to 1-meter-square of area; additional points of magnitude can allow for accordingly larger creatures or spaces to be affected.

No contest is required to cast the spell, even when infecting a living target. If a living creature has been infested with fungus, it should thereafter be treated as a disease:

Moulder Fungus Disease

Type: Spellborne or Airborne

Delay: 1D3 days

Potency: 75

Full Effect: -2 penalty to CON. If the victim's CON is reduced to 0 or if he is killed, then the fungus infesting his body spores and becomes airborne, causing non-fungus creature within 10 metres to immediately resist the disease.



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A Young Kingdoms Digest

By CHARLES GREEN

Any good campaign needs interesting characters to make it memorable. The players in such a campaign are charged with bringing their own characters to life. The Games Master, however, has a much trickier time, because he must play everyone else. In order to make that job a little easier, I have provided a collection of game stats for the denizens of the Young Kingdoms most likely to interact with a group of player characters.

I have divided the stats up into sections, indicating where such characters would most likely be encountered. Of course, this is not set in stone; there are waterfront taverns across the world where salt-stained sailors ply drinks and seduction from overworked merchants, while wily thieves pluck bronze gilders from the overstuffed pockets of drunken nobles. Any and all of these folks can be found in a good sized city such as Menii or Cadsandria.

Men at Arms

The Young Kingdoms is a violent place. There is no shortage of work for people with strong arms and the skill to swing a sharp blade. Sometimes they congregate in guilds and fighter's associations, in guard houses, or

in tight-knit units on the battlefield. Use these stats for warriors of various types, including bandits, infantry and cavalry.

Also, do not let the title of this section fool you; many a young woman has found herself with life's jaws at her throat and has turned to the sword and dagger to bring her what she needs to survive.



ARCHER

Since bows and arrows are much cheaper to make than a sword, archers typically come from peasant stock, and are not taught how to fight in close-order unit structures. They may be able to nock a bow, but will likely flee from a dedicated assault.

STR 12 INT 10
DEX 13 POW 10
CON 10 CHA 12
SIZ 10

Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-3	Right Leg	0/4
4-6	Left Leg	0/4
7-8	Abdomen	1/5
10-12	Chest	1/6
13-15	Right Arm	0/3
16-18	Left Arm	0/3
19-20	Head	2/4

Weapons

Type	Skill	Damage
Shortbow	50%	1D8
Longbow	50%	2D8
Melnibonéan	50%	2D8
Bone Bow		
Nomad Bow	50%	1D10
Dagger	25%	1D4+1

Note that archers will only possess a single bow, and all archers in an encounter will have the same weapon type.

Special Rules

Combat Actions: 3

Damage Modifier: none

Strike Rank: +12

Movement: 4m

Officers

A unit of troops does not typically go into battle without a leader to keep it operating efficiently. Rather than provide a batch of statistics that differ only slightly from the troops they lead, instead assume the following changes:

Leaders have a better skill with the weapon commonly used by the unit. Increase that skill up to the next highest 25% increment. They also have an Influence skill with a base chance of 50%, but only when it comes to dealing with their unit. Particularly well-liked leaders may have an additional piece of armour on one hit location, or have slightly better equipment.

Skills: Dodge 25%, Perception 50%, Persistence 25%, Resilience 25%, Stealth 50%

Typical Armour: Leather hauberk (1 AP on Abdomen and Chest) and heavy leather helm (2 AP on Head)

Assassin

Any general worth the title knows that winning a battle is more than just the movement of troops. Sometimes a swift knife in the night can bring an otherwise bloodless victory. There are always those who direct their martial training towards stealth, sabotage and murder. Such individuals are highly sought after by all of the religious organizations in the Young Kingdoms, as they are great weapons for use against heretics as well as hostile cults.

STR 12

INT 15

DEX 16

POW 16

CON 14

CHA 13

SIZ 12

Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-3	Right Leg	0/6
4-6	Left Leg	0/6
7-8	Abdomen	0/7
10-12	Chest	0/8
13-15	Right Arm	0/5
16-18	Left Arm	0/5
19-20	Head	0/6

Weapons

Type	Skill	Damage
Dagger	100%	1D4+1+poison
Thrown Dagger	75%	1D4+1+poison
Shortsword	75%	1D6
Martial Arts	50%	2D3

Special Rules

Combat Actions: 4

Damage Modifier: none

Strike Rank: +16

Movement: 4m

Skills: Acrobatics 50%, Athletics 50%, Disguise 50%, Dodge 75%, Lore (Plant) 75%, Mechanisms 50%, Perception 75%, Persistence 75%, Resilience 50%, Sleight 50% Stealth 75%

Typical Armour: None

Assassin's Blade Venom

Name: Pepperpaste Sap

Delay: 1D3 rounds

Potency: 50

Effect: 1D6 damage to injured location. Excruciating pain makes all actions *Hard* (-40%) for 1D6 rounds after the effects begin.

Duration: 1D6 rounds.

Barbarian

A burly, tanned figure dressed in outlandish furs and bearing tattoos and ritual scars. While they may not have sophisticated training, they make up for it in animal cunning and pure savagery. Of course, barbarians are also capable of great acts of kindness, especially to those who have earned their respect, and sometimes behave with a strict code of honor that transcends the orders given to them by their employers.

In the Young Kingdoms, barbarians hail from one of three places: Oin, the Weeping Wastes, or Yu. Those from Oin and Yu tend to be brutish and savage, while those from the Wastes tend to be more humane in their dealings without outsiders. Weeping Waste folk spend much of their lives without seeing the sun, and are known to stare at a non-cloudy sky with rueful bewilderment.

Finding Gods

So pervasive are the cults of the Lords of the Higher Worlds in the Young Kingdoms that any character found herein may be, in addition to whatever else he does, a follower of one of the gods. Assume that the character is an official member of a cult within their chosen faith. Grant them one compulsion and one Gift (usually Perfection or Divine Training.) Also assume a Pact skill of 50% or higher.

Followers of Chaos will likely have access to Summoning Rituals for three different types of demons. Followers of the Elemental Cults will likely have access to a single Summoning Ritual of the appropriate elemental. Followers of Law may have access to a single Summoning Ritual for a sorcerous creature, or potential a particularly well-crafted piece of equipment (which might offer +10% to any related skill test, or either block or do an extra point of damage.)

STR 14 INT 10
DEX 10 POW 9
CON 15 CHA 10
SIZ 14

Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-3	Right Leg	1/6
4-6	Left Leg	1/6
7-8	Abdomen	2/7
10-12	Chest	2/8
13-15	Right Arm	0/5
16-18	Left Arm	0/5
19-20	Head	2/6

Weapons

Type	Skill	Damage
Battle Axe (1H)	50%	1D6+1+1D2
Battle Axe (2H)	50%	1D6+2+1D2
Short Spear	50%	1D8+1D2

Special Rules

Combat Actions: 2

Damage Modifier: +1D2

Strike Rank: +10

Movement: 4m

Skills: Athletics 50%, Dodge 50%, Lore (Plant) 75%, Lore (Animal) 50%, Perception 75%, Persistence 75%, Resilience 50%, Stealth 75%

Typical Armour: Heavy Leather Hauberk and Helm (2 AP on Abdomen, Chest and Head) Leather Trews (1 AP on legs). Weeping Waste Barbarians often bring their personal armour with them to the Drylands. Such suits of heavily lacquered armour only fit people of the same SIZ, and offer 3 AP on the Abdomen, Chest and Head.

BARBARIANS

In some sections of the Young Kingdoms, notably in the nations of the Northern Continent, its is quite fashionable to hire barbarians from the Weeping Wastes as bodyguards. This practice is being picked up in other parts of the world, although Oinic and Yuish barbarians are in much greater supply in the Southern Continent. Such beings are less scrupulous then their northern counterparts, and have been known to take bribes in order to look the other way when their erstwhile employers are being attacked.

In Vilmir, merchant enterprises have been making runs into the Wastes to harvest the lush hardwoods that grow in the ever-present rain. The locals tribes are not pleased with these actions, and any character hired to protect such a venture can look forward to dealing with a tribe of angry barbarian warriors in their near future.

Soldier

There are many different types of warriors within the Young Kingdoms, so many in fact that it would be foolish to attempt to provide game information for most of them. Below you will find the game stats for a typical warrior, someone handy with their weapons and willing to use them. Their statistics will work for a variety of purposes. Consider these to be city guards, the local Duke's personal security force, or a gang of mangy bandits hiding out in the forests.

STR 12 INT 10
 DEX 12 POW 10
 CON 12 CHA 10
 SIZ 12

Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-3	Right Leg	0/5
4-6	Left Leg	0/5
7-8	Abdomen	0/6
10-12	Chest	0/7
13-15	Right Arm	0/4
16-18	Left Arm	0/4
19-20	Head	0/5

Weapons

Type	Skill	Damage
Long Spear	50%	1D10+1D2
War Sword	25%	1D8+1D2
Full Shield	50%	1D4+1D2

Special Rules

Combat Actions: 2

Damage Modifier: +1D2

Strike Rank: +11

Movement: 4m

Skills: Dodge 25%, Perception 25%, Persistence 25%, Resilience 25%

Typical Armour: Armour worn varies greatly depending on the nature of the group to which the soldier belongs. A successful bandit band might be able to scrape together enough leather to armour their members for 1 AP per location, while a poor one may go completely unarmored save for an occasional leather helm.

Soldiers will have better equipment, with chainmail being commonplace. City guard are often quite well equipped, with plate components in place as well as leather. Guard Captains often have the very best equipment, although some wear the same as the men in their charge.

Modifying the Soldier

The stats above are basic, and will work for most purposes. However, there will no doubt be times when a Games Master will need something with a little more differentiation to accurately represent the quality of the troops being represented.

Officers

Most times, a group of soldiers will have unit leaders amongst them to coordinate their actions. Use the Officers box earlier in this article to represent this.

Regional Equipment

There are a number of cultures that make particular types of weapons and armour that reflect their national character. If the soldiers are of one of the nationalities listed below, consider replacing some of their standard equipment with the more appropriate items.

Nation of Origin	Equipment
Eshmir	Eshmirian Falchion (1D6+1) replaces warsword
Filkhar	Filkharian Pike (2D6) replaces longspear
Lormyr	Lormyrian Axe (1D8+1) replaces war sword
Melniboné	Melnibonéan Plate (7 AP) replaces armour. Only certain rare individuals possess this armour.
Pan Tang	Pan Tangian Sabre (1D8+1) replaces war sword, Pan Tangian Plate (6 AP) may replace armour. See text box for more details.

Elite Troops

Some soldiers survive long enough, and have had enough additional training, as to be considered an Elite force. Such characters are much like normal soldiers, save that their weapons skills are increased up to the next highest 25% increment, and they have access to much better equipment. Additionally, such groups will be well known in their immediate area by a descriptive nickname, such as the Black Spiders or the Hands of Donblas.

