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Signs & Portents

9

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MGP 5509



Cover art from Book of the Planes by Vincent Hie, whose dragon graced the front of Issue 1

Editorial

Heya!

I've been thinking this month about playing occasional 'guest' characters in games. At Mongoose Hall we now have a Monday game and a Thursday game, with a spread of players in each. It came to pass a few weeks ago that I was at a loose end on a Thursday (me being a Monday bloke normally) so I asked if I could guest in the Thursday Judge Dredd game. Ian Belcher, who is running the Dredd game suggested I take on a cameo role as a desk-bound older judge.

I have to confess at first I was uncertain. It sounded awfully dull and I wanted an evening's entertainment, but after a bit of thought I came up with an idea. I remembered an inspector I had worked for when I was a policeman many moons ago. This inspector rejoiced in the name of Piggy Milner (Piggy wasn't his actual name, but he was, how can I put it...rotund) and was larger than life in many senses of the word. With his northern accent (that's north England, everybody) and propensity for looking after number one, I felt that it might be great fun to play him as this character, Judge Elias.

The whole idea was that Matthew's judge character (who was just back from a spell in an Iso-cube for a spot of manslaughter) needed supervision on the street, and Judge Elias was considered the right sort of chap to get him back on the straight and narrow.

The evening started well as I fell asleep during the briefing and spilled coffee down my uniform, before revealing that my judge's uniform was set off by carpet slippers. When we actually went out I revealed I hadn't been a street judge for four years and that I never loaded the weapons on my Lawmaster motorcycle. Next I stopped off on the way to a prison riot to buy cream cakes which I loaded into the bike's panniers.

It went on from there, and I'm sure you get the drift. What it reminded me was that if you get stuck into a character, it doesn't matter if you only play him once or twice. The important thing is to have fun. This can appear to be stating the obvious, but it's surprising how often we can get distracted from what really matters. It's not really about poring over book after book, creating the mingiest character possible. Sure, it can be a fun exercise to create killer characters, but they are somehow unsatisfying. Taking the example of Judge Elias, he had great skills relating to office admin, but apart from that he was useless. He fell off his Lawmaster trying to get on it and then had to be helped on and off every time the team stopped anywhere. Totally useless, but great fun to play.

The moral of this little story?

Nothing. Just have fun and be careful out there.

Ian

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Babylon 5 created by J. Michael Straczynski

EYE ON MONGOOSE

New Releases This Month

Scorpionfolk; savage and destructive, yes, but who are they really. How can they be so savage and yet still exist, surely they would all have killed one another in an orgy of violence; so there must be more to the scorpion folk than meets the eye.

The Slayer's Guide to Scorpionfolk will lift the veil that obscures these fascinating and dangerous creatures from mortal ken.

The first travellers normally know that they are the targets of a scorpion folk raid is when they are faced with the awesome and terrifying vision of these huge creatures charging them. Somewhat akin to centaurs, these creatures appear to be the blending of two forms; that of a monstrous scorpion with a human upper torso. Bearing down on their prey with lance to hand, claws and stinger twitching, scorpionfolk make short work of their targets.

Often portrayed as mindless savages the folk have had a bad press, insular and tribal in nature little is known about their origins, their society and their very nature. This Slayer's Guide will open the book on their coming and goings and try and allow players the option of peaceful communication rather than outright war. The normal reaction of a player character seeing a band of folk travelling is to hide, and hope to remain unnoticed, or fight if they are discovered. This book aims to give another option to the player, for who is best to provide information to the adventuring group than the very people who live of the land. For the folk are a people make no mistake about that they have a society, a culture, and a way of life, alien though it may be, they act in a logical and predictable fashion. Understanding these rules could save player characters unnecessary combat and the casualties these combat will inevitably bring.

The latest in the Slayer's Guide series details this race in such detail as to make them worthy of the sting in their tails.



LONE WOLF

The Roleplaying Game



This book is the definitive guide to the world of Magnamund and the many roleplaying possibilities it provides. Here you will find the Brotherhood of the Crystal Star before their order went into seclusion. You can ride with the Sommerlund Knights of the Realm five decades before their fateful charge against the Darklord Zagarna decimated their numbers. You can walk the forests of the Wild-Lands with Telchos amazons, alert for any danger that might leap out of the toua trees. If you can imagine an adventure, it awaits you somewhere on the face (or in the dark caverns) of Magnamund.

Discover the lore of the Rangers, the wild powers of the Kundi tribes, and the ancient secrets of the divine Shianti. The wisdom of many races both old and new will be at your command, making the stories you

wish to tell in your campaigns more compelling and detailed. From psychic combat to the searing force of elementalism, you will have all the power you need to do battle against the night and defend whichever kingdom you proudly call home.

Providing statistics for dozens of terrible beasts and vile henchmen to throw at those foolish enough to oppose the rise of the Darklords. From skulking Giaks to the raging might of the Mawtaw, these foes will pose quite a challenge for anyone determined to play hero in a world destined to fall before the might of Helgedad and its shadowy hordes.

The basic rules of Lone Wolf are just that- basic. They provide the foundation for all action in Magnamund without getting in the way of the saga that is your campaign. What you will not find in these pages are overly complicated or burdensome rules. The combat of Lone Wolf is quick and simple, with greater emphasis placed on the descriptions and action of titanic conflict rather than the dice rolls involved. The heroes of Magnamund are too busy saving the world from unimaginable peril to worry about the minutiae of how to fight in the first place.

This 256 page book contains all you need to enter the world of Magnamund and make a name for yourself as a Hero of the Realm. Whether you hail from the Kai Monastery and use your powers of mind and body in the name of justice or wield the force of terrible magic as a Crystal Star Brother, your destiny awaits you. Prepare Yourself for Adventure!



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

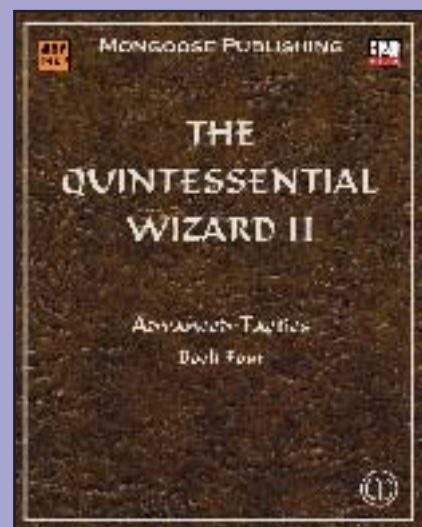
With this book, a Games Master can take any modern setting or rules codex based on the genre he wishes to play and run with it. No other basic rulebooks are needed. This reduces the expense and paperwork required to play variant systems, making it easier for Games Masters and players alike to jump right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

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

There is no class that has the potential to reach the realms of legend like that of the wizard. Mysterious beings who wield powers that only they understand; they consort with creatures from beyond the planar barriers, command the very elements of the world and can literally bring down the heavens upon their enemies. With such power, it is not strange for wizards to carve a name for themselves in the halls of myth.

By meeting certain criteria, a wizard character may divert his advancement towards a set of abilities that are literally the stuff of legends. Sometimes he seeks out these paths, but more often they find him, leaving the wizard little choice but to follow that path into the unknown – sometimes he does not even realise he is set on the road to legend until he hears his praises sung in a bard's song.

Advanced Tactics - Quintessential Wizard II presents a number of new rules, prestige classes and options suitable for wizards of medium to high level sure to make members of other classes green with envy. It is time to reward the intense dedication to the arcane arts that the wizard exemplifies.



Go beyond the fields we know, into the realms of high fantasy and legend. The planes are a far grander stage for adventure than the mundane wilderness and dungeons of the world. Out there, the characters can walk with the gods themselves, delve into the foundations of the cosmos or quest in the lands of the dead or be the deciding factor in the great wars of Good and Evil.

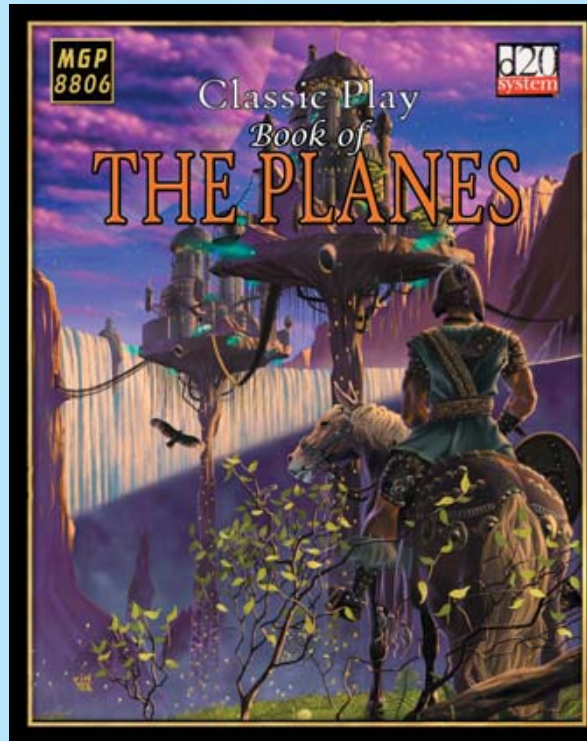
This is truly a place for heroes.

Classic Play - The Book of the Planes describes the myriad planes of existence in exacting detail, offering encounters, hazards and adventures in dozens of alternative worlds. Beginning with the elemental planes of Earth, Air, Fire and Water, travel outwards through the transitive Ethereal, Shadow and the Dream planes to the wild planes of Positive and Negative energy. Beyond them, the wide gulf of the Astral plane and the vast Outer Planes.

Presented within are ten entirely new outer planes, along with suggestions for how to arrange and integrate them into your campaign cosmology including the dark realm known as Mâl, where ancient horrors are awakening and the Questing Grounds, the realm of living stories. Including rules for each of these planes, according to a set of magical traits, along with the secrets of the art of Planecrafting, characters can shape their own home plane or wreak havoc by changing the laws of reality.

Travellers do not walk the planes alone, however, there are all sorts of fellow travellers out there, including reality-spanning organisations with their own agendas and conspiracies. Along with advice and new magic for travelling the planes, the wise traveller will consider using one of the Nexus planes; pocket worlds that share borders with a multitude of other planes.

This 256 page tome tackles the mind-boggling complexity of the planes and travel throughout them head on and makes it as simple as fighting off kobolds.



Caption Competition #6 Winner!

This month's competition has been won by David Williams with:

'Who's the cookie monster now?'

A copy of the Mongoose Pocket Player's Handbook will soon be residing on his bookshelf.

Starship Troopers!

Mongoose Publishing is proud to announce the licensing of *Starship Troopers*™ for a miniatures wargame, roleplaying game and an all new set of graphic novels charting the exploits of the Mobile Infantry and Mankind's many enemies throughout the galaxy.



The Starship Troopers miniatures wargame will bring you face to face with the very worst the galaxy has to throw against Mankind. Supported by a complete range of 30mm plastic and metal miniatures, players will command entire armies of Mobile Infantry, Fleet Expeditionary Forces, Arachnids, Skinnies and many more. Released as a large box set in January 2005, the Starship Troopers wargame will contain the main rulebook with enough Mobile Infantry and Arachnids to begin your fight for the galaxy. Further miniatures, vehicles and armies will be released throughout 2005 and beyond, all with their own specialist army books describing the structure of their forces, unique technologies, painting guides and, of course, their army lists.

Do you want to know more?



Join up now!

The Starship Troopers roleplaying game, based on Mongoose Publishing's own innovative, exciting and Open Game system, will be released in March 2005. Providing a wealth of



The Starship Troopers graphic novels will be released at regular intervals throughout this year and beyond, each telling the story of the struggle throughout the galaxy and within Earth's own government. New aliens will arrive and old enemies stand ready to launch fresh offensives. Only the Mobile Infantry and Mighty Fleet can save Mankind from annihilation.



information on the Mobile Infantry, Fleet, Citizen Federation and the alien races clamouring for dominance of the galaxy, the Starship Troopers RPG will provide the ultimate immersive experience of the far future. Supported by high quality supplements detailing characters, aliens and equipment, the survival of the species will be down to you.

Countdown to Invasion!

This is of course, something of a departure from Mongoose's norm, so keep your eyes peeled for

Remember your training and you will make it back alive!

The entire Starship Troopers product range will be fully supported in Mongoose Publishing's here, in Signs & Portents, including new scenarios, optional rules and tie-ins to the Starship Troopers graphic novels and films. Massive multi-player campaigns stretching across the whole world will enable players to personally take part in the most crucial wars, from Klendathu to the Home Front itself, giving you a real frontline experience of gaming.

Are you doing your part?



more miniatures games released throughout this year in a run up to Starship Troopers, including Mighty Armies and Gangs of Mega-City One.

Service guarantees citizenship!



Tales from

MONGOOSE HALL

After a month's break the Mongoose crew are back, as Casper, Bulwei and Co. attempt to survive a fortress full of hobgoblins.

We left Casper and Slurp attempting to escape from captivity as they ride out into the middle of the fortress courtyard...

As it turns out the 'open' isn't all it's cracked up to be. For a start, it seems to be home to an awful lot of arrows. Clearly the hobgoblins are less than impressed at our attempt to break free, and they begin streaming off the walls to surround us.

If you take a quick look at the picture of the fort from Issue 7 [*what do you mean you don't have Issue 7? Go out and buy it at once!*] you will see that the fort has one weak spot – namely, the damaged wall section which has not yet been fully repaired. As one, Slurp and I decide to ride for the gap and attempt to somehow get through it. This idea is met with a fair amount of caustic ridicule from the rest of the group who seem intent on

Ian's Roleplaying Tips #180

Gamers Don't Dance

This is important and needs spelling out. Don't shake your booty across a table full of drinks, sweetsies and even the occasional roleplaying book. I'm not saying it will always happen, but sometimes a chap can lose his balance during the excitement and fall through the table, ending up looking like a disaster in a fast food joint.

Casper's Diary

witnessing our demise. Undaunted, we ride for the gap, avoiding missile fire and wondering just how we can blag Matthew into letting us out.

What it amounts to is a pair of hideously high Difficulty Checks, with failure not being an option. With a considerable degree of trepidation, Rich and I reached for the d20s. Two natural twenties later we are dancing around the room like two of the Von Trapp children, singing and making unpleasant gestures at the rest of the party.

Luckily nobody wanted much in the way of food that session, which is handy when you are wearing most of it.

Anyway, back to the game. Having wiped myself down and apologised for squashing three malt loafs and a bar of chocolate we continue apace. Actually, what really happens is that the party leg it before the hobgoblins can overcome the horror of what Bulwei has done to their camp, which looks like the ground floor of the Towering Inferno. Heading north to the ruins we reform, resting up while we wait for our actual army to arrive. Luckily, as night was falling we managed to make good our escape, and the hobgoblins were far too busy on bucket-of-water duty to notice.

We were now faced with fresh difficulty. For one thing, we had seriously dented the element of surprise, and now the fort was fully garrisoned by all the hobgoblins whose tents had been torched during our merry path of destruction. What we needed was a plan,

which as any regular readers will know isn't exactly our strong point.

Still, rising to the challenge we came up with the following gem:

Firstly, we would use the recently found tunnel in the ruins to approach the fort with a small but dedicated party intent on staging a brilliant surprise attack at a critical point in the battle. No prizes for guessing who might comprise this team.

The second part of the plan consisted of our ragtag army of humans, lizardfolk and elves making themselves an appealing target for the hobgoblin catapults, thus distracting them from the real point of attack. This was worded slightly differently, of course, as 'Hey, you lot are going to stand out there and get shot to bits' was likely not to work. The fact that this was actually going to be Bulwei's initial approach to the varied soldiery is something best swept under the nearest rug.

Having been told that they will provide a distraction, the rabble – sorry, army – appear quite happy, knowing that we will be taking the brunt of it. With this fantastic plan put together we decide to wait until dusk before getting the ball rolling.

As darkness fell our sturdy troops lit their torches and proceeded forward to attract rocks whilst we brave few headed down into the depths of the tunnel, my good self leading the way as usual. At first it was the usual dirty cavern-type deal, as one would expect, but as we came closer signs of life suggested that the hobgoblins were making at least irregular use of the facilities, so to speak. At this point I inadvertently failed a Spot check and stepped in one of the 'facilities', much to everybody

Ian Barstow

else's amusement. Quite what the DC number is for spotting doings I don't know, but clearly I missed it.

Ian's Roleplaying Tips #747

Don't Tread In Doings

Technically this can be considered something of a gimme.

I did at last manage to stop myself from shouting out loud, which would have attracted the two hobgoblin guards I came across a few minutes later. These fellows were ostensibly protecting the 'secret' door but were in fact fast asleep. This caused something of a dilemma to Casper, who of course varies from deranged lunatic to pacifist doctor, depending on mood.

Ooh, ooh! I forgot to tell you. While we were in the camp guess who showed up? Guy! Yes, indeed, none other than my pseudodragon pal who had also been captured by the hobgoblins but had managed to escape due to Matthew wanting to get him back into the plot. Probably. Anyway, to cut a long story short the little fellow is a bit banged up (not too many hit points to you and I, squire) and having to spend most of his time resting on my shoulder.

Guy took this opportunity to flash some subliminal pictures into my head, which showed two knocked out and tied up hobgoblins. Sadly what he should actually have flashed up was a demented barbarian barging me to one side in his hurry to get to the killing. All this not-very-pent-up brutality tends to come with collateral noise, however, and it was this that alerted the hobgoblins to their potential fate. Seeing Bulwei picking himself after tripping over me, the guards fled, opening the patently unlocked door before slamming it behind them, laughing unpleasantly as they slid a noisy bolt into place.

I love it when a plan comes together.

* * *

So here's the situation. We are standing in a tunnel looking at a locked door. Do we have somebody who can pick a lock? Of course not. We have a halfling

who may be the most eminent physician on the planet, a berserk nutcase who is doing his best to emulate Conan the Barbarian, a former professional wrestler masquerading as a rubbish sorcerer, a grumpy fighter with a variable level of ethics, a powered-up elf who could put three arrows per round into the door and a seven foot blue creature who is currently buck naked.

How cool is that?

I bet you came up with the same answer I did. Never mind. We decide to smash the door open, which obviously will come as a huge surprise to all of you. As it turns out this is a particularly tough door – it is almost as if Matthew were trying to tell us something. We aren't the sort to be put off by a few subtle hints, however, and we continue smashing the hell out of the door until it collapses.

Ian's Roleplaying Tips #662

Don't Stand Under Big People

Especially big people in ARMOUR.

Disappointingly, on the far side of the door is nothing more than a ladder, leading up to a trap door. Rather more irritating is the hobgoblin mooning at us from the open trap door. This is guaranteed to wind up the calmest of parties, and that we ain't.

With a howl of rage Bulwei throws himself at the ladder only to get the trap door slammed on his head by the irritatingly witty hobgoblins who we can hear giggling behind the door. We might have been better advised to keep an eye on Bulwei, whose grip on the ladder was loosened by the jarring impact.

Six hit points damage later I pull myself to my feet and look to see who else has been damaged by Bulwei's rapid return to *terra firma*. This turns out to be everybody but Slurp, who is looking awfully smug for a lizard if you ask me. Rich attempts to masquerade in the guise of a veteran roleplayer at this point, until Matthew points out he was just standing at the back.

Things are thus going incredibly well. All bar one of the party have already taken damage and we haven't had a fight yet. Worse still, nobody can justify wasting any of our precious yellow liquid (healing potion, to those of you not following the story) at this stage, so we are obliged to carry on in a less-than-immaculate condition. Hands up who is getting bad vibes yet?

Due to his gratuitous showing off we nominate Slurp as the next door opener, and he duly climbs the ladder and puts his weight against the trap door – which opens. Any party with half a brain between them would not simply push on here. Sadly we don't have that much brainpower on hand and Slurp (Mr Careful, if you recall) shouts follow me and disappears out off sight.