Also, their unit leaders will be even more potent, doubling the bonuses offered by Officer status.

Cavalry

For mounted units, give each member a steed of some sort and a Ride skill of 25 to 50%. In all but a single instance, the mounts are horses. If the characters are from Shazar, who are famed for their skills on horseback, make their skills even higher (around 60-75%) and allow their animals to move slightly faster and for longer periods than normal steeds.

The exception are the Devil Riders of Pan Tang, who ride huge six-limbed lizards into battle. Such beasts are unlikely to be encountered outside the Isle of Pan Tang itself or on the Western Continent. However, for adventures taking place there, use the following statistics for these fiendish beasts.

The animals look something like an overgrown monitor lizard, with an extra set of legs coming from the middle of their torsos. They move

Pan Tangian Plate Armour

Crafted from Black Iron and designed to increase the wearer's fearsome appearance, suits of plate armour from Pan Tang are rare and wondrous items. Each suit is a gift from the Theocrat, only given to those who please him. Each suit is an individual expression of malice and horror, covered in cruel spikes, engraved with screaming faces, or possessing other features that mark their wearers of villains of the worst sort. They are worn as a badge of honor; some are enchanted so as to be impossible to remove.

When worn, the suit of armour grants the wearer 6 AP on each hit location. Furthermore, when worn by someone who has a Pact skill with one of the Lords of Chaos, the skill penalty associated with the armour is reduced to 10%. Additionally, the spikes and other cruel adornments increase the damage done by unarmed attacks by +2 points.

Care should be taken, however, should characters not aligned with Chaos attempt to wear the armour. After wearing the armour for one week, and at the start of each week thereafter, the wearer must make a Persistence test. Failure means they develop a compulsion to behave irrationally, to inflict cruelty on others, or to becoming bitingly mean to all around them. Becoming a follower of Chaos is the only remedy, aside from removing the armour and destroying it utterly. Those who undergo Chaotic initiation do not lose the compulsions, but do not gain any new ones when purchasing Gifts of Chaos.

If someone were to develop eight different compulsions while wearing the armour, the character's mind snaps under the strain, and they become an NPC controlled by the Games Master, who now has a dastardly new villain to inflict upon the characters.

with an odd slithering gite, and their size and lack of dexterity belie the fact that they can move almost as fast as a horse when pressed.

Devil Lizards

STR 22 INT 4 (fixed)
DEX 10 POW 10
CON 16 CHA 4 (fixed)
SIZ 30

Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-2	Tail	2/9
3-4	Right Front Leg	2/10
5-6	Left Front Leg	2/10
7-8	Right Middle Leg	2/10
9-10	Left Middle Leg	2/10
11-12	Right Hind Leg	2/10
13-14	Left Hind Leg	2/10
15-16	Hindquarters	2/11
17-18	Forequarters	2/12
19-20	Head	2/10

Weapons

Type	Skill	Damage
Bite	50%	1D10+1D12
Tail Lash	50%	1D8+1+1D12

Special Rules

Combat Actions: 2

Damage Modifier: +1D12

Strike Rank: +7

Movement: 6m

Skills: Dodge 25%, Perception 25%, Persistence 25%, Resilience 25%

Typical Armour: 2 AP Scaly hide, no skill penalty

People of the Sea

The Young Kingdoms is a largely maritime world, with sea travel being the center point for conquest, trade and diplomatic relations. Many people make their livings on the sea, either navigating the waters or by wresting food and treasure from its embrace.

Sea Dog

These stats represent any of a number of people who live and work on the sea, from fisherfolk, to navy sailors, to bloodthirsty pirates.

STR 12 INT 10
DEX 13 POW 10
CON 13 CHA 10
SIZ 10

Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-3	Right Leg	0/5
4-6	Left Leg	0/5
7-8	Abdomen	0/6
10-12	Chest	0/7
13-15	Right Arm	0/4
16-18	Left Arm	0/4
19-20	Head	0/5

Weapons

Type	Skill	Damage
Cutlass	50%	1D6+2
Dagger	50%	1D4+1

Special Rules

Combat Actions: 3

Damage Modifier: none

Strike Rank: +12

Movement: 4m

Skills: Acrobatics 50%, Athletics 75%, Boating 50%, Dodge 25%, First Aid 25%, Lore (The Seas) 50%, Lore (World) 25%, Perception 25%, Persistence 25%, Resilience 25%, Shiphandling 25% Survival 25%

Typical Armour: None. It is far to heavy to wear around the water. However, see Modifying Sailors below.

Marine

Where regular sailors typically work to keep the ship moving, as well as fighting as situations warrant, a marine is an ocean-borne warrior whose specialty is fighting on ships. They find employment in the navies of the world (especially that of Pan Tang), and are in high demand for pirate and privateer fleets from every corner of the world.

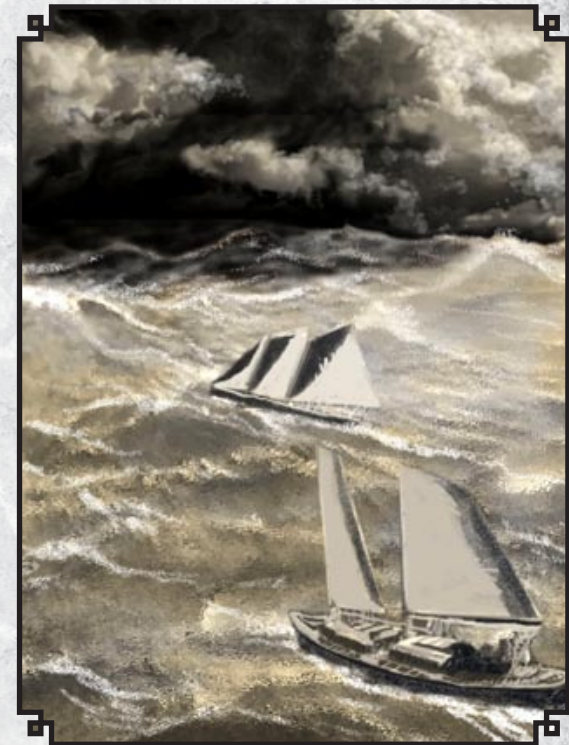
STR 13 INT 10
DEX 11 POW 9
CON 14 CHA 11
SIZ 13

Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-3	Right Leg	0/6
4-6	Left Leg	0/6
7-8	Abdomen	0/7
10-12	Chest	0/8
13-15	Right Arm	0/5
16-18	Left Arm	0/5
19-20	Head	0/6

Weapons

Type	Skill	Damage
Battleaxe (1H)	50%	1D6+1+1D2
Battleaxe (2H)	50%	1D8+1+1D2
Cutlass	50%	1D6+2+1D2
Small Shield	50%	1D3+1D2
Longbow	50%	2D8



Special Rules

Combat Actions: 2

Damage Modifier: +1D2

Strike Rank: +12

Movement: 4m

Skills: Acrobatics 50%, Athletics 75%, Boating 50%, Dodge 25%, First Aid 25%, Lore (The Seas) 50%, Lore (World) 25%, Perception 50%, Persistence 50%, Resilience 50%, Shiphandling 50%, Survival 50%

Typical Armour: None. It is far too heavy to wear around the water. However, see Modifying Sailors below.

Ship's Captain

It takes a special mixture of cunning and raw nerve to safely captain a vessel through the waters of the Young Kingdoms, and the individuals who are able to do so are a hardy bunch. If they are captains of legitimate sailing vessels, they tend to be savvy and sharp-witted, while pirate captains are often the most cunning and vicious of the bunch. In any case, they can be quite tricky to deal with.

STR 13 INT 15
DEX 14 POW 16
CON 15 CHA 15
SIZ 13

Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-3	Right Leg	0/6
4-6	Left Leg	0/6
7-8	Abdomen	0/7
10-12	Chest	0/8
13-15	Right Arm	0/5
16-18	Left Arm	0/5
19-20	Head	0/6

Weapons

Type	Skill	Damage
Rapier	100%	1D8+1D2
Dagger	75%	1D4+1+1D2

Special Rules

Combat Actions: 3

Damage Modifier: +1D2

Strike Rank: +15

Movement: 4m

Skills: Acrobatics 50%, Athletics 75%, Boating 50%, Dodge 25%, Influence 50%, First Aid 25%, Lore (The Seas) 50%, Lore (World) 25%, Perception 50%, Persistence 50%, Resilience 50%, Shiphandling 75%, Survival 50%

Typical Armour: None. It's far too heavy to wear around the water. However, see Modifying Sailors below.

Modifying Sailors

For the most part, sailors have the same modification options as their ground-based counterparts. Additionally, the Ship's Captain for a Pan Tangian galley is very often a sorcerer with the Pact (The Whisperers) skill at around 50%. He will usually know the Summoning Rituals for Demons of Combat and Protection.

Cityfolk

While much adventuring can be done in the wild places of the Young Kingdoms, most games eventually wind up in one of the world's many major cities. Almost all cities of note are also port towns, which means that the People of the Sea can be found here as well.

Cities offer unique avenues for trouble and wealth, and are filled with a colorful variety of people preying upon each other, and any coin-laden adventurers that happen to wander by.

Apothecary

A special class of merchant that deals with herbs, potions and philters. While most of their wares are legal remedies for various illnesses, some take to smuggling and the brewing of illicit substances to supplement their somewhat meager income. A skilled apothecary makes a wonderful ally and a cunning foe.

STR 10 INT 17
DEX 12 POW 12
CON 14 CHA 12
SIZ 10

Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-3	Right Leg	0/5
4-6	Left Leg	0/5
7-8	Abdomen	0/6
10-12	Chest	0/7
13-15	Right Arm	0/4
16-18	Left Arm	0/4
19-20	Head	0/5

Weapons

Type	Skill	Damage
Dagger	25%	1D4+1+poison-1D2

Special Rules

Combat Actions: 2

Damage Modifier: -1D2

Strike Rank: +15

Movement: 4m

Skills: Dodge 25%, Evaluate 50%, First Aid 50%, Healing 50%, Lore (Animal) 75%, Lore (Plant) 75%, Lore (Mineral) 75%, Lore (World) 50%, Perception 50%, Persistence 50%, Resilience 50%, Survival 25%

Typical Armour: None

Poison

While an apothecary is not likely to carry an envenomed dagger at all times, they can whip up a batch easily enough. Also, if caught unawares, anything they may have been cutting at the time might be poisoned as well. For ease of use, consider the following poison:

Name: Milkspider Venom

Delay: 1D6 rounds

Potency: 60

Effect: 1D8 damage to Chest location. Total paralysis for the duration

Duration: 1D6 hours

BEGGAR

Present in nearly every city in the Young Kingdoms, beggars whine, cajole, or intimidate 'donations' of coin, food or beverages from passersby. Many bear disfiguring ailments, to better shock and horrify their intended targets. Also, it is not widely known that the world's beggars are part of the ring of spies and informants that funnel information and treasure to Urish the Seven-Fingered, the Beggar-King of Nadsokor.