In true Mongoose Hall style we do indeed follow, finding ourselves standing in a circular hut-type building. It's a damned big hut though with room to host a small convention, which is just as well as there appears to be a convention of hobgoblins going on.

There are about forty of them, led by the magician who had caused me such trouble on the wall during our earlier 'scouting' mission. With a scream they promptly charge us. The scream was actually made by Sabah Karambunai (aka The People's Armpit) attempting to get back to the trap door, but Raygar conveniently blocked his path with a knee-to-groin sort of manoeuvre. The next thing we are in a seriously big fight and things aren't looking good.

This is the sort of massive scrap that is too protracted to recount in detail, so I will provide interesting highlights.

Notable Thing #1

Raygar spends most of the fight like the trainer at a boxing match. One after another characters were reduced to negative numbers, only for Mr Grumpy to haul them out, administer yellow liquid™ and send them back to the fray, all the while surrounded by howling hobgoblins. This sounds a bit implausible, but Mark kept coming up with reasonable arguments for why Raygar was doing this so Matthew cut him some slack.

Notable Thing #2

Sabah Karambunai actually fought like a professional wrestler, much to everybody's surprise. David has a reputation in our group as a notoriously useless fighter, so he spends most of his time attempting to avoid physical contact of any means possible, but in this case there was literally nowhere to go. With this in mind, and tanked up with *mage armour* and other such keep-yourself-alive spells, The People's Armpit went to work with a vengeance, inflicting German suplexes and clotheslines on any hobgoblin coming within range. Amazingly, he was not hit once in the entire fight.

Notable Thing #3

The hobgoblin mage should have had 'nemesis' tattooed on his forehead. Why is this, you ask. I shall tell. Call it fate, circumstance, predestination, kismet, or any other word I can generate with Encarta, a number of us were

drawn to one place at the same time – namely, this mage. Those of us in question were Casper (me, in case you had been dozing off in class), Slurp and Guy. Raygar of the Magic Sponge had hauled out all of us at least once and we all found ourselves on one hit point each at the same time in front of the mage.

Ian's Roleplaying Tips #301*Death Can Be Fatal*

It turns out that certain NPCs in the hands of a sadistic Games Master are prepared to top themselves in order to take you with them. This is nasty. Very nasty.

This turned out to be a seminal moment, as the mage took out a nasty looking wand (he was pretty badly banged up himself), gave us an unpleasant grin and touched the ground at his own feet. This caused a moment of silence in the gaming group, as unexpected actions by serious NPCs invariably tend to do. The next second, a bolt of lightning struck the floor and fused all four of us to the hobgoblin National Grid.

So, get the picture? Casper, Slurp and Guy went so far past –10 that they became part of the floor, at which point the rest of the party belatedly fled, drawing a veil over the whole undignified episode.

At which point we will take a break from this campaign. It comes at a natural break, with the death of by far the most excellent character (me) and will develop into the Bulwei Show in the future. If you are particularly good we will return to meet my new character the oriental manservant, Chang, and see how Alex managed to become a General. Next time, though, you will finally get to meet Orfeo, Tharg and Agamar, and see just what level of carnage they can hand out as we go back to our original *Forgotten Realms* campaign. You thought these characters were mingy? You ain't seen nothing yet...

**The suicidal hobgoblin mage
nukes our heroes**



Write for the Mongoose

Want to write for your favourite RPG publisher? Want to get paid for it? Got a great idea for an article? If the answers to these questions are 'yes', then Signs & Portents wants to hear from you.

Where to Start...

We will need a brief synopsis of your intended article, no more than one page long. Also include a paragraph or two of your actual writing style, so we can see whether you have what it takes and any samples of previously published work. If we like what we see, we will commission a first draft from you and you will be on your way to becoming a Mongoose contributing writer. And every article we publish will be paid for...which is nice.

Things to Remember

Provide your full details, including name, address and email address if available.

Supply articles via email or on disc. We can read most formats, although MS Word is always a safe bet. You will be provided with a style guide when we commission your article. Make sure you read it!

Subject Matter

First and foremost, the article has to be based on one of our product lines. That is not as limiting as it sounds, however. The d20 fantasy family alone should give you plenty of scope. Think of all our various products, like the Quintessential series and the Slayer's Guides. With more than 80 fantasy-based books to choose from...well, you get the idea. But don't stop there. Think Babylon 5, Judge Dredd, Slaine, Armageddon 2089, not to mention the barrage of forthcoming games that we have coming. If you have ideas for any of our games we want to hear them.

So, you have chosen your game, but what do you actually write about? Scenarios are good. In fact, we love them. Give me a scenario to edit and I am a happy camper. Perhaps you want to discuss the philosophy of a game. That's good. We encourage intellectual thought process around here. If you have something meaningful to say, then try us out. If we don't like it, we *will* tell you. Think hard before you try humour though. With guys like Jonny Nexus about, you will need to be sharp if you want to break in. If you think you have what it takes, though, then feel free to try your hand. Just be prepared to be told you may not be as funny as you think you are.

If you want to write new rules for a game, with new uses for skills and maybe some new feats, then be our guest.

We cannot promise that we will like what you have done, but you will get constructive criticism in return, and not just a terse one-line rebuff.

Editing

It is a painful fact that whatever you write, it will get edited. That is why editors exist, after all. Even this passage will have been edited. If you can get over this hurdle you are well on your way to attaining the mentality needed to be a writer. It will help if you can handle criticism as well. Take it from us – writing is a tough business. Just ask any author doing the rounds looking for a friendly publisher.

We have various house styles that we use and you do not need to know them. As long as your submission is literate and tidy, we will do the rest.

Little Details

If you are not sure how long your article is, assume around 800 words fit on one page. Do not use the word processor's page counter as a guide. By the time it has been edited, laid out and had artwork added, it will look nothing like that screen of text in front of you.

Remember to run the article through a spell checker before you send it in. It will still get proofread, but it shows willing. Anything not spell checked will be rejected straight away.

Legal Requirements

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Corporate Strategy

Corporations in the Babylon 5 RPG

Greg Smith



A suit is a suit is a suit...always.

While the television series is centred on a group of EarthForce characters and diplomats from the major races, a roleplaying game may be set anywhere in the diverse universe of *Babylon 5*. Unlike other science fiction franchises, *Babylon 5* is not set in a cashless utopia. The future portrayed in *Babylon 5* is an extrapolation of our own present, which includes money, supply and demand, and therefore profit.

Corporations in the 23rd century operate in a similar way to corporations today, but often on a larger scale. For example, it is a conglomerate of companies that supply all of Mars' needs. Yet it is still the bottom line that is most important.

There is a huge potential profit in space and so it is the private sector that has driven humankind's expansion into space since the 21st century. Before the Centauri arrived

with jump technology, it was IPX who built the first permanent habitat on Mars, whilst Universal Terraform surveys entire new worlds for exploitable resources.

While the exploration of space is profitable, it is also dangerous. Companies often subcontract work to veterans, such as planetary surveyors, who have plenty of experience in the rigours of travel beyond known space. Of course the edges of explored territory are often beyond the reach of the law and therefore less scrupulous corporations may employ people of dubious backgrounds for tasks that are not strictly legal. Which is usually where the player characters come in

Corporations as Employers

The most likely way for characters to become involved with corporations is

as freelance employees. If a company wants something done quietly, off the books or even illegally, it will hire a group of trouble-shooters. Whatever the reason, be it keeping research secret, setting up a rival, finding a defecting employee or helping a rival's employee defect, the company will want a team that can plan and execute such a scheme, as well as being able to handle any problems that may arise.

The corporations that will recruit characters are ones involved in projects that have the potential to generate a huge profit. Finding the location of a world rich in quantum-40 that has been discovered by another company is going to be worth the risk of hiring a team to uncover it illicitly.

Because of the requirement for secrecy, a company representative will make a covert approach to the team he wishes to hire. A middleman

or fixer often brokers these deals. The representative will not reveal any salient details until he is sure that he has a deal. An up-front payment is then made to ensure the team's loyalty.

Should things go wrong, the corporation has a lot to lose. If a company employee or the company itself is caught paying for illegal services, the company could lose millions, both in fines and loss of revenue. For this reason a hired team of trouble-shooters is generally considered expendable. When things go awry, a team may find that its unwritten contract is terminated, in the lethal sense.

If you think all of this sounds like the clichéd 'You are sitting in a bar and a patron approaches you with a job' start to any roleplaying adventure, then you would be right. It is, however, an easy way to get things going. To avoid the cliché, you only need to vary it a little. For example, a corporate employee seeks them out, desperate for help; a friend who works for a corporation is involved in a situation from which he needs extricating; or should the players become regular hirelings of one particular company they may become trusted enough to be hired as legitimate and full-time trouble-shooters.

There is another way for characters to become involved in an adventure on the behalf of a company – they could be legitimate employees. A team of company security specialists would be ideal for characters because it gives a group a reason to work and stay together. However, such a team would have to be a little more mindful of the law than if they were freelancers. Regular workers, such as admin staff, management, drivers and the like are less likely to be used as player characters, however they could play a part in a carefully crafted scenario.

It is important to remember that corporations are not single entities. There are often internecine struggles

for power within a company. It may be that the characters are hired to work for one department head who is plotting against another. Often the outcome of the characters' efforts will depend on how the company employees continue to view them. They may get further job offers if they have done well after their employer has whispered their names to his colleagues. If they failed, they will find that the subject of their last job is very upset with them.

Corporations as Enemies

Doing a job for one corporation can involve working against another. Ideally the characters' involvement in a scheme should remain unknown to the rival company but things can go wrong. If the characters fail to wholly neutralise security systems or leave witnesses alive, then their identities will be revealed. In which case they will have made an enemy of an organisation with considerable resources to use against them. Should the characters find themselves in a position where the company employing them has double-crossed them or vice versa, they are also likely to find themselves with a corporate enemy.