BEGGAR AILMENTS

Most beggars consider their afflictions a unique blessing that allows them to grift money from gullible passersby. While most healthy adults would find these conditions unbearable, beggars enjoy them with perverse, morbid pleasure.

Each beggar will have at least one and sometimes as many as 1D3 afflictions from the following list:

1. Deaf or blind. Reduce Perception skill by half.
2. Missing Tongue-cannot speak anything besides gibberish
3. Disfigured-covered in weeping sores, crooked limbs or terribly scarred. Reduce Influence skill by half, unless you are attempting to gain a bit of coin, in which case it is doubled.
4. Missing 2D4 digits
5. Missing a random limb
6. Gimp leg-halve Movement rate
7. Skeletally thin or grossly obese. Lose or gain 2D6 SIZ accordingly.
8. Terrible stench-smells of smoke, grease, extreme body odor or rotten offal.
9. Addled. Lose 1D6 INT.
10. Gastric problem, both smelly and rude.

STR 10

INT 9

DEX 10

POW 10

CON 10

CHA 8

SIZ 9

Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-3	Right Leg	0/4
4-6	Left Leg	0/4
7-8	Abdomen	0/5
10-12	Chest	0/6
13-15	Right Arm	0/3
16-18	Left Arm	0/3
19-20	Head	0/4

Weapons

Type	Skill	Damage
Dagger	25%	1D4+1-1D2

Special Rules

Combat Actions: 2

Damage Modifier: -1D2

Strike Rank: +8

Movement: 4m

Skills: Dodge 25%, Evaluate 50%, Influence 25%, Mechanisms 50%, Perception 50%, Persistence 50%, Resilience 50%, Survival 25%, Streetwise 75%

Typical Armour: None

Healer

A profession that is a necessity in all human social groups, healers are those individuals who, either by studious research or arcane teachings, have the skills

needed to care for the sick, nurse the wounded back to health and attempt to cure disease should an epidemic occur. In some ways, it is a thankless job, one which often as not kills healers from a disease they were trying to treat in others.

As even the wealthy and influential have a need for healing, they come to know things their station would otherwise not allow. This makes them good contacts for adventurers to have.

STR 10 INT 15
DEX 10 POW 20
CON 10 CHA 15
SIZ 10

Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-3	Right Leg	0/4
4-6	Left Leg	0/4
7-8	Abdomen	0/5
10-12	Chest	0/6
13-15	Right Arm	0/3
16-18	Left Arm	0/3
19-20	Head	0/4

Weapons

Type	Skill	Damage
Dagger	25%	1D4+1-1D2

Special Rules

Combat Actions: 2
Damage Modifier: -1D2
Strike Rank: +8
Movement: 4m

Skills: Dodge 25%, Evaluate 50%, First Aid 75%, Healing 50%, Influence 25%, Lore (Animal) 25%, Lore (Plant) 50%, Perception 50%, Persistence 50%, Resilience 50%

Typical Armour: None

MERCHANT

Many nations of the Young Kingdoms make a great deal of money through trade. Both wily individual merchants and the sons and daughters of influential merchant cartels travel through the oceans of the world, plying their wares in far-flung ports. Every city has its own collection of business minded people, making the merchant an almost universal figure. Most have a specialty they focus on, be it rare herbs, fine artwork, weapons, or even something illicit like illegal drugs or artifacts of Chaos. If the players are interested in something, chances are good that a merchant somewhere is even more interested in it than they are.

STR 12 INT 15
DEX 10 POW 15
CON 12 CHA 15
SIZ 12

Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-3	Right Leg	0/5
4-6	Left Leg	0/5
7-8	Abdomen	0/6
10-12	Chest	0/7
13-15	Right Arm	0/4
16-18	Left Arm	0/4
19-20	Head	0/5

MERCHANT PRINCES

If a merchant does particularly well for himself, and is lucky enough to avoid catastrophic damage to his fortunes, he may refer to himself as a Merchant Prince. This has little weight outside merchant circles, but some places, such as the Isle of the Purple Towns, are filled with such self-styled Princes, and their influence at times overshadows that of the hereditary nobility.

For a Merchant Prince, use the merchant stats listed separately, with the following changes:

Increase three of his characteristics by 1D3 each, and adjust his attributes accordingly.

Add an additional weapon skill at 75%.

Add 25% to each of the following skills: Evaluate, Influence, one Language, and Perception.

Many will have picked up an Advanced skill as a personal specialty through their travels. Include an appropriate one at 50%.

For a Prince, money is not an issue. Assume anything that has a price can be bought, and many supposedly priceless things can be bought as well.

Weapons

Type	Skill	Damage
Dagger	50%	1D4+1
Shortsword	50%	1D6

Special Rules

Combat Actions: 2

Damage Modifier: None

Strike Rank: +13

Movement: 4m

Skills: Dodge 25%, Evaluate 75%, Influence 50%, Languages (any three) 50%, Lore (World) 50%, Perception 50%, Persistence 50%, Resilience 50%, Streetwise 50%

Typical Armour: None

Noble

Where merchants work to earn their wealth, and peasants toil for a meager living, only the nobility of the Young Kingdoms are free from the need work for a living. Having inherited estates and titles from their ancestor, nobles come in a range of temperaments. Some readily adopt the *nobilis oblige* and work to improve the lot of those they govern, while others are hedonistic fops who feel that they owe their position to the gods. Nobles make valuable friends and patrons for adventurers. However, care should be taken with them; it is never wise to raise the ire of the idle rich, as they have lots of money, time, and the imagination to put both sets of resources towards making someone's life miserable.

STR 13	INT 15
DEX 16	POW 14
CON 13	CHA 17
SIZ 13	

Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-3	Right Leg	5/6
4-6	Left Leg	5/6
7-8	Abdomen	5/7
10-12	Chest	5/8
13-15	Right Arm	5/5
16-18	Left Arm	5/5
19-20	Head	6/6

Weapons

Type	Skill	Damage
Longsword (1H)	120%	1D10+1D2
Longsword (2H)	120%	1D10+1+1D2
Dagger	100%	1D4+1+1D2

Special Rules

Combat Actions: 3

Damage Modifier: +1D2

Strike Rank: +16

Movement: 4m

Skills: Artistic Expression (Epic Poetry) 50%, Courtesy 50%, Dance 75%, Dodge 50%, Evaluate 50%, Influence 50%, Lore (World) 50%, Oratory 25%, Perception 50%, Persistence 50%, Resilience 50%, Riding 75%, Sing 50%, Streetwise 50%

Typical Armour: Chainmail coif, shirt and trews. Full helm. -41% skill penalty.

Note: Nobles are quite likely to be religious. Some profess very public faith in the White Lords, while others harbor secret worship of Chaos in dark and forbidden places. Consider what place a religious noble would have in your campaign, and assign the appropriate Pact skills to reflect this.

Thief

So long as there are people with money and resources, there will be others who desire to take it from them. Thieves are amazingly commonplace in the Young Kingdoms; in some places, they outnumber the normal population, sometimes by a great deal. Given their great numbers, there is a surprising amount of diversity in the thief population. Some disdain from injuring those they rob, while others revel in the terror they inspire.

STR 9	INT 15
DEX 18	POW 12
CON 10	CHA 12
SIZ 9	

Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-3	Right Leg	0/4
4-6	Left Leg	0/4
7-8	Abdomen	0/5
10-12	Chest	0/6
13-15	Right Arm	0/3
16-18	Left Arm	0/3
19-20	Head	0/4

Weapons

Type	Skill	Damage
Dagger	50%	1D4+1-1D2

Special Rules

Combat Actions: 4

Damage Modifier: -1D2

Strike Rank: +17

Movement: 4m

Skills: Athletics 50%, Acrobatics 50%, Disguise 50%, Dodge 75%, Evaluate 50%, Mechanisms 50%, Perception 50%, Persistence 50%, Resilience 25%, Sleight 75%, Stealth 75%, Streetwise 50%

Typical Armour: None

Religious People

It is hard to stay out of a cult when the very gods themselves have walked amongst mortals, and their priests command great power. Still, while most folks are able to be in a cult without it taking over their lives, there are always people who give themselves over completely to one of the Lords of the Higher Worlds. Such folks are dangerous, as their behavior is dictated by a being that is not at all human.

Cultists

You have seen these people, even if you do not realize it. By day, they are like most regular people. They go about their business, serving under their commanders, keeping a clean home, or serving drinks in a nameless waterfront dive. When night falls, however, they become something else. Black robes are brought out of secret hiding places, and wickedly curved daggers are belted on for ready use. At night, they are willing to die at the command of their leaders, almost grateful for a chance to bring themselves a glorious death.

What they lack in skill and utility they more than make up for in numbers and enthusiasm. Cultists will die in droves at the hands of typical adventurers, but they can use the weight of numbers to bring down even battle-hardened mercenaries.

STR 10 INT 10
DEX 10 POW 10
CON 10 CHA 10
SIZ 10

Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-3	Right Leg	0/4
4-6	Left Leg	0/4
7-8	Abdomen	0/5
10-12	Chest	0/6
13-15	Right Arm	0/3
16-18	Left Arm	0/3
19-20	Head	0/4



Weapons

Type	Skill	Damage
Dagger	25%	1D4+1-1D2

Special Rules

Combat Actions: 2

Damage Modifier: -1D2

Strike Rank: +10

Movement: 4m

Skills: Dodge 25%, Perception 25%, Persistence 50%, Resilience 25%

Typical Armour: None

SHAMAN/PRIEST

Regardless of their influence in the regular world, this person holds a great deal of power within the specialized circle that is a religious cult. They may not be the high priest of their order, but they are trusted enough to care for the religious activities of an entire city or a comparable area.

Priests are dangerous for this reason, and also because they can be quite unpredictable. They might send waves of cultists to attack enemies, or summon dark creatures from beyond the heavens, or even use their influence with government officials to make the player's lives interesting.

STR 10 INT 15
DEX 10 POW 16 (6 dedicated to Patron)
CON 14 CHA 17
SIZ 12

Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-3	Right Leg	0/5
4-6	Left Leg	0/5
7-8	Abdomen	0/6
10-12	Chest	0/7
13-15	Right Arm	0/4
16-18	Left Arm	0/4
19-20	Head	0/5

Weapons

Type	Skill	Damage
Dagger	75%	1D4+1-1D2

Special Rules

Combat Actions: 2

Damage Modifier: -1D2

Strike Rank: +13

Movement: 4m

Skills: Dodge 25%, Influence 75%, Language (High Speech) 50%, Oratory 50%, Perception 50%, Persistence 50%, Resilience 50%

Sorcery: Command 50%, Any three Summoning Rituals at 50%, Witch Sight 50%. He may know any other types of magic at comparable levels at the Games Master's Discretion.

He will also have 6 POW's worth of Gifts and appropriate compulsions.

Typical Armour: None

Champion

The goal of many who worship the Lords of the Higher Worlds, Champions status is an exalted position within the religious organization to which the Champion belongs. They have power and influence well beyond the dreams of beginning adventurers, and are not at all timid about using it to further their aims and those of their deity.

Plus, being on a first-name basis with a god is a power unto itself.

STR 20	INT 15
DEX 19	POW 16 (10 dedicated to Patron)
CON 16	CHA 10
SIZ 15	

Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-3	Right Leg	6/6
4-6	Left Leg	6/6
7-8	Abdomen	6/7
10-12	Chest	6/8
13-15	Right Arm	6/5
16-18	Left Arm	6/5
19-20	Head	6/6

Weapons

Type	Skill	Damage
War Sword	100%	1D8+1D4
Full Shield	50%	1D4+1D4
Unarmed	50%	1D3+1D4

Special Rules

Combat Actions: 4

Damage Modifier: +1D4

Strike Rank: +17

Movement: 4m

Skills: Dodge 50%, Influence 75%, Language (High Speech) 50%, Perception 50%, Persistence 50%, Resilience 50%, Tracking 50%

Sorcery: Command 50%, Any three Summoning Rituals at 50%, Witch Sight 50%. He may know any other types of magic at comparable levels at the Games Master's Discretion.

Gifts: Has a total of 8 POW split into 2 Gifts. He has Perfection in two characteristics (DEX and STR) and an Animal Familiar with a SIZ 5D6. This is typically a warhorse, either a black destrier if he is a follower of Chaos, or a valiant white charger if he is a follower of Law.

Typical Armour: A full suit of plate armour, superbly made as to provide no skill penalty.

DEBRIEFING

Debriefing! A word to thrill the soul and inspire fingers to leap to PDCs to record deeds both heroic and treasonous! A lot of PARANOIA scenarios skim over the post-mission scenes, preferring to focus on laser fire, explosions and accusations in the field, but the Debriefing scene can be as violent and chaotic as any mission with just a few small tweaks.

One problem with Debriefing is that most Troubleshooters, and most PARANOIA players have the memories of goldfish with ADD. There are two solutions to this: you can fill the bowl with Ritalin, or you can use the handy Mission Record Forms provided in this article. Give one Mission Record Form to each Troubleshooter at the start of the mission*. These Mission Record Forms clearly show what a vigilant and right-thinking Troubleshooter should be looking out for! The intent is to encourage players to gather evidence and set each other up for betrayal later on...

Using The Mission Record Form

Page 1 of the Mission Record Form is for listing the team members and reporting behaviour. Page 2 is for listing the events in the mission that prompted the reports, and the proof that the events actually happened as described. For example, during a mission, equipment guy Bob-R-4 is ordered by Team Leader Mike-O-2 to throw a grenade at a nest of Commie Mutant Traitors. Bob-R's grenade happens to catch Hygiene Officer Alice-R-3 in the blast. Alice-R-4 fills in an entry on page 1 of her form as follows:

* If your players are actually, really goldfish, then laminate the form and stick the game session up on Youtube.

By Gareth Hanrahan

Bob-R-4: for blowing me up with a grenade!

Event Reference #: 1

I did/did not condone/stop/observe/participate in/attempt to prevent this treason.

She then adds a matching entry on page 2.

Event #	Description	Participants	Authorised?	Illegal	Treasonous?
1	Bob-R threw a grenade at me and some commies	Bob-R, some commies	YES/NO	YES/NO	YES/NO

If AUTHORISED: Who authorised it? Mike-O-QRS-2

If ILLEGAL: Was it: Unusual or Insubordinate Behaviour [] Unhappiness [] Ignoring or Avoiding Proper Procedure [] Vandalism and Wanton Destruction [X] Abuse of Resources or Position []

If TREASONOUS: Was it: Disobeying an order [] Unauthorised Termination [X] Sabotage []

Membership of a Secret Society [] Possession of Unregistered Mutation [] Other Treason []

What Proof Do You Have Of This Event?

I was an eyewitness [X] and so were Mike-O-QRS-2 & _____ & _____ [X]

Recorded Data on PDC [] Multicorder [] Other Data Storage Device _____ []

Communications & Recording Officer should have it recorded, right? [X] Vague Hunch []

Other (specify): _____

Poor Alice-R has made several mistakes already. If something's treasonous, then it's already illegal anyway, and there's no need to mark it as both illegal and treasonous. (See the charts on pages 248-249 of the Paranoia rulebook). She's also assuming that the Recording Officer, Cyril-R, caught the incident on camera.

Proper Procedure Is To Be Followed At All Times

The official, approved method for processing a Mission Record Form can be found in CPU Instruction Booklet CPU/Pub/G/5832-4366644-D, The Official Approved Method for Processing a Mission Record Form, which comes with a free copy of CPU Instruction Booklet CPU/Pub/H&S/4191-34538-A, Only Mutants Lift With Their Back Instead Of Their Knees. And a small truckbot.

The quick and dirty method is:

- ☉ If the team was responsible for any disasters/core meltdowns/WMD detonations/sector-wide blackouts/riots/Computer crashes/propaganda distribution/irritated a high-clearance Citizen, check to see if that event shows up on their Mission Record Forms. If it doesn't show up on a Troubleshooter's form, tick a 'Deliberate Error or Falsification' box on that form.

- ☺ For each report (for meritorious conduct, illegal activities, or treason), look at the associated event. If that event has sufficient evidence associated with it, and/or is backed up by similar testimony by other Troubleshooters, then tick the appropriate box in Section 3.
- ☺ If there is doubt about an event, raise in debriefing with the team to ascertain exactly what happened. If the report cannot be justified, tick a Deliberate Error or Falsification box.
- ☺ If a Troubleshooter gets one or two meritorious conduct ticks, then reward that Troubleshooter appropriately.
- ☺ If a Troubleshooter gets three Meritorious Conduct ticks, then something weird is going on – tag that Troubleshooter for investigation.
- ☺ If a Troubleshooter gets one or two Deliberate Error or Falsification ticks, then censure that Troubleshooter.
- ☺ If a Troubleshooter gets three Deliberate Error or Falsification ticks, then tick a Treason or Insubordination box.
- ☺ If a Troubleshooter gets one Treason or Insubordination ticks, then punish him with Brainscrubbing.
- ☺ If a Troubleshooter gets two Treason or Insubordination ticks, then punish him with demotion.
- ☺ If a Troubleshooter gets three Treason or Insubordination ticks, then punish him with termination.
- ☺ Have lunch.

■ A Boy's Best Friend Is His Debriefing Officer

Despite the best efforts of CPU Clone Standardisation and Total Quality Assurance, not every debriefing officer is the same. Roll on the Debriefing Officer Table to determine the sort of DBO inflicted on the Troubleshooters. Usually, the Debriefing Officer is the same as (or, knowing Troubleshooters, a clone of) the Briefing Officer at the start of the mission.

Debriefing Officer Table

1. *Absolute Stickler*: If there is the slightest error or inconsistency on a form, then it's TREASON. Give a Troubleshooter a Treason & Insubordination tick for every error they make, including misspelling the names of other team members.

2. *Ticks Every Third Box*: This briefing officer is in a hurry, and can't be bothered actually reading the forms. Pick a random box in section 3. Tick it. Tick every third box after that and loop around until you're back where you started. Ask the Troubleshooters a few generic questions ('Which of you is to blame for this disaster? Can you explain exactly what went wrong?') and doze through their answers. Think about sandwiches.

3. *Doesn't Really Understand These Forms Guy*: You're supposed to use Section 3 to record the misdeeds and commendations of that Troubleshooter, based on the accusations and evidence of other Troubleshooters. So, Bob-R's Section 3 will be filled in based on evidence from Alice-R's Section's 2 and 4. Doesn't Really Understand These Forms Guy, however, fills in Bob-R's Section 3 based on Bob-R's Section 2 and 4 – so the more evidence that a Troubleshooter provides to damn another, the more trouble he gets himself into.

4. *Sherlock-O-MES*: This debriefing officer fancies himself as something of a detective. Pick a minor event and obsess about it. Find conspiracies everywhere. Ignore everything that doesn't fit with your theories.

5. *Secret Society Member*: The Debriefing Officer is a member of a Secret Society (roll randomly). At the start of the Debriefing, he tries to identify any Troubleshooters who share his allegiance. If he finds any co-conspirators, then he does his best to give them meritorious conduct ticks and protect them from termination and censure. He will also punish anyone who acts against his Society beliefs.

6. *Easily Bribed*: 100 Credits to ignore a Deliberate Error & Falsification tick. 250 Credits for a Meritorious Conduct tick. 500 Credits to ignore a Treason and Insubordination tick. Other services on request. He may subtly (using Twitchtalk) ask for a bribe, or hand out flyers.

7. *Can't Read Handwriting Guy*: Is that a '3' or a '5'? And is that box ticked, or is that a blood splatter? What do you mean, Batclone was on your team!? Er... is that a 'Commie' or a 'commander'?

8. *Terminally Paranoid Guy*: It's probably for the best if no-one survives this debriefing. Do whatever you can to terminate the whole team. Dead clones tell no lies.

9. *Merit and Happiness For All*: These debriefings are much too negative! Let's focus on the positive! Who got high ratings! Who didn't? If you didn't give your fellows high ratings – why didn't you? Why do you hate your fellow team members?

10. *I Scratch Your Back, You Scratch Mine*: Look, it's very simple. I can hand these forms over to IntSec and they can shoot you out behind the chemical sheds, or you can give me half of the drugs you secretly stole and we'll call it even. Of course, I could be lying...

11. *Let The Recording Officer Show*: Anything the Recording Officer recorded is Evidence. Everything else is a lie. That's the whole point of having a Recording Officer. Why are you lying to me?

12. *There's No 'I' In Team*: Everything has to be blamed on a single traitor. The team is paramount. Who's the scapegoat?

13. *Mutant Hater*: Registered mutants get a free Treason and Insubordination tick, as does anyone who ticked 'vague hunch' (damn telepaths!). Blame everything you can on mutants.

14. *Wrong Debriefing Officer*: This debriefing officer has gone to the wrong debriefing room, and has an entirely different mission to debrief. So, what happened to the Escaped Sentient Vat Slime, why did you give the nuke to the cultist, what was in Vault 613, did Ronald-G know about the coded message, and if not, how do you explain the hair loss?

15. *Lazy Guy*: Get each Troubleshooter to fill in his neighbour's Section 3.