Handing the characters over to the law may well seem like the logical course of action for a corporation, however if there is any illegality involved in the situation, then the company is going to have to take care of the matter itself. This will usually involve having the characters killed. There will be more to it if the characters know the corporation's secrets or have evidence in their possession. The company will then go to greater lengths such as blackmail or the taking of hostages to ensure their dirty secrets do not come out.

Resolving enmity between themselves and a corporation can be a challenging task for the characters. It may be that the characters have

to find a way to meet a more senior member of the company to get the dogs called off. Or they may choose to expose the company's wrongdoings while trying to avoid revealing their own crimes. With its secrets uncovered, the company is unlikely to try to avenge itself – there is no profit in it. However there may be employees who have to take the fall for the company and they will certainly want revenge.

Corporate Allies

Characters working with corporations need not be involved in the grey business practices described above. Should the characters help out a company or senior executive in a significant way, they will find that the company's resources may be used to their benefit.

With resources such as spacecraft, research laboratories or security guards at their disposal, the characters will be a force to reckoned with. But there is a continuing price to pay: once the characters become allies of senior figures within a corporation, they are likely to be called upon for aid. If the CEO believes that one of his senior executives is selling information to a rival, the characters, as trusted outsiders, will be asked to investigate. The characters may be expected to do this for free, if they have already availed themselves of the company's assistance.

Of course the characters will only benefit from the aid they receive as long as the person they have allied with remains in a position of power within the company. The characters' fortunes will rise and fall with his. The characters should be willing to help their ally against forces within his own company. But how far will they go to protect their own interests?

There is a danger that any executive is not as clean as the characters first believed. Just because they helped him out when he was threatened by

illegal practices does not mean that he does not engage in illicit activities himself. He may ask the characters to do a favour for him that seems straightforward but that in fact lands them in hot water with the authorities. Once he has the characters in this way, the executive will try and blackmail them into continuing his dirty work. Should they refuse, their ally may well become their enemy.

Corporations and Alien

Races

Of the four major interstellar powers, only the Earth Alliance has private companies engaged in free trade. The Minbari worker caste encompasses all the manufacturing, service, research and other industries for the whole of the Federation. The Narn government controls the Regime's industry, ensuring that resources can be directed where they are most needed – usually to the military. Centauri business is competitive but the Noble Houses own all industries and they usually manufacture products for their own house and its allies.

Of the League of Non-Aligned Worlds, the Vree and the Brakiri have independent corporations. The Vree Trading Guilds operate throughout the galaxy and are very protective of their businesses. Most Vree ships tend to be a mix of both warship and freighter. The Brakiri, who are ruled by a syndicate of mega-corporations, are rivals of the Vree. They have trading agreements with many other races, which have earned them political influence both inside and outside the League.

Players may want to have characters working for Brakiri or Vree traders. This offers a chance to travel the universe, make money, carry interesting passengers and have grand adventures fighting off raiders, and beating their adversaries to valuable cargo.

Just because some races do not have companies does not mean they are not

involved in trade. Centauri characters can almost certainly be involved in scenarios working against another House's business interests. While there is no internal rivalry between Minbari and Narn industries, there is still the possibility of outside attempts against them. Universal Terraform would pay millions to learn the secrets of the Minbari terraforming techniques that they used to engineer the world of Sorpigal and IPX is desperate to get its hands on any working Minbari gravitic technology.

Specific Corporations

What follows is a description of five corporations seen in the TV series, with details on their activities and suggestions as how to use them in your game.

Universal Terraform

Universal Terraform is one of the largest companies involved in space exploration. The discovery and exploitation of new planets is hugely profitable. While many consider that exploration should be a purely scientific endeavour, it is only because of the potential financial gains that most exploration actually takes place.

Universal Terraform works closely with EarthForce in the deployment of explorer ships. The company pays a fee for the services of these massive vessels so they will investigate planets for mineral resources. Should the explorer detect such minerals, then a jump gate will be deployed at Universal Terraform's expense.

Once a worthwhile planet has been located and a jump gate established Universal Terraform will despatch unmanned probes for further study. For the final stage of the analysis a planetary surveyor is sent to chart the planet, to gather samples, to determine the quality and quantity of resources present and to provide a thorough report on the viability and

the requirements for establishing a mining operation.

Universal Terraform might potentially employ a group of characters with a ship of their own and a planetary surveyor or a scientist among them. Surveying a newly discovered planet is both hazardous and extremely profitable – a small percentage of a valuable find is worth millions of credits. There could be predators to fight, dangerous terrain to explore, an expedition from a rival company intent on preventing the characters reporting back or even a new alien race to encounter.

The financial gain offered by the discovery of a new resource-rich world will attract plenty of unwanted attention. Rival corporations will stop at nothing to learn the location of the planet so that they can stake a claim. Characters could be employed by other companies to get that information using whatever means necessary; be it blackmail, spying or outright theft. Alternatively, Universal Terraform may give the characters the job of finding someone in the company who has leaked the location of the planet to another corporation.

Future Corp

With a reputation for fairness, Future Corp has offices throughout the nations of Earth. It was one of the original companies behind ISN but lost much of its share of the business to aggressive competitors.

CEO Taro Isogi tried to spread Future Corp's business into space but was repeatedly balked by competitors who wished to keep their lucrative off-world contracts. In 2259 Isogi conceived a plan for Mars to supply resources directly to alien governments, giving the colony a strong economic base that could lead to independence from Earth. He put his proposal to a representative from Mars' Business Affairs Committee at a meeting on Babylon 5, but was murdered shortly afterwards.



Some people work for organisations with low ethical standards...

Talia Winters, a telepath and long-time friend of Isogi, tried to have the murdered CEO's idea put into practice. However, turmoil among Future Corp's board and resistance in the senate caused significant delays. In November 2259, the Mars Conglomerate learned of several key points of the plan and moved to have it quashed by the senate. The board believed Winters was responsible for the leak but they were unable to contact her.

In the years up to Taro Isogi's death, Future Corp will not recruit characters to engage in illegal activities. Isogi ensured that his company played by the rules and was fair to both customers and competitors. However, characters might be recruited to deliver secret messages to Mars or Talia Winters on Babylon 5. Isogi's proposed plan for the colony's business would have required a number of secret communications and meetings, all of which could involve the players. When the Mars Conglomerate and EarthGov learns of these meetings, they will be desperate to find out what is going on and the characters will have to stop them. Throw Free Mars into the mix and you will double the characters' problems.

The Mars Conglomerate

A group of Earth corporations forms the Mars Conglomerate. Each supplies one or more of Mars' essential needs and each has a monopoly. Understandably, this does not sit well with those Marsies who want independence from Earth or other companies who want some of Mars' business.

Marsies rely on Earth to supply them with food, spare parts for their air recycling facilities, replacement polymers for their protective domes and terraforming materials. The cost of bringing such items from Earth makes them extremely expensive on Mars and therefore very profitable. The Mars Conglomerate was formed initially to protect the corporations' business and investment in Mars against the aggressive politics of Earth but it has become a highly protectionist organisation that has a stranglehold on Mars' trade.

The corporations in the conglomerate maintain offices, distribution centres and retail outlets in all of Mars' cities. These represent a huge investment in Mars' infrastructure and the conglomerate has significant lobbying power in the senate to ensure the safety of its business. Similarly the conglomerate threatened to pull out

of the colony after rioting in 2258, for fear of threats to its interests. The Mars Business Affairs Committee considers the conglomerate to be something of a millstone around Marsies' necks and have been trying to break its monopoly. Free Mars and other pro-Mars groups share this attitude but their actions against the conglomerate are generally more violent.

EarthGov is happy with the status quo. It considers the Mars Conglomerate to be a known and stable quantity with no ties to the Free Mars movement. Any attempt by other corporations, such as Future Corp, to gain a foothold on Mars is believed to play into the hands of Free Mars by giving the Marsies greater economic independence. The Clark government is pursuing an active policy of discouraging such attempts.

Into this heady mix of money, politics and freedom fighters, come the players. Characters with a ship might be hired to smuggle goods onto the colony to beat the monopoly. The Mars Conglomerate is always on the lookout for people to provide security for its property and Free Mars will be looking for insiders if they should be so employed. Those characters who witness the difficulties of life on Mars may well be tempted to join the freedom fighters' cause and act against the conglomerate. EarthForce characters will be given strict orders to keep an eye out for Free Mars activity or to pose as sympathisers to infiltrate the group to protect the Conglomerate's property.

It is very easy to portray the Conglomerate as an evil group dedicated to making money off the Marsies' struggles but remember that the Conglomerate employs Marsies. If the players find themselves working against the Conglomerate, they may well find that they have to choose between Free Mars and their friends. If the characters know the security guard about to raise the alarm, they will suddenly learn that

everything about the Conglomerate is not quite as clear cut as they had believed.

The Belt Alliance

Formed by a group of companies in the early 22nd century to protect their ships against raiders, the Belt Alliance still carries out that task today. Now the Belt Alliance is a company in its own right and its ships protect transport vessels throughout known space for many races. As well as defence against pirates, the Belt Alliance is also involved in securing and managing mining sites on behalf of corporations without the expertise to do so themselves.

The Belt Alliance operates only fighters and small combat craft, in accordance with an agreement made with the Earth government and EarthForce. It also operates freighters and carriers for its fighters. The crews for these craft come from all races, usually flying within their own race's territory.

Usually the Belt Alliance tries to stay out of combat zones. Its ships have served to evacuate non-combatants in both the Dilgar War and the Earth/Minbari War. However, when the fate of Earth was at stake at the Battle of the Line, the Belt Alliance pilots flew valiantly alongside their EarthForce counterparts.

The Belt Alliance provides an excellent framework for a group that wants to adventure in space without the strictures of EarthForce. Any race could work for the Belt Alliance and scenarios can take place anywhere. There can be conflict against pirates, both in space and on the ground. There is also plenty of scope for other sorts of scenarios, such as mysterious alien ships, thwarting criminals on mining colonies or daring-do while on leave.