16. *Bucking For Promotion*: The debriefing officer wants a promotion, and you get promoted by a) reporting successful missions, b) reporting traitors or c) both. He wants to give the impression that the Troubleshooters did really really really well while simultaneously proving they're all saboteurs.

17. *IntSec Agent*: The debriefing officer is an IntSec agent. He doesn't give a damn about the mission, just about finding traitors.

18. *Spy*: The debriefing officer is a spy for another sector/service group/secret society/High Programmer/Complex/alien invasion fleet. He just wants to gather information about what the Troubleshooters saw. Ask weird and leading questions.

19. *False Records*: Take the forms handed in by the team. Throw them over your shoulder. Make up your own answers to the questions. Ask the Troubleshooters to justify your new answers.

20. *Roll Again Twice*: The debriefing officer is unusual in two ways.

■ The Debriefing Game

For a variant PARANOIA game, you can skip the 'mission' part of a mission entirely, and jump straight to debriefing. Hand out blank Mission Record Forms, then have the players each briefly narrate one scene as if they were describing it to a superior. Nothing went wrong, everything was according to plan. For example:

GM: Team Leader, how did the mission begin?

Team Leader: We received a Mission Alert at 0430 hours and proceeded without delay to the briefing room, where Citizen Ger-Y-RMD-5 ordered us to investigate rumours of sabotage in Research Lab 5.

GM: Hygiene Officer, continue.

Hygiene Officer: We arrived cleanly in Research Lab 5, where we discovered several open cages. Which I scrubbed.

GM: Quite. Equipment officer, what happened next?

Equipment Guy: It was then the monsters attacked us...

And so on. After each bit of narration, give the players a chance to write down Mission Record entries for that scene.

When the mission is successfully completed, collect the Mission Record Forms. Read them. Laugh. Then work through the Debriefing. The players will need to think on their feet to deal with the accusations. Give especial weight to anything mentioned by more than one player – the idea is to predict what the other players will identify as treasonous.

If conflicting accounts are presented, then let the players argue and try to come up with a compromise or justification for their stories. If things get deadlocked, then run a flashback scene using the normal PARANOIA rules to find out what 'really' happened.

MISSION RECORD FORM

Form Ref: INTSEC/CA/694373-A/CPU/CA/4366644-D (revised). Failing to complete this form, providing incorrect or incomplete information, using a pen of the wrong colour, marking or staining this form, allowing this form to fall into enemy hands, making illegal copies of this form, forming the form into another form or exposing this form to biohazards, radioactivity, Communist propaganda or mutie cooties is treasonous. All information in this form is warranted to be wholly correct and accurate by the applicant. In the event that this form is damaged in the course of a mission, replacement copies will be extracted from the MemoMax records of your next clone. Brain damage caused by rapid extraction of MemoMax data is the fault of the applicant, not this form.

Name: _____ (I have/have not registered my mutation) Mission Code: _____
 Service Group: CPU [] InSec [] Armed Forces [] PLC [] HPD&MC [] R&D [] PS [] Tech []
 MBD: Team Leader [] Loyalty [] Hygiene [] Comms & Records [] Equipment [] Happiness []
 Other (please specify) _____ []

ALL SECTIONS MUST BE COMPLETED

Section 1: Your Troubleshooter Team

Name	Service Group	MBD	Notes	Rate this team member
				/10
				/10
				/10
				/10
				/10
				/10

The MVP for this team was: _____!

Section 2: Reporting

The mission was: Completed Successfully [] Completed Very Successfully [] Other [] Totally Lethal []

I would like to nominate the following citizens for their meritorious conduct:

_____ : for _____
 _____ : for _____
 _____ : for _____

I would like to report the following citizens for illegal or insubordinate behaviour

Event Reference #: _____ I did/did not condone/stop/observe/participate in/attempt to prevent this behaviour.
 _____ : for _____
 Event Reference #: _____ I did/did not condone/stop/observe/participate in/attempt to prevent this behaviour.
 _____ : for _____
 Event Reference #: _____ I did/did not condone/stop/observe/participate in/attempt to prevent this behaviour.
 _____ : for _____
 Event Reference #: _____ I did/did not condone/stop/observe/participate in/attempt to prevent this behaviour.
 _____ : for _____

I would like to report the following citizens for TREASONOUS behaviour

Event Reference #: _____ I did/did not condone/stop/observe/participate in/attempt to prevent this treason.
 _____ : for _____
 Event Reference #: _____ I did/did not condone/stop/observe/participate in/attempt to prevent this treason.
 _____ : for _____
 Event Reference #: _____ I did/did not condone/stop/observe/participate in/attempt to prevent this treason.
 _____ : for _____
 Event Reference #: _____ I did/did not condone/stop/observe/participate in/attempt to prevent this treason.
 _____ : for _____

.....

Section 3: Internal Use Only

Deliberate Errors and Falsifications: [] [] [] []
 Recommendation: No action [] Probation [] Censure [] Medication [] Brainscrub [] T&R [] E []
 Validated Meritorious Actions: [] [] [] []
 Recommendation: No action [] Credit Bonus [] Promotion [] Other Reward [] Investigate []
 Validated Treasons and Insubordinations [] [] [] []
 Recommendation: No action [] Probation [] Censure [] Medication [] Brainscrub [] T&R [] E []

Section 4: Observed Events Of Note

Event #	Description	Participants	Authorised? YES/NO	Illegal YES/NO	Treasonous? YES/ NO
---------	-------------	--------------	-----------------------	-------------------	------------------------

If AUTHORISED: Who authorised it? _____
 If ILLEGAL: Was it: Unusual or Insubordinate Behaviour [] Unhappiness [] Ignoring or Avoiding Proper Procedure []
 Vandalism and Wanton Destruction [] Abuse of Resources or Position []
 If TREASONOUS: Was it: Disobeying an order [] Unauthorised Termination [] Sabotage []
 Membership of a Secret Society [] Possession of Unregistered Mutation [] Other Treason []
 What Proof Do You Have Of This Event?
 I was an eyewitness [] and so were _____ & _____ []
 Recorded Data on PDC [] Multicorder [] Other Data Storage Device _____ []
 Communications & Recording Officer should have it recorded, right? [] Vague Hunch []

Event #	Description	Participants	Authorised? YES/NO	Illegal YES/NO	Treasonous? YES/ NO
---------	-------------	--------------	-----------------------	-------------------	------------------------

If AUTHORISED: Who authorised it? _____
 If ILLEGAL: Was it: Unusual or Insubordinate Behaviour [] Unhappiness [] Ignoring or Avoiding Proper Procedure []
 Vandalism and Wanton Destruction [] Abuse of Resources or Position []
 If TREASONOUS: Was it: Disobeying an order [] Unauthorised Termination [] Sabotage []
 Membership of a Secret Society [] Possession of Unregistered Mutation [] Other Treason []
 What Proof Do You Have Of This Event?
 I was an eyewitness [] and so were _____ & _____ []
 Recorded Data on PDC [] Multicorder [] Other Data Storage Device _____ []
 Communications & Recording Officer should have it recorded, right? [] Vague Hunch []
 Other (specify): _____

Event #	Description	Participants	Authorised? YES/NO	Illegal YES/NO	Treasonous? YES/ NO
---------	-------------	--------------	-----------------------	-------------------	------------------------

If AUTHORISED: Who authorised it? _____
 If ILLEGAL: Was it: Unusual or Insubordinate Behaviour [] Unhappiness [] Ignoring or Avoiding Proper Procedure []
 Vandalism and Wanton Destruction [] Abuse of Resources or Position []
 If TREASONOUS: Was it: Disobeying an order [] Unauthorised Termination [] Sabotage []
 Membership of a Secret Society [] Possession of Unregistered Mutation [] Other Treason []
 What Proof Do You Have Of This Event?
 I was an eyewitness [] and so were _____ & _____ []
 Recorded Data on PDC [] Multicorder [] Other Data Storage Device _____ []
 Communications & Recording Officer should have it recorded, right? [] Vague Hunch []
 Other (specify): _____

Event #	Description	Participants	Authorised? YES/NO	Illegal YES/NO	Treasonous? YES/ NO
---------	-------------	--------------	-----------------------	-------------------	------------------------

If AUTHORISED: Who authorised it? _____
 If ILLEGAL: Was it: Unusual or Insubordinate Behaviour [] Unhappiness [] Ignoring or Avoiding Proper Procedure []
 Vandalism and Wanton Destruction [] Abuse of Resources or Position []
 If TREASONOUS: Was it: Disobeying an order [] Unauthorised Termination [] Sabotage []
 Membership of a Secret Society [] Possession of Unregistered Mutation [] Other Treason []
 What Proof Do You Have Of This Event?
 I was an eyewitness [] and so were _____ & _____ []
 Recorded Data on PDC [] Multicorder [] Other Data Storage Device _____ []
 Communications & Recording Officer should have it recorded, right? [] Vague Hunch []
 Other (specify): _____

ONCE MORE INTO THE BREACH

SPYCRAFT COMBAT, STEP-BY-STEP. BY LOREN DEAN.

The team moves quickly down the volcano base corridor, coming up on a door marked 'Master Control.' Sherman is guns-up in the lead, his rifle shouldered and ready. He and Gentry move to flank the door, with Bootleg standing a few paces behind them covering the entrance. At Sherman's nod, Johnny kicks it in, the doorjamb's light metal groaning as the latch tears loose.

Fanning out a few steps into the cavernous control room, the team brings weapons to bear, searching for hostiles. The room itself is circular, 100 feet across, surrounding a holographic projection of the globe ringed with tiny images of killer satellites in orbit.

The infamous Doctor Gunther whirls to face the team from his slightly elevated position behind his master console across the room. He straightens, adjusts his monocle, and slams his fist into a big red button, shouting, 'You're too late, fools! Now die!' Eight of the mastermind's guards grab weapons and rush toward the heroes...

To many players, RPG combat can be a daunting challenge. The rules surrounding it are dense and concentrated, the process is time-consuming, and it's not always obvious how all the die rolls and modifiers translate to cool action. In particular, *Spycraft 2.0's* diverse array of options can leave some confused. Here we offer a typical combat sequence using this robust system, including the mechanics behind the scenes and how it all plays out in the game world.

Before diving into the nitty-gritty behind the mayhem, let's introduce our cast of characters...

Sherman (Pointman 4/Counter-Terrorist 1): Sherman is armed with a readied RSA AK-47 assault rifle liberated from a dead guard in a previous encounter, and still has his trusty Colt M1911A1 service pistol tucked into a tactical holster. Sherman possesses the Ambush Basics feat, which grants him a bonus die of sneak attack damage.

Bootleg (Snoop 5): Bootleg also has a readied RSA AK-47, gained from a similarly dead guard, and carries a .40 S&W HK P7 backup pistol in a concealed holster. She's not a combat character and has no combat-oriented feats.