It is also possible for Belt Alliance characters to become involved in the wars that take place within the timeframe of the *Babylon 5* series. Both the Narn and the Centauri use

the Belt Alliance to protect civilian shipping, so it is possible that characters manning Belt Alliance ships could be caught up in the War of Retribution on either side. When the Shadows began moving openly, they attacked several mining installations. Characters could easily be involved in the defence or evacuation of those colonies. Belt Alliance characters may hate the Shadows enough to become directly involved in the struggle against them. Similarly, when it comes to the Earth Alliance civil war, the Belt Alliance crews may feel strongly enough to take sides.

Interplanetary Expeditions (IPX)

'Exploring the past to create a better future' is Interplanetary Expeditions' motto. The corporation undertakes xeno-archaeological expeditions for the sole purpose of discovering previously unknown technologies from long-dead races. Sociological and historical research take strictly second place to scientific investigation at IPX xeno-archaeological digs. IPX is often accused of grave robbing because the company is unconcerned about the ethical issues of profiting from another race's misfortune.

The business of improving Earth's technological level is one that IPX takes very seriously and so it has formed very close relations with EarthForce's New Technologies division and Psi Corps. Representatives from those organisations often accompany IPX expeditions so that they get a first look at what the expedition finds. The company also has links with the EarthForce Bioweapons Division because the discovery and development of organic technology is one of IPX's primary goals.

Like any large corporation, IPX has an involvement in politics. The company supports the campaigns of many pro-business senators with very generous contributions. It also was a major supporter of Clark's campaign

for the Vice Presidency and when Clark became President, the favour was returned. EarthGov, under Clark, gave IPX tax breaks and exemptions from import and export duties and regulations.

By 2261 the corporation is a multi-planetary one that has agreements with six alien worlds to allow IPX to investigate any world within their space. The company has had to agree to full disclosure of any finds they make in exchange for its unfettered access. Whether the company actually upholds its side of the bargain has yet to be seen. These agreements allow IPX to operate safely outside EarthGov laws during the chaos of the civil war. It may be that the company is playing both sides to ensure that it survives, no matter what the outcome of hostilities.

IPX often hires independent archaeologists and scientists to undertake its work. It pays very well and turns a blind eye to any short cuts they may take. If a team travels to a world forbidden to outsiders for example, the company is able to deny that it sanctioned any illegality. Circumstances often require the company to hire non-science-oriented individuals for a variety of tasks, such as couriers or to rescue stranded research teams. *The Fiery Trial* module revolves around just such a group.

The involvement of IPX with EarthGov, EarthForce, the Psi Corps, alien races and ultimately the Shadows, makes them a great company for the player characters to become involved with. If a scientist is among the characters, IPX may hire them as a team to investigate finds on their own; otherwise the characters could be hired to assist an archaeological team. The players could also work for IPX in any number of capacities outside of direct research, as described above, and it is always possible to involve EarthForce and Psi Corps characters as well as aliens.



Working for a news corporation can be an interesting experience.

If the characters work for IPX over a number of scenarios, they may begin to learn about some of the company's secrets. In fact, any Games Master worth his salt should make sure that they do because the moral quandary this poses to the characters will provide the opportunity for great roleplaying. Do the characters continue with IPX so that Earth gains greater technology to fight its enemies or do they turn whistleblower and reveal all they have learned, despite a very real threat to their lives? They could always continue to work within the company and leak its secrets to the crew of *Babylon 5*...

A number of IPX's projects have been detailed in the *Babylon 5* TV series. It can be an interesting roleplaying experience to play characters involved in uncovering those finds. While the players will know the outcome, they must play their characters' ignorance of what they are investigating and shock when it is finally uncovered.

In 2148 IPX discovered alien artefacts near Syria Planum, on Mars. Fifteen years later Psi Corps established a secret base at Syria Planum to research those artefacts. While these events take place a long time before

the events of the TV series, and in all likelihood before any roleplaying campaign is set, the Psi Corps base continues to operate until the time of the series. It is here that Talia Winters underwent her conditioning (see the comic *Shadows, Past and Present*) and here that the Psi Corp implanted rogue telepaths with Shadow technology before they were sent to the Shadows. This base is a good setting for adventures such as rescuing captured rogues or stopping Psi Corps experiments. Although this is primarily a Psi Corps installation, it is likely that IPX scientists will be on hand to help them with the alien technology.

IPX continued to search the surface of Mars for more alien technology. In 2253 it came up trumps when a team of scientists, including Dr Mary Kirkish, discovered a Shadow ship that has been buried for a 1,000 years. The IPX scientists were evacuated and Psi Corps moved in for a closer look. 6 days later, Dr Kirkish saw another Shadow vessel dig out the buried ship and both of them leave. These events are well documented in the TV series and comics and are observed by Garibaldi and Sinclair, so playing them out as part of your game

may be a little dull. It is perhaps better to use them as background events witnessed by your characters while they are involved in something else; possibly with the Psi Corps base described above, as part of Free Mars, or working for the Mars Conglomerate.

Perhaps IPX's greatest and most dangerous discovery is the planet Alpha Omega 3, also known as Z'ha'dum. IPX tracked the Shadow vessel from Mars to Alpha Omega 3 and dispatched a probe to follow it. The probe sent back pictures of ruins on the surface and so IPX quickly organised an expedition. The team, led by Dr Chang and including science officer Anna Sheridan and archaeolinguist Mr Morden, is sent to Alpha Omega 3 aboard the science vessel *Icarus*. Playing out the *Icarus*' last voyage could be fun, with inter-group strife between the IPX scientists, the ship's crew and EarthForce and Psi Corps representatives before they reach the planet and their final fate. Alternatively, the players could be part of a follow-up expedition to find out exactly what happened to the *Icarus*, leading to possible encounters

with the Shadows, or even the Vorlons, who are watching Z'ha'dum.

It may be that the players or Games Master do not want to play in a scenario where they already know the outcome, so an adventure where the players uncover something new may be preferred. A mix of old and new is also a good way to go, for example if the players discover a buried Shadow vessel but find it has a new weapon. They must then decide who to reveal their find to – IPX and EarthForce, who would use the ship for their own ends, or the Babylon 5 crew so they may use it for the forces of light.

Corporate Non-Player Characters

The following are generic Non-Player Characters for use in your games. They can be used as they are or as the basis for more defined personalities. A template for a corporate telepath can be found in the *Babylon 5 Roleplaying Game* rulebook.

Administrator

2nd Level Human Worker (white collar); hp 7; Init +0; Spd 30ft; DV10; +1 melee; +1 ranged; SQ None; Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +1; Str 11, Dex 10, Con 9, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 13
Skills and Feats: Bluff +3, Computer Use +6, Concentration +4, Diplomacy +3, Drive +3, Gather Information +3, Knowledge (company) +6, Listen +6, Profession (administrator) +9, Spot +4, Technical (electronics) +2; Data Access, Skill Focus (profession – administrator)

The person you want to speak to when you need to know what form to fill in, to find out if an order has been shipped or to know about an employee's wages. He is useful as a contact because he knows all the company gossip and inside information. If he is the wages clerk who pays you, remember to be extra nice to him!

Executive

5th Level Human Worker (white collar); hp 9; Init +0; Spd 30ft; DV10; +2 melee; +2 ranged; SQ None; Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +3; Str 9, Dex 9, Con 10, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 15
Skills and Feats: Appraise +5, Bluff +7, Computer Use +1, Diplomacy +5, Drive +4, Intimidate +5, Knowledge (corporate law) +5, Knowledge (company) +9, Knowledge (business) +12, Listen +5, Perform (presentation) +4, Profession (accountant) +6, Profession (executive) +12, Sense Motive +5, Spot +5; Independently Wealthy, Skill Focus (knowledge – business), Skill Focus (profession – executive)

The character most likely to hire player-characters. He may be a ruthless businessman whose career has made him wealthy, but he wants more and someone is in his way. Or perhaps he is someone whose family has been kidnapped so that he will hand over the company's latest research data.

Security Guard

2nd Level Human Soldier; hp 11; Init +1; Spd 30ft; DV11; +4 melee; +3 ranged; SQ None; Fort +3, Ref +1, Will 0; Str 14, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 9, Wis 9, Cha 10
Skills and Feats: Computer Use +1, Drive +3, Intimidate +3, Listen +4, Spot +4, Technical (electronics) +1; Hobby (computer use), Weapon Focus (PPG), Weapon Focus (shock stick)
Standard Equipment: Hand unit communicator, PPG, shock stick

Corporate security guards are not as well trained as their EarthForce equivalents. They often sit watching monitors for hours on end. When called to deal with a problem, they rely on intimidation first and action second. This does not mean they will not shoot back if armed intruders break into their company.

IPX Expedition Leader

5th Level Human Scientist / 2nd Level agent; hp 15; Init +1; Spd 30ft; DV11; +3 melee; +4 ranged; SQ Peripheral Studies (technical), Primary Area of Study (knowledge), Security Systems; Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +3; Str 11, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 15, Wis 14, Cha 13
Skills and Feats: Appraise +4, Bluff +5, Climb +2, Computer Use +10, Concentration +5, Gather Information +4, Intimidate +3, Knowledge (alien languages) +9, Knowledge (alien life) +13, Knowledge (history) +7, Listen +4, Medical +4, Profession (archaeologist) +10, Search +12, Sense Motive +7, Speak Language (Centauri), Speak Language (Vree), Spot +6, Survival +3, Technical (electronics) +6, Technical (engineering) +6, Technical (mechanical) +6; Contact (scientific), Contact (Psi Corps), Skill Focus (knowledge – alien life), Skill Focus (Search)

A scientist with a distinguished career who joined IPX. After several successful expeditions in Centauri and Vree space, he was given the position of team leader. Now he is well-versed in keeping IPX's secrets and learning things others do not want him to know. When the characters encounter him, he will seem like a dedicated scientist with an overwhelming curiosity about all things alien, however he will stop at nothing if there is some vital technology to be gained for IPX. As the characters begin to learn that he is not all he seems, he will first try to convince them of his patriotism to Earth and that Earth needs the technology he is seeking. Then he will attempt coercion, bribery or blackmail. If all else fails, he will reluctantly turn to violence and ambush the characters.



THE ROAD OF KINGS

‘Know, oh Prince, that the lands of Hyboria beckon. Gilded warriors and brazen wenches abound, but beneath the veneer lies DEATH.’



**COMING SOON FOR CONAN THE
ROLEPLAYING GAME - THE
DEFINITIVE HYBORIAN GAZETTEER**

THE WHITE HAND OF HYPERBOREA

CONAN

THE ROLEPLAYING
GAME

Vincent Darlage

North of the Hyborian lands lies pale and misty Hyperborea, an unwelcoming wasteland that offers no warmth to visitors, of which there are very few. Unless they happen to arrive in a slave caravan, as did a young Cimmerian once upon a time...

SOON THE TRAIL OF THE HYPERBOREAN HORSES FADED OUT ON STONY SOIL. BUT THERE WAS LITTLE CHANCE TO LOSE THE TRAIL, FOR NOW AND AGAIN HE PASSED A SIGN THAT HIS SON'S ABDUCTORS HAD LEFT TO GUIDE HIM; THE IMPRINT OF A HAND, WHITE AGAINST ROCK OR SOIL. BETIMES IT WAS SEARED INTO THE DRY, SCRUBBY GRASS OF A HUMMOCK LIKE A PATTERN OF FROST LEFT BY A BLAST OF PRETERNATURAL COLD.

WITCHCRAFT! HE GROWLED, DEEP IN HIS THROAT, AND HIS NAPEHAIRS PRICKLED. HIS OWN HOMELAND, CIMMERIA, LAY TO THE NORTHWEST. HIS PRIMITIVE FOLK KNEW OF THE WHITE HAND, DREAD SYMBOL OF THE WITCHMEN OF HYPERBOREA. HE SHIVERED AT THE THOUGHT THAT HIS SON WAS THEIR CAPTIVE.

L. SPRAGUE DE CAMP AND LIN CARTER,
THE WITCH OF THE MISTS

the deadliest fighters in the world, immune to fear and pain. In addition to the death goddess, they worship a whole host of devil-gods and avatars. All members of the White Hand are subject to The Rule of the Master (see the *Conan RPG* for details).

Even the brooding Cimmerians, amongst their forested ridges and misty hills, know the infamous the White Hand. The sight of it can set a brave man to trembling. Members of this order are known as Witchmen or Witchwomen, all of who are virtual devils in human guise, without the taint of compassion or any other constraint that limits other men to sensible or moral behaviour.

This organisation is small, though its leader, Louhi, longs for it to reach the size and prestige of the Black Ring of Stygia. Even so, perhaps because she

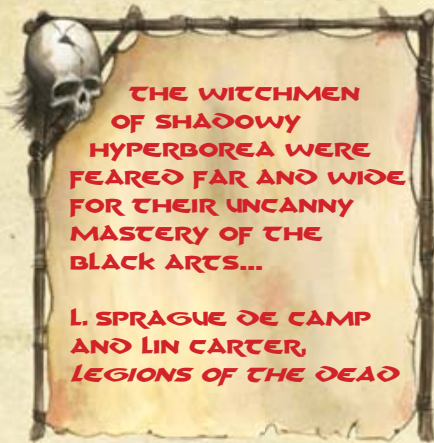
Even though most sorcerers work alone, many have found the need for mutually supportive communities for darksome training and better understanding of the esoteric tomes they study. Indeed, given the scarcity of truly powerful tomes, it is understandable that the possessors of such tomes would find themselves at the centre of such gatherings, and the truly powerful practitioners of the art find themselves equally sought after by others. Other societies are formed by those practitioners who, either through obsession or temperament, long to be a leader. Such is the case with the White Hand of Hyperborea, a sorcerous cult devoted to Louhi, considered to be the avatar of a death goddess.

The White Hand is a strange cult of wizard-assassins that holds power in Hyperborea through the terror of their horrible arts. They kill without leaving a mark and fight only with their strange, platinum-tipped rods. Those who serve in the White Hand undergo strange mortifications of body, mind and will. They are accounted



also has the services of the infamous Witchmen of Hyperborea and became an avatar of their horrible god, her magical order has gained the attention of Thoth-Amon of the Black Ring, as well as the Scarlet Circle in far Khitai.

THE WITCHMEN OF HYPERBOREA



The Witchmen and Witchwomen of Hyperborea serve the sorcerers and sorceresses of Hyperborea, learning from them, serving them and protecting them. As with all prestige classes in the *Conan RPG*, this class is a favoured class for any who meets its requirements.

Low level Witchmen serve as shock troops and assassins for the Witch Kings and Queens. Until they reach 6th or 7th level, they are required to dress in skin tight black clothing and featureless white ivory masks while in public view. They are taught to not divulge their emotions, lending them expressionless faces at higher levels, which aids them in Bluff checks. At ninth level, the character is deemed a Witch King or Witch Queen and usually begins his or her own cabal of Witchmen, although all are still considered part of the White Hand. Individual avatars may order their Witchmen to display their own symbol on their black uniform. For

example, Vammatar's Witchmen, in de Camp and Carter's *Legions of the Dead*, had a red emblem on their chests.

Hit Die: d6.

REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to become a Witchman of Hyperborea, a character must fulfil all of the following criteria.

Sorcery Styles: Must know at least two sorcery styles.

Codes of Honour: Must not have a code of honour.

Skills: Knowledge (arcane) 5 ranks, Perform (ritual) 5 ranks.

Race: Must be Hyperborean.

Religion: Must be a worshipper of the Death Goddess of Hyperborea in good standing.

Corruption: 1 or higher.

Special: Must have been a member of the White Hand coven for at least a year.

CLASS SKILLS

The Witchman of Hyperborea's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Bluff (Cha), Concentration (Con), Craft (alchemy) (Int), Craft (herbalism) (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Gather Information (Cha), Hide (Dex), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (any) (Int), Move Silently (Dex), Perform (Cha), Sense Motive (Wis), and Sleight of Hand (Dex). See the *Conan RPG* for skill descriptions.

Skill Points At Each Level: 6 + Int modifier.

CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features of the Witchman of Hyperborea prestige class.

Weapon and Armour Proficiency:

The Witchman of Hyperborea gains no new weapon or armour proficiencies. Note that armour check penalties for armour heavier than leather apply to the skills Balance, Climb, Escape Artist, Hide, Jump, Move Silently, Sleight of Hand and Tumble.

Advanced Spell: At 3rd level and every level thereafter, the Witchman of Hyperborea improves his knowledge of any one of the sorcery styles he already knows by gaining any one of the advanced spells listed under the style. The Witchman of Hyperborea is taught this spell by his Witch King or Queen and does not get to choose his own spell. This is a supernatural ability.

New Sorcery Style: This new sorcery style may be chosen either from the *Conan RPG* or from *The Scrolls of Skelos*, and the Witchman of Hyperborea also gains the basic spell associated with it.

Scholar Levels: The Witchman of Hyperborea may add his Witchman of Hyperborea class level to his scholar class level for the following purposes: gaining bonus spells for high Intelligence, determining effective scholar level when casting spells. This is a supernatural ability.

Witchman Accoutrements: The Witchman gains a Rod of the Witchman and The Faceless Costume for free. If the Witchman dies, the Rod and the Costume are removed from the dead body so that others cannot steal them.

Exotic Weapon Proficiency: The Witchman of Hyperborea is proficient with the use of the Rod of the Witchmen (see below).

Bonus Feats: The Witchmen of Hyperborea gain a bonus feat at 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th levels as they develop their fighting styles at the expense of magical power. They may choose from the following feats: Combat Expertise, Improved Disarm, Improved Feint, Striking Cobra, Weapon Finesse.

Mortification of Body (Ex): The Witchman of Hyperborea gains curiously green eyes and his body is trained not to telegraph coming attacks or movements or to reveal emotion. The green eyes allow the Witchman to take the Steely Gaze

feat even if he does not otherwise meet the prerequisites. The body training gives the Witchman a Bluff bonus equal to his class level. Hyperboreans are naturally thin and gaunt, and this mortification makes them even more so.

Mortification of Mind (Ex): The Witchmen are trained to obey their leading avatar and to not feel the emotions their faces already refuse to betray. As cold as the land they live in, they are inscrutable and alien in thought. This makes them extremely resistant to mental domination from anyone other than their avatar. The Witchman gains a +2 bonus to Will saves against spells from the Hypnotism and Divination styles. They gain a -2 penalty against any spell of any school cast by their avatar.

Mortification of Soul (Ex): The Witchman is twisted and vile through his training. He has no sense of right or wrong, only a duty to his avatar. He automatically gains a point of corruption and a +1 power point bonus. His soul is so cold, he can sear his emblem, the White Hand,

onto any surface with a press of his palm, leaving a white imprint as if frosted.

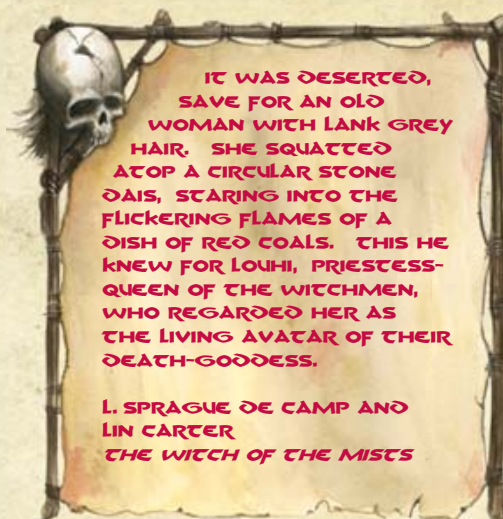
Leadership: The Witchman of Hyperborea that reaches this level becomes a Witch King or Witch Queen and gains the Leadership feat as a bonus feat. If the character already has the feat, he gains the Enhanced Leadership ability as a 6th level Noble (see the *Conan RPG*).

Avatar (Su): The avatar of a Hyperborean Witchman Cult gains all the benefits of The Rule of the Master (see the *Conan RPG*). Hyperborean avatars also have damage reduction equal to their Cha bonus derived directly from their magical natures, rather than from the hardness or natural armour of their bodies. This is indicated in the entry for Damage Reduction by the parenthetical note (avatar) after the number. Any damage reduction gained in this way can be removed by use of the *incantation of Amalric's witchman*

spell. Avatars immediately gain a +10 bonus to Reputation. The avatar becomes the sponsor of his or her own arcane religion (see *The Scrolls of Skelos*). That of Louhi, the Death Goddess, is detailed below.

NEW ARCANE RELIGION

LOUHI, DEATH GODDESS OF HYPERBOREA



**TABLE 01:
THE WITCHMAN OF HYPERBOREA**

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Base Dodge Bonus	Base Parry Bonus	Magic Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1	+1	+0	+0	+1	+0	+2	+2	Scholar Levels, Bonus Feat, Exotic Weapon Proficiency, Witchman Accoutrements
2	+2	+0	+0	+2	+0	+3	+3	Bonus Feat, Advanced Spell
3	+3	+1	+1	+3	+1	+3	+3	Bonus Feat, New Sorcery Style
4	+3	+1	+1	+3	+1	+4	+4	Mortification of Body, Bonus Feat
5	+5	+1	+1	+4	+1	+4	+4	Bonus Feat, Advanced Spell
6	+6	+2	+2	+5	+2	+5	+5	Mortification of Mind, New Sorcery Style
7	+6	+2	+2	+6	+2	+5	+5	Advanced Spell
8	+7	+3	+3	+6	+2	+6	+6	Mortification of Soul, Advanced Spell
9	+8	+3	+3	+7	+3	+6	+6	Leadership, New Sorcery Style
10	+9	+3	+3	+8	+3	+7	+7	Avatar, Advanced Spell

Although Louhi is a mortal sorceress, she is considered to be the living avatar of the Hyperborean death-goddess. She is the master of the cult and all worshippers must follow the Rule of the Master as given in the *Conan RPG*. She teaches magic, warping her followers' bodies, minds and souls, in exchange for their obedience.

Requirements of Worship: Pay a tithe worth 1 sp/level/month to the local priests of Louhi, attend at least one cult meeting/month.

Benefits of Worship: Spells (Counterspells, Curses, Divination, Immortality, Necromancy, Oriental Magic, Prestidigitation).

Requirements for Ordained Priesthood: Standard, plus as follows: must know at least three sorcery styles and three advanced spells; Knowledge (arcana) 8 ranks; must give up at least three magical links to oneself to the cult's avatar.

Benefits of Ordained Priesthood: Standard, plus sorcery teaching is available (Counterspells, Curses, Divination, Immortality, Necromancy, Oriental Magic, Prestidigitation)

Typical Punishments for Disloyal Priests: Killed in a sorcerous ritual.

NEW SPELL

LEGIONS OF THE DEAD ☠

PP Cost: 1 point/5 corpses

Components: V, S, F

Casting Time: 1 full round

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft. per scholar level)

Effect: Up to 5 corpses per scholar level

Duration: Concentration plus 1d6 hours

Saving Throw: See Below

Prerequisites: *Raise Corpse*, Magical Attack Bonus 10+

This spell works as a more powerful version of *Raise Corpse*, allowing a veritable army of undead to rise and work for the sorcerer. The undead follow the sorcerer's verbal commands until the spell expires, when the undead become lifeless corpses again.

* This spell can have severe repercussions on a campaign world and is subject to Runaway Magic (see the *Conan RPG*).

NEW MAGICAL DEVICE

THE ROD OF THE WITCHMEN

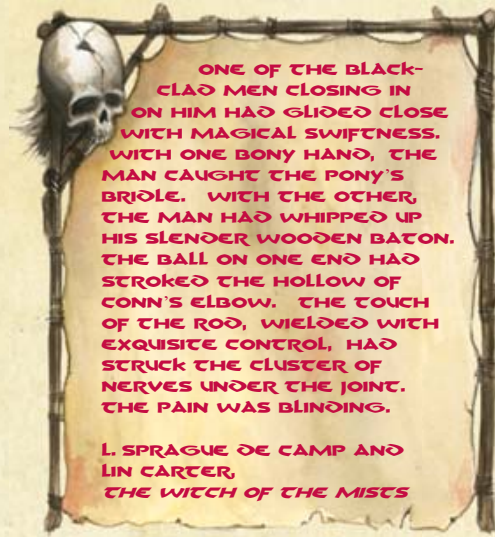


TABLE 02:
THE ACOLYTE PATH OF THE WITCHMAN OF HYPERBOREA

Character Level	Scholar Level	Witchman Level	Witchman of Hyperborea	Magical Attack Bonus
1	1	-	<i>Lesser Ill-Fortune</i>	+0
2	2	-	<i>Witch's Vigour</i>	+1
3	2	1	-	+2
4	2	2	<i>Ill-Fortune</i>	+3
5	2	3	<i>Raise Corpse</i>	+4
6	2	4	-	+4
7	2	5	<i>Death Touch</i>	+5
8	2	6	<i>Astrological Prediction</i>	+6
9	2	7		+7
10	2	8	<i>Gelid Bones</i>	+7
11	3	8	<i>Agonising Doom, Greater Ill-Fortune</i>	+8
12	4	8	<i>Warding, Visions</i>	+9
13	5	8	<i>Sorcerous News</i>	+9
14	5	9	Free Choice	+10
15	5	10	Free Choice	+11

The Rod of the Witchmen, which can be used as a finesse weapon, provides a proficient wielder with ability to stun his opponents with blinding pain. A foe touched by this weapon is forced to make a Fortitude saving throw (DC 10 + one-half your character level + Magical Attack). Armour is no defence against this attack. If the defender fails his saving throw, he is stunned for 1 round (until just before your next action). A stunned character may not act and loses any Dodge or Parry bonus to Defence Value. Attackers get a +2 bonus on attack rolls against a stunned opponent.

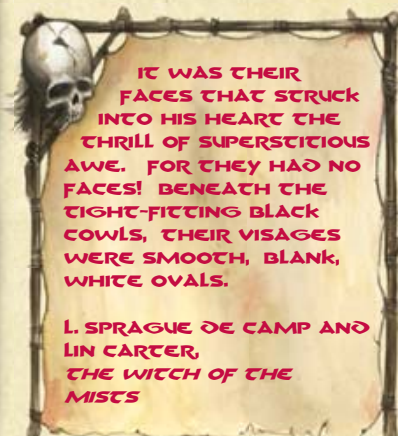
These rods or batons are over two feet long and made of sleek, gleaming black wood. The ends of each rod are tipped with spherical knobs of platinum slightly smaller than a fowl's eggs.

Purchase Price: 20,000 sp

NEW UNUSUAL ITEM

The following item is not magical, but may be regarded as magical by the ignorant. It is difficult to buy, as someone has to kill a Witchman in order to have one to sell. This item is only ever offered for sale at the Games Master's discretion.

THE FACELESS COSTUME



The Witchmen of Hyperborea dress in the costume created by Vammatar: a skin-tight black outfit with tight cowl and an ivory mask without features save for two small eye-slits. This costume is frightening to look upon and gives the Witchman a



+4 circumstance bonus to Intimidate and Bluff checks. Its overwhelmingly black look gives the Witchman a +1 circumstance bonus to Hide checks in darkness or shadows.

Purchase Price: 2,000 sp (the ivory mask is a work of art in and of itself, and the costume and mask is fitted exactly to its wearer to maximise the impact. The price is high also because of the extremely limited supply)

LOUHI, THE WITCH OF THE MISTS

Medium Human Hyperborean Female
10th level Scholar / 10th level
Witchman

Hit Dice: 10d6+20 plus 10 (65 hit points)
Initiative: +12 (+2 Dex, +10 Ref)
Speed: 30 ft.
DV (Dodge): 20 (+2 Dex, +8 Level)
DV (Parry): 18 (+0 Str, +8 Level)
DR: 5 (avatar)

Base Attack Bonus/Grapple:
+16/+16

Attack: Dagger +18 melee
(1d4/19-20/x2 / 1 AP)

Full Attack: Dagger
+18/+13/+8 melee
(1d4/19-20/x2 / 1 AP)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks:
Spells

Special Qualities:
Background (*lay priest*), knowledge

is power, increased maximum power points, mortification of body, mortification of mind, mortification of soul, avatar

Magic Attack Bonus:
+17 (+12 base +5 Cha bonus)

Saves: Fort: +9, Ref: +12, Will: +17 (+2 bonus to Will saves against spells from the hypnotism and divination styles)

Attributes: Str 11, Dex 15, Con 16, Int 16, Wis 17, Cha 21

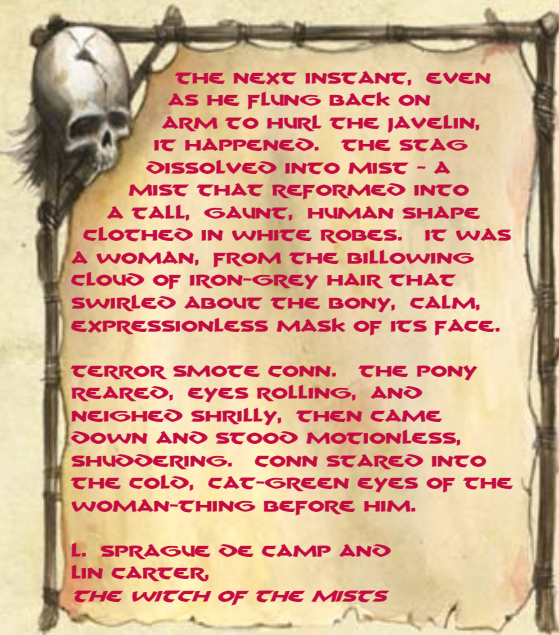
Skills: Bluff +26, Concentration +16, Craft (alchemy) +16, Craft (herbalism) +16, Craft (stone) +5, Decipher Script +16, Diplomacy +13, Gather Information +13, Heal +5, Hide +12, Intimidate +30, Knowledge (arcana) +26, Knowledge (religion) +28, Knowledge (local) +16, Move Silently +12, Perform (ritual) +27, Profession (priestess) +5, Sense Motive +28, Sleight of Hand +12