Johnny (Martial Artist 5): As an unarmed combat specialist, Johnny doesn't carry a firearm. He has the following combat-oriented feats: Kicking Basics, Kicking Moves, and Martial Arts, all of which improve his general unarmed capability.

Gentry (Sleuth 5): Gentry packs a Colt M1911A1 service pistol, which would be in a shoulder holster, but he's announced prior to combat that it's out and readied. He possesses the Surge of Speed feat, which allows him to take 1 non-attack action during each round.

Doctor Gunther: This is the episode's mastermind, so his job consists of barking orders to his minions, menacing about his doomsday satellites, and cackling with mad glee. Gunther's unarmed as this encounter begins, but his .44 Magnum Ruger Super Redhawk hunting revolver is stashed in a holdout compartment under his master console. Of course, its preferred use is to show minions the 'price of failure,' but Gunther figures the weapon

will do just fine against the intruding agents. The good Doctor possesses the *mastermind* and *treacherous* qualities, which improves the GC's action die type for him (to d10) and generally improves his chance of survival.

Gunther's Minions: Also referred to as 'the goons,' these terrified mercenaries fight and die at Gunther's order. They possess the *horde* quality, which sets the minion squad's size to double that of the team size (instead of equal). Thus, the agents face eight of them instead of four. Each of the goons is armed with an RSA AK-47 and all of these weapons are slung when the encounter begins.

And now, Action!

Everyone rolls 1d20 and adds their Initiative modifiers. The GC creates a master list of the results: 22 for Johnny, 18 for Gunther, 17 for Sherman and the goons (Sherman's Initiative bonus is higher, so he goes just before them), 16 for Bootleg, and 15 for Gentry. As usual, the GC makes one roll for all the goons since tracking them individually would be cumbersome and offer little overall benefit.

ROUND 1

The minions are 80 ft. away and their weapons are slung. Johnny knows he has to close the distance, but doesn't want to just run out in front and draw all the hostile fire. Planning for next round, he chooses to Regroup, increasing his Initiative by 6 (5 + his Intelligence bonus).



Doctor Gunther is next. He spends the round indulging a character flaw, shouting and exhorting his minions against the agents.

Sherman takes a free action to sarcastically mutter 'yeah, whatever' in Johnny's general direction, then uses a full action to Strafe the group of goons. They're low-rent bad guys, so they're clustered together but didn't have the forethought or courtesy to stand in a neat line. Some are located behind others and can't be targeted with a Strafe action. Sherman can only Strafe five goons, all in adjacent squares. Fortunately, Sherman's AK-47 has a full magazine (30 rounds), so he plenty of ammunition to make the attack (at 3 shots per square, it will consume 15 rounds).

Sherman's base ranged attack bonus is +6. He's within the AK-47's first range increment, so he suffers no penalty there. The minions haven't been attacked yet

and so they're still *flat-footed*, but their Dexterity scores of 10 offer no bonus to Defense, so this has no effect the attack either. Sherman's Strength is higher than his rifle's recoil, so he suffers no penalty for making a Strafe attack with it.

He rolls 1d20, getting a 12, for a total of 18, but he knows this won't be enough against all the minions' Defense values, which increase from the first Strafe target to the last. He uses his Counter-Terrorist core ability, *shoot first*, which allows him to spend 1 action die and roll 2, applying both. He scores a 2 and a 4. The 4 'explodes,' allowing him to roll that die again. He rolls a 3 the next time, for a total bonus of 9, which brings his final Attack roll to 27. Sherman feels good about that total, and opts not to spend any more action dice to boost the attack result.

The minions' base Defense is 14. Modifiers applied by the Strafe action increase the first target's Defense to 16, the second target's Defense to 18, and so on. Sherman hits all five minions (whose modified Defense values are 16, 18, 20, 22, and 24, respectively).

Each minion hit suffers the rifle's standard damage – 3d6 lethal – plus an additional 1d6 sneak attack damage from Sherman's Ambush Basics feat because the enemy is *flat-footed*. In total, each minion suffers 16 points of damage. Since they're standard NPCs, each must make a Damage save with a DC of 10 + 1/2 the damage inflicted (rounded down), or 18. The mission's Threat Level is 4 and the goons' Damage save Roman Numeral is III, which translates to a +5 Damage save bonus. Respectively, their rolls are 5, for a 10 (the first goon dies), 14, for a 19 (the second goon lives, but the 16 points of lethal damage carries over toward the next attack), 19, for a 24 (ditto), 8, for a 13 (another death), and 13, for an 18 (another injured survivor).

Next up, at the bottom half of Initiative Count 17, three of the surviving goons take one half action to ready their rifles and their other half action to fire (the other living goons dive for cover behind Doctor Gunther's holoprojector). As the attacking goons can only manage 1 half action to fire, they can't Strafe (which would allow them to attack all four agents at once). They can, however, take a Standard Attack action with the Burst trick, which allows each of them to fire three shots at a single team member.

Each goon's base ranged attack bonus is +2. There's no range penalty, but the AK's recoil is 11, which is higher than the goons' Strength scores of 10 and therefore inflicts a –1 attack penalty. Each minion has a +1 modifier for these attacks.

The first goon fires at Sherman and rolls a 15, for a total of 16. Sherman's Defense is 14, so only one bullet finds its mark (with Burst fire, two shots hit if the attack result exceeds the target's Defense by 5 or more, and three shots hit if the attack result exceeds the target's Defense by 10 or more). The GC rolls 3d6 lethal damage, scoring a 13, which decreases Sherman's vitality points from 34 to 21.

The second goon also bursts at Sherman, rolling... a natural 20! Sherman's hit with two bullets, but since the goon lacks the *treacherous* NPC quality the attack can't be activated as a critical hit. The GC rolls damage twice (6d6), inflicting 27 more points of lethal damage.

Sherman's vitality points drop to 0 and his wounds drop from 12 to 6. This is bad news. Because he suffered wound damage, Sherman becomes *fatigued*, which reduces his Strength and Dexterity by 2 each, and his Initiative Count by 3 (to 14). Now he acts after the minions and in fact, he now goes dead last in the round.

The third goon takes a Burst as well, hoping to finish Sherman off. Sherman's Defense is now 13 (he loses a point of Dexterity bonus due to his *fatigued* condition), but the GC luckily only rolls an 8, for a total of 9. A miss.

Bootleg acts next. She only has a ranged attack bonus of +3, as she's far from a hardened combatant. She knows she's unlikely to hit any target more than once, and based on Sherman's turn knows that just one hit may not be enough to take a goon down, so she decides to sow some confusion. She takes a Cover Fire action targeting one of the goons behind the projector. While Cover Fire counts as an attack, and requires a full action to perform, no attack check is made, which is good, since Doctor Gunther's holoprojector's provides the goon with 1/2 cover, increasing his Defense against her attacks to 18.

The Cover Fire action forces the goon to make a Will save with a DC of 10 + Bootleg's attack bonus (for a final DC of 13). The Goon's Resilience bonus is only +1 and he rolls an 8, so he fails the save. He suffers a -4 penalty with all attack and skill checks for the next round. Bootleg hopes that's enough to keep him from hurting anyone else on her team.

Bootleg hasn't taken any move actions this round, so she can also take a bonus 5-ft. step, which she uses to shift directly in front of Sherman, taking him out of the goons' lines of sight. She's not going to let him die on her watch.

At the bottom of the round, Gentry spends his standard two half actions moving, closing 60 ft. on the goons. Then, once he's within CQB Range (30 ft.), he activates his Surge of Speed feat to Taunt a second of the goons behind cover. He makes a Manipulate (Cha) check, for

which his skill bonus is +6 (it's not a class skill for him). He rolls a 9, for a total of 15. Wanting to make sure he gets the goon's attention, Gentry spends an action die to boost his skill check. He rolls a 3, for a boosted total of 18. Still not confident, Gentry uses one more action die, rolling a 4, which explodes, totaling out at 10, for an overall result of 28.

The goon makes a Sense Motive (Wis) check to resist the Taunt, but he doesn't have the Sense Motive skill, so his Competence bonus of +2 is added to the roll. There's no way he can resist with a straight roll, so the GC spends an action die, which boosts the result by 1d6 because the NPC is a minion. With a 13 on the d20 and a 3 on the action die, the goon's total Sense Motive result is only 18. The GC spends another action die, this time rolling a 5, which brings the total to 23. It's still not enough, but the GC wants to save the rest of his dice.

Gentry's goading distracts the minion, who will have to attack the Sleuth during the next round. That works for Gentry; he's still got all his vitality points.

For heroically (or foolishly) advancing into the goons' point blank range to help save a comrade, the GC awards Gentry with a bonus action die (which also helps replenish the GCs pool, as he used a couple to try and aid the second goon).

With Gentry's actions done, the round is over.

Gunfire erupts throughout the room as Doctor Gunther shouts, 'You can't stop my satellites! Minions! Kill them! Make them pay for this vulgar intrusion!'

Johnny hesitates to keep the sightline clear for Sherman, and the counter-terrorist grudgingly mows into the goons, a red-hot brass fountain erupting in a gleaming

arc from his AK. Two minions die immediately, and half the remainder dive for cover. The other half return fire, the staccato barking of the assault rifles rising to a snarling crescendo. Sherman staggers, taking at least one hit...

Bootleg steps in front of him and lays down some cover fire, while Gentry races toward a flanking position to try and draw some attention. Sherman struggles to get his bearings, fighting the clouds forming at the edges of his vision.

ROUND 2

The Initiative order looks similar to last round, except that Johnny's Count is now 28 and Sherman now acts last.

Johnny decreases his Initiative Count by 20 to Press, which gives him an extra half action during the current round. First, though, he uses a free action to make an Athletics/Speed Push check to increase his Speed. His total Athletics skill bonus is +10 and he rolls an 18, for a total of 28. Needing 2 more points for the desired result, Johnny spends an action die and rolls exactly the 2 he needs. This increases his base Speed to 40 ft. for the next minute. He'll suffer 2d6 subdual damage at the end of that time, which could potentially knock him out, but he's hoping that the fight will be over before then.

Johnny uses his bonus Press action to move forward 40 ft. and place himself between Sherman and the goons who are still in the open. Due to the Press action, Johnny's remaining actions happen on his new Initiative count of 8, so he's done for now.

The agents are closing on Gunther's position, so the mastermind uses a full action to retrieve his Ruger Super Redhawk from its hidden compartment.

The goons go next, and typically they'd have to make Resolve/Morale checks before they act (as they lost 1/4 their number during last round). The check's DC is 0, though, because they're Supportive of their leader, so they can't fail and fight on.

The goons out in the open have a clear line of sight to Johnny and Bootleg, and either partially or completely obstructed lines of sight to Sherman. They now realize that their attack bonuses aren't as effective as they first assumed, so instead of applying the Burst trick each of them Aims at a target and fires a single shot. The Aim action grants each of them a +1 attack check bonus against his target and boosts his Initiative Count by 1. The first goon attacks Johnny, rolling a 5. Adding his total attack bonus of +2 (which includes the Aim bonus), he misses.

The second goon also attacks Johnny and rolls a 17, for a total of 19. A hit! Johnny's vitality points drop from 45 to 31.

The third goon fires at Bootleg, whose Defense is 16 – more than enough to avoid the total attack check result of 12.

The other three goons behind the holoprojector all fire on Gentry. The players might assume this is payback for Gentry's wildly successful Taunt, but the second goon is still under the effects of Bootleg's Cover Fire action, which inflicts a –4 penalty with all his attack checks. He's unlikely to hit either Johnny or Bootleg (who have high Defense bonuses), or Sherman (who's directly behind Bootleg, and benefits from cover), so he decides to go for the easier shot. The third minion, admittedly, is just following suit.

The fourth (Taunted) goon stands to unleash a Burst attack in Gentry's direction, which the GC thinks is



appropriate to the circumstances despite its dubious strategic value. However, as the weapon's muzzle swings in line, Gentry spends an action die to enter a Stand Off with the attacker. Gentry must make a Reflex save (DC 12). His Reflex save bonus is +4 and he rolls a 10, for a total of 14, which means that the goon's attack is cancelled and the two combatants become locked in a mortal test of wills, each of them pointing their weapon at the other and waiting for him to flinch. It also means that both characters are now *vulnerable* (Gentry loses his Dexterity bonus to Defense, which lowers his Defense to 13), and neither can take any non-free action until the Stand Off is complete. Gentry's Initiative Count also drops by 5 (to 10).

The fifth goon Aims but just before he makes his Standard Attack against Gentry, the agent spends his last action die and tries to add him to the Stand Off as well (Stand Off is a free action and can be taken by those already in a Stand Off). Gentry rolls a 9 for his Reflex save this time, totaling 13 and narrowly adding the second goon to the silent, staring fray. Gentry's Initiative drops by another 5, to 5. He's sacrificing his own reaction time in order to keep the minions at bay.

Gentry can't stop the sixth and final goon from firing on him, but the goon's first attack roll is a 2, which falls within the AK-47's error range. Knowing her teammate is out of action dice, Bootleg spends 2 action dice to activate the error as a critical miss, which translates as a misfire rather than a jam since the rifle has the *dependable* quality. The minion spends his second half action growling and clearing the misfire.

With the goons done, the GC surveys the scene. For gutsy use of a double Stand Off the GC awards Gentry another bonus action die.

Bootleg goes next, and knowing that Johnny will be in melee with goons 4, 5, and 6 before the end of the round she trains her weapon on the goon whose error she just activated. She Aims to raise her attack bonus by 1, which she hopes will partially offset the goon's cover bonus, and makes a Standard Attack. The goon's Defense is currently 18, but Bootleg rolls a natural 20, which is a threat! She spends her last action die to activate the critical hit and automatically kill the poor bastard.

Gentry is embroiled in the Stand Off and can only take free actions for the moment. He passes and the action continues with Sherman at the bottom of the round. Like the minions, Sherman has suffered a morale trigger (he came under automatic fire from more than two

opponents at once), so he must make a Resolve/Morale check vs. a DC of 15. His Resolve skill bonus is +10 and he rolls a 12, for a total of 22, so he's fine.

Sherman uses his bonus 5-ft. step to move out from behind Bootleg, firing a Burst attack at the now-*vulnerable* second goon (one of the two locked in the Stand Off with Gentry). The goon benefits from 1/2 cover, so his Defense is 18. Sherman's got a total attack bonus of +5 and rolls a 13, for a total of 18, which is just enough to hit the goon with one shot. He rolls a whopping 21 points of damage (he gets an extra sneak attack die vs. the *vulnerable* goon), which means that goon's now suffered a total of 37 points of damage (factoring in the 16 points he suffered last round). His Damage Save DC is now 28 (10 + 18). He rolls a 19, but even with his bonus of +6 this is only a 25. He dies, which ends the Stand Off.

With his second half action, Sherman fires a Burst at the third goon, who's just emerged from the Stand Off and is no longer *vulnerable*. He rolls a 9, which gives him a total attack result of 14. He needs an 18, so he spends an action die. It comes up 3, and Sherman spends his last action die to push his total over the top. He rolls 15 points of damage, bringing the third goon's new damage total to 31 (and bringing his Damage Save DC to 25). The goon only rolls a 2 with his Damage save, and his corpse hits the floor, a giant smoking hole in his chest.

For taking fearsome advantage of the *vulnerable* opponents and bailing Gentry out, the GC awards Sherman an action die.

Initiative Count 8 rolls around and Johnny gets another chance to act. He uses his first half action to complete his movement, advancing another 40 ft. into melee range of the goons hiding behind the holoprojector. He levels a Kick at the fourth goon, activating the Power Kick trick

from his Kicking Moves feat. This grants the attack the *armor-piercing* (2) and *takedown* qualities, though only the latter matters in this case. The goon's Defense is 14 and Johnny has a base attack bonus of +8. He rolls a 7 for a total of 15, which thanks to bonuses from his Martial Arts feat inflicts 8 points of lethal damage. The goon must make a Damage Save with a DC of 14. He rolls an 8 – precisely what he needed to roll to stay alive.

The goon still needs to save vs. the *takedown* effect. He rolls a Fortitude save with a DC equal to the damage suffered (8) using his Resilience bonus of +1 and scores a pathetic 3, failing. He becomes *sprawled*, falling to the floor and becoming *vulnerable*. Next round, the goon may only take the Drop Prone or Stand Up actions and suffers a -2 with attack checks.

Johnny's Initiative decreases by 2 for the Kick attack. Technically, Gentry's Initiative Count of 5 comes next, but he's already acted for the round, so it's time to move on.

Johnny explodes into action, leaping through the hellish crossfire to close on the minions with near-inhuman speed. Gentry, whose understanding of human nature is unparalleled, makes eye contact with two of the minions behind the holoprojector, and they hesitate just long enough for Sherman to bring them both down.

The third goon behind the holoprojector suffers a freak misfire, which he follows with an amateur mistake: standing up from cover to work the AK's bolt. He realizes his mistake just as Bootleg unloads a shot in his head.

ROUND 3

The GC's Initiative chart now looks like this: Doctor Gunther at 18, the remaining three goons after their boss at 18, Bootleg at 17, Sherman at 14, Johnny at 6, and Gentry rounding things out at 5.

Gunther Aims at Gentry, shouts 'Never!' (a free action), and fires, making a Standard Attack. Gentry spends his last remaining action die to again attempt a Stand Off, but fails the Reflex save (Gunther is harder to trick). Worse, Gentry's Initiative Count drops by another 5 for the attempt, which brings him to 0 and sends him *reeling*. He loses his next two half actions. Too much happened too quickly behind the holoprojector, and Gentry must take a few moments to catch up to the action.

The mastermind's attack proceeds. Gentry's Defense is 14 and Gunther's base attack bonus is +4. The Super Redhawk's recoil, however, is 14, which is higher than Gunther's Strength, so he suffers a -1 penalty. Fortunately, his Aiming bonus compensates. Gunther rolls a 19 – a threat – and since Gunther's a special NPC, he can activate threats as critical hits. The GC spends an action die and rolls for damage: 2d6+2. He scores maximum damage, 14 points, which is all applied directly to Gentry's wound points, bypassing his vitality entirely. Gentry's Constitution is 12, so his wound points drop to -2. He falls *unconscious* and begins to die.

Gunther takes another free action to cackle with mad glee.

The minions lost half their number last round, so the GC must make another Resolve/Morale check for them, this time against a DC of 5 (base 20 minus 15 because their leader is still present and they're still Supportive of him). The GC easily makes this check and the goons keep their heads despite mounting casualties.

The goons must now deal with Johnny. All three are adjacent, so if they want to fire on him they must move away or suffer a stiff penalty (-8 for shooting at an adjacent target who's also engaged in melee, and +4 to the attack's error range).

The fourth goon takes a Stand Up action but since this is a movement action he can't also take a bonus 5-ft. step. Neither can he use the Withdraw action to get clear, since it's a full action and he only has 1 half action remaining. His only recourse is to attack and hope for the best. Rather than firing his rifle, he attacks unarmed, sparing himself the penalties for shooting in melee. He rolls a 13 for a total of 15, which results in a miss.

The other two goons take 5-ft. steps away from Johnny and the first uses a Delay action to let the other get free. This decreases both their Initiative Counts by 1. They consider firing on Johnny but think the better of it. One shoots at Bootleg and the other shoots at Sherman.

Bootleg's Defense is 16. The goon rolls a 16, and with no modifiers to the roll, hits the agent with a single bullet. Bootleg suffers 9 points of damage.

Sherman is now out from behind cover, so his Defense is only 13 (remember, he's *fatigued*). The Goon declares a Burst and rolls a 12, which misses.

At Initiative Count 17, Bootleg Aims at Doctor Gunther, then immediately uses the bonus to make a Standard Attack. The villain's Defense is 14, but he benefits from 1/4 cover behind the console, which increases his Defense to 16. Bootleg scores that on the die, which brings her total to 20, and she inflicts 14 points of lethal damage. As expected, it's not enough to bring the mastermind down.

Sherman spends his first half action to reload his AK-47 and then fires a Burst at Doctor Gunther. He rolls a 17, adding his +5 attack bonus (down from +6 because he's *fatigued*). His total is 22. This exceeds Gunther's modified Defense of 16 by 6, which means that Gunther is hit with two bullets. Sherman rolls damage, inflicting 24 more points of lethal damage on the (not so good)

Doctor. This strips Gunther of all his vitality and inflicts 4 points of wound damage. (The Doctor's a special NPC, so he possesses vitality and wound points rather than a Damage Save). Gunther is now *fatigued* and suffers the attendant effects.

As a Level 5 Martial Artist, Johnny has an effective Reach of 10 ft., so even though the fifth and sixth goons aren't immediately adjacent to him, they're still in danger. Johnny attacks the fourth goon first, though, making a Standard Attack with a roll of 6. His unarmed attack bonus of +8 brings the total to 14, which hits, and he rolls 1d6+3 for damage, inflicting 7 more points of damage on the battered goon.

The goon's suffered a total of 15 points of damage now and must make a Damage save with a DC of 17. With a +6 Damage save bonus, he can stay vertical with any roll of 11 or more. Sadly, he rolls a 6 and dies.

Johnny then lays out a Power Kick on the fifth goon, rolling a 15 (for a total of 23). He Initiative Count decreases by 2 for the Kick, but he inflicts 7 lethal damage. The goon's Damage save DC is 13 and he rolls a 2. He dies as well.