Feats: Adept (necromancy), Combat Expertise^b, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Rod of the Witchmen)^b, Hexer, Improved Disarm^b, Improved Feint^b, Iron Will^b, Leadership^b, Menacing Aura, Negotiator, Opportunistic Sacrifice, Priest, Ritual Sacrifice, Sorcerer's Boon, Steely Gaze, Striking Cobra^b, Tortured Sacrifice, Weapon Finesse^b

Climate/Terrain: Hyperborea
Organisation: The White Hand

Base Power Points: 11
Maximum Power Points: 33
Reputation: 72 (villain) Louhi may apply her +8 Reputation bonus to all Bluff, Intimidate and Gather Information checks when dealing with others
Corruption: 9 (corrupt) Louhi is extremely thin and bony
Advancement: By Character Class
^b = Bonus feat
^s = Chosen in lieu of a sorcery style
 Louhi's background is as a lay-priestess in the temple of an unnamed

Seeking more power, she allied herself with Thoth-Amon and several other notable sorcerers of the Hyborian Age. Turning herself into a white stag, she lured King Conan's son into a trap.
 King



death goddess of Hyperborea. She became an acolyte of Vammatar, a powerful necromancer gifted with eternal youth. Louhi herself eventually became a high priestess. In Conan's youth, Louhi served Vammatar the Witch-Queen as a high priestess at Castle Haloga, where she was notably critical of Vammatar's pursuit of sensual pleasures. After Vammatar's death, she moved her base of operations to Pohiola. As she can change shape into animal forms, she must have either travelled to the Orient, hosted an Oriental sorcerer or bargained with a demon for the Oriental Magic style at some point in her career. She became identified as the avatar of the death-goddess and took control of the White Hand.

Conan arrived at her citadel and, during the course of combat, set her on fire. She was last seen blazing past Conan. She is presumed dead, her corpse buried underneath the rubble of her citadel.

She appears as an incredibly ancient woman. Although her rival, Vammatar, held the guise of eternal youth, such is not the interest of Louhi, although she is more than capable of performing that particular spell, having learned it from Vammatar herself. Louhi's expressionless face is furrowed with a thousand wrinkles and her grey hair dangles in an unkempt manner. She is thin, tall and gaunt. Louhi's overriding weakness was curiosity, which ultimately led to her downfall. Thoth-Amon told her to kill Conan on sight, but she wanted to find out for herself why such a powerful wizard feared a mere mortal man. She found out.

Spells: Louhi knows the following styles and spells:
 Counterspells: *Warding; Greater Warding*
 Curses: *Lesser Ill-Fortune, Ill-Fortune; Greater Ill-Fortune; Gelid*

Bones; Draw Forth the Soul^b
 Divination: *Astrological Prediction; Visions; Sorcerous News*
 Immortality: *Witch's Vigour; Eternal Youth; Life Drain^b*
 Necromancy: *Raise Corpse; Death Touch; Agonising Doom; Draw Forth the Heart; Legions of the Dead*
 Oriental Magic: *Calm of the Adept; Shape-Shifter*
 Prestidigitation: *Conjuring, Telekinesis*
^b = Bonus spell

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Howard's *The Hyborian Age* establishes that many aspects of this age has carried forward to the modern era. Finnish Mythology has a goddess named Louhi who rules the icy realm of Pohjola. Perhaps this is a racial memory. Perhaps she survived Conan's attack and later achieved godhood.

Also, from Finnish Myth, Louhi has several beautiful maiden daughters who sends suitors on impossible tasks – and Louhi, critical of fleshly pleasures, ensures that these suitors fail. These may not be literal daughters, but acolytes.



Combined Arms 2089

Datafile:
2089

Battlefield Tactics For Armageddon 2089

Martin J. Dougherty

To many, the complexities of post-modern warfare are enough to melt an industrial fusebox. With this in mind, popular WarMek author Martin Dougherty explains how to make the most of your battlefield assets.

The Concept of Combined Arms

Faced with a choice of what units to deploy, or how best to use the units at his disposal, it is tempting for a commander to just go for as many heavy units as possible. While there are occasions when this can be effective, the wise commander fields a mix of forces that complement one another. This concept is known as combined arms. It is not new, but whatever the technology available, combined arms is the way to go.

On the battlefields of the ancient world, heavily armoured cavalry represented a massive concentration of military force, the pinnacle of military technology. Yet a body of determined pikemen could hold off a force of vastly more effective armoured cavalry so long as they maintain their cohesion.

But what if archers supported the cavalry? With the pikemen pinned in place by the threat of the cavalry, the archers will be able to shoot up the pike formation until casualties cause it to waver or break up. At that

point, there will be nothing to stop the cavalry from charging home to annihilate their opponents. This is a classic example of the use of two different types of weapon: the archers are a 'fire' weapon that 'crumbles' the enemy, while the cavalry is a 'shock' weapon that delivers a smashing blow.

This co-operation between combat arms was taken a step further on the gunpowder-dominated battlefields of Europe in the period 1700-1870 or so. All the ground combat arms were now represented on the battlefield – infantry, cavalry, artillery and specialist troops.

A force of 10,000 infantrymen in the age of Napoleon was a powerful instrument of war. Armed with short-ranged muskets that were deadly in massed fire and made decent hand-to-hand weapons when used with a bayonet, these 10,000 infantry represented a flexible and potent force.

A battle between two such forces could only be a bloodbath. While superior generalship might allow a local advantage to be gained, and superior training might make one force more potent than the other, in almost all cases a victory would be hard-won and costly. The battle



would be characterised by infantry units standing and pouring fire into one another, or attempting to close and fight it out with the bayonet. Heavy casualties would be certain, and there would be no effective pursuit of the side that broke beyond a hundred meters or so, no exploitation or follow-up, and therefore no great strategic advantage to the victory.

Let us replace one of these divisions with a combined arms force of equivalent 'value'.

The combined arms commander has under his hand a force of mobile cavalry to scout, harass and pursue his enemy, and perhaps to provide a decisive shock at the critical point. He has artillery, which can stand off and bombard the enemy. He has less infantry than his opponent, but in reality he has a lot of advantages.

His cavalry provides superior reconnaissance, allowing him to attack or defend as he chooses, or even to avoid combat. They also allow him to harass enemy supply lines, but we will disregard this factor for now.

Infantry and artillery can operate together; artillery bombards the enemy to cause casualties and disorder, and to drain morale by doing so. By the time the infantry engage, the enemy should be shaken and ready to break. The infantry can then turn on other enemy units from the flank while the cavalry pursues the remnants to prevent them from rallying. Cavalry units can also threaten the flanks of the enemy's infantry or deliver shock in the form of charges against units that are 'pinned' by infantry.

This is a simple model from the age of gunpowder. In the modern era we have far more potent and sophisticated weapon systems available, and a far greater variety of unit types. Yet one simple fact remains: a force composed of complementary unit types will

generally defeat a single-type force of equivalent value.

Combined Arms in the Mek Age

The use of combined arms tactics to maximise the fighting power of a unit has never been so important as now, in this age of highly mobile, firepower-intensive warfare.

There is a truism in warfare that it does not matter how many troops are present on the battlefield. What matters is how many are present at the critical point, at the critical moment. Or more accurately: how much force can be applied at the point of decision, at the critical moment. Combined arms theory is all about delivering maximum force with maximum effect. To see how this is done in 2089, we need first to consider the various combat roles played by Meks.

The Basic Mek Combat Roles

Meks can do many, many things, mostly involving violence and destruction. However, by far the majority of their tasks fall into the following categories:

Reconnaissance: obtaining information and targeting data on the enemy.

Close Assault: close-range attacks on enemy units using powerful weapons or even hand-to-hand attacks to quickly disable enemy units.

Midrange combat: the typical running-around-and-shooting that occurs on a battlefield.

Fire Support: long range attacks, normally in support of units closer to the enemy

Artillery: Stand-off bombardment using indirect fire.

These combat roles, like the concept of combined arms combat, are well established, though the means varies according to the technology available. Note that in some cases a Mek can be used effectively in a given role

even though it would not normally be suited. For example, almost any Mek can conduct a close assault against an infantry position if the infantry possess few anti-Mek weapons.

Combined Arms within a Mek Force

It is tempting, when equipping a Mek force, to either buy a group of very similar Meks, or to equip the unit's commander with something expensive and prestigious, letting everyone else share whatever is left over. The latter is a common folly in the Mek age, where individuals try to be battlefield heroes. Units of this type are said to follow the 'Samurai Model', since the Samurai and his entourage is an easy example from history.

The truth is, a well-integrated team will beat a hero and his followers. The trick is to choose the units making up that team so that they fully complement one another.

A team's Meks should be reasonably focussed in terms of equipment and role. Most generalist Meks are considerably inferior to specialists at their chosen task. However, when equipping a small unit such as a squad of four to six Meks, it is likely that the squad will not be greatly dispersed and the units are likely to have to cover one another. Generalist, workhorse Meks are a good idea in such a unit. They can be backed up by the specialists to give increased capability in desired areas.

A small unit that is expected to operate alone, say as a raiding or mobile-defence unit, must be able to handle all tasks. For this and other reasons, extreme specialisation is a bad idea in a small unit. Everyone should have some midrange combat capability, ideally an energy weapon or high-capacity cannon. Artillery Meks do sometimes get involved in direct-fire situations, after all. A helpless unit is a liability to be avoided at all costs.

Small units that are intended for a highly specialised role (e.g. recon or close assault units) obviously need to be equipped to best carry out this role. However, it is wise to include a measure of general capability in the squad in case support is cut off.

When equipping a larger force, it is reasonable to assume that they may be more dispersed in their operations. Specialist artillery Meks may be an option in such a force, as they can be kept back a couple of kilometres