Johnny's had a good round, but Gentry less so. At the bottom of the Initiative curve, his wound damage drops to -3. Also, he must make a d% roll to see if he stabilizes. His result must be equal or lower than his Constitution score (in this case, 12) or he continues to die. He rolls a 49, and approaches one step closer to his final mission.

In the heat of battle, Gentry loses track of Gunther just long enough for the mastermind to get the drop on him. 'Never!' The Doctor's cry rings out across the room a split-second before his enormous revolver buries a slug in the agent's chest.

Johnny, enraged at his apparent loss of his teammate, crushes into the remaining minions in a whirlwind of limbs. Two fall with brutal, bone-crunching efficiency, leaving only one standing. The minion glances nervously at the door, then back to Gunther, who's fully manic now, waving his revolver and screaming like a banshee.

ROUND 4

Initiative now looks like this: 17 for Bootleg, 17 for the last goon, 16 for Doctor Gunther, 14 for Sherman, 4 for Johnny, and Gentry pulling up the end at 0.

The agents have effectively lost one-quarter of their number (as no one has had time to see if Gentry is actually dead or not), so each of them except Sherman must make a Morale check with a DC of 15 (Sherman's DC drops to 10 because he succeeded at his last morale check). Johnny rolls a total of 16 and Sherman scores a 17, both successes. Bootleg, however, only has a



Resolve skill bonus of +3 and only rolls an 8. Her total is 11, and because she failed her check by 5 or fewer points she suffers reservation in the form of 1d6 stress damage (the GC rolls a 4 for this damage).

Doctor Gunther's a maniac, Gentry's down, Sherman's a mess, and it's all starting to get to Bootleg just a little bit, but she has the highest initiative this round and she's gotta step up if her team's going to win the day. She uses her first half action to Aim at the last goon, then follows with a single-shot Standard Attack. She rolls a 1, which is an error with her weapon (an AK-47). The GC unloads 4 action dice on the error, which after applying the weapon's *dependable* quality prompts a catastrophic misfire, rendering the gun useless until repaired. Bootleg gulps and starts scrambling for her backup pistol.

The misfire is a boon for the last minion, but he's the last survivor of his squad, outnumbered by more than 2 to 1. His Morale check DC starts at a staggering 25, which only drops to 10 because Gunther's still standing. The GC isn't feeling any special need to help the heroes out just now, but given Gunther's manic gun-waving he feels compelled to also apply a -2 discretionary modifier to the goon's Resolve check. He rolls a 4, which drops to a 2 – far, far less than needed to keep the minion in the fight. With a failure of 8, the GC must spend 1 action die or the goon breaks into a run for the nearest cover. He declines and the goon flees.

The goon spends his first half action to scramble behind the holoprojector, after which he fires a Burst at Sherman (he hasn't got much of a chance of hitting Johnny, and Bootleg is too far away to be threatening with a handgun). The GC rolls a 15, which is enough to hit Sherman. Fortunately, the attack scores only 5 points of damage. Sherman has 1 wound remaining.

However, as he's suffered wound damage a second time now, his condition moves from *fatigued* to *exhausted*. His Strength and Dexterity scores each drop by 6 and his Speed is reduced to 1/2 normal (in this case to 15 ft.). At Initiative Count 14, Gunther Aims at Johnny and makes a Standard Attack with his Redhawk. Johnny's Defense is 18 and Gunther's attack bonus is +4 (with the recoil penalty, as before, offset by the Aim bonus). Gunther rolls a 12, for a total of 16, and the GC spends an action die to roll an additional 1d10. (Gunther's a *mastermind* so he gets better action dice than other villains.) He rolls an 8, boosting the roll enough to score a hit. Johnny suffers 10 points of damage, bringing his current vitality down to 21.

Sherman goes next, but he's not well at all. One more wound and he's down for the count, and his Strength and Dexterity scores are so low that he has little hope of firing his AK-47 accurately. He chooses the Drop Prone action (which increases his Defense) and uses his remaining half action to pull and ready a liquid skin patch from his gear.

Johnny uses a half action to move behind the master console with Doctor Gunther, engaging him in melee. This will have the happy byproduct of making the Doctor's Redhawk attacks much more difficult. Johnny uses his second half action to Kick again, rolling a 10, for a total of 18. He connects with Gunther, scoring 13 points of damage, which brings Gunther's wound point total below 0. The mastermind falls *unconscious* and begins *dying*.

Just like Gentry, who rolls again to stabilize. His d% roll comes up 72 and his wound points continue to drop.

Gunther swings his revolver to bear on Johnny, screaming 'And now YOU!' In a move worthy of bullet-

time cinematography, Johnny leaps over and past the bullet, delivering a sound boot to the Doctor's head. The mastermind flies back into the master console and slides to the floor, his eyes fluttering shut.

Sherman takes another bullet and collapses. He digs into his tac-vest for a liquid skin patch as Bootleg tries to finish off the last minion. Unfortunately, the chambered round blows out the side of her weapon and she knows the gun's toast. She drops the Kalashnikov and goes for her backup piece...

ROUND 5

Approaching thirty seconds of game time into the combat, there's only one enemy left standing, and he's a poorly trained mercenary faced with a horrendous Morale check. His leader's down and he's surrounded with no hope of escape, so he's got to beat an astronomical DC of 50! Worse, he failed his last Morale check, so he gains no DC reduction from that. His heart just isn't in it anymore and he only rolls an 8, for a total of 10. Failing by 40 points, he surrenders unconditionally.

It takes the last of Gunther's minions no more than a split-second to realize he's better off in custody than the morgue. He slides his rifle out from behind the holoprojector and mutters 'No more' as he slowly gets to his feet.

The team splits, half moving to arrest the survivors and the rest tending to the wounded. They've defeated another maniac bent on world domination, but they got close to losing some of their own today. They'll get a week or two of R&R, but soon they'll be back in the fray, defending the innocent from unseen, unfelt threats. How long before they're not so lucky? How long before one of them doesn't come home, or they fail and it doesn't matter?

Best to leave that to fate, they decide. No need to brood when there's work to be done...

This example illustrates several things that set *Spycraft 2.0* apart from many of its contemporaries. First, even non-combat characters can be effective in a fight. Bootleg and Gentry used a couple of tricks (neither of which required an actual Attack roll) to keep half the goons out of the fight long enough for Sherman and Johnny to mop up.

Action dice are an amazing tool at the disposal of every player, including the GC. They're critical to the cinematic

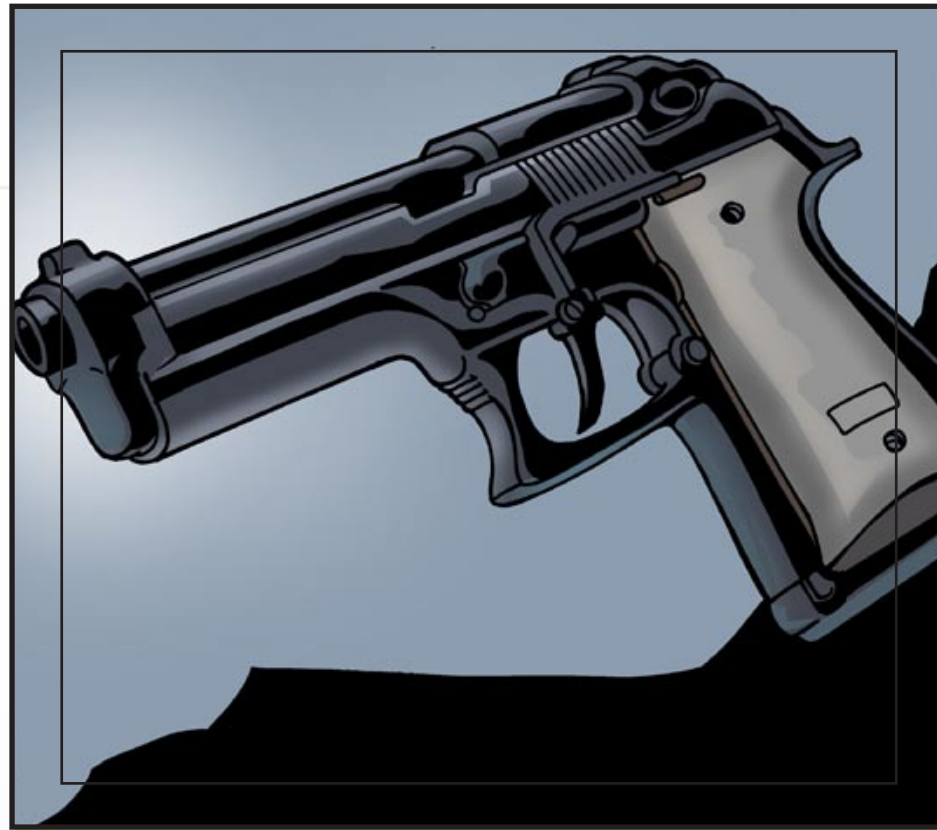
nature of *Spycraft* play, and as this combat shows a nice flow of them across the table promotes action and all-around fun.

Guns are dangerous, but fists and feet shouldn't be discounted. Much is made of the idea of automatic weapons, but the *Spycraft* engine is built to offer just as much power and versatility to melee and unarmed options.

Body armor makes a difference. Just a few points of damage reduction would have kept both Gentry and Sherman in the fight for the duration.

Lastly, the GC is a player, too. He needs to keep track of more details than the players, but *Spycraft* offers him just as many ways to whoop and holler at the large-caliber mayhem as the players themselves.

Feeling the need to wreak some devastation? Grab your mission profiles and dive right in! There's always room for more bodi- uh, heroes. There's always room for more heroes.



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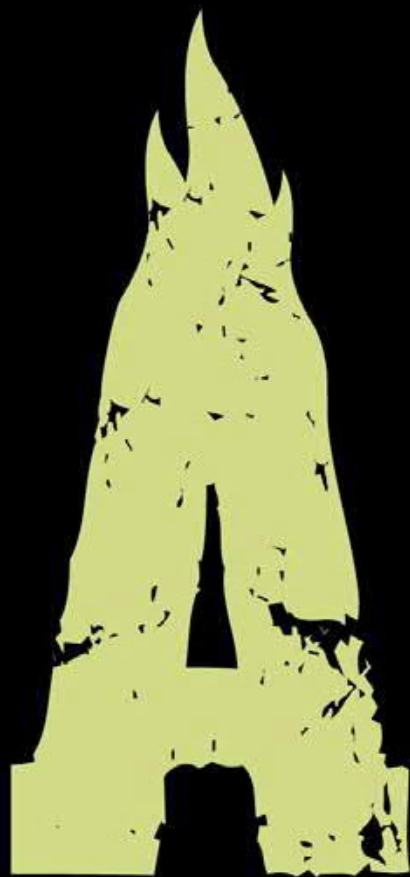
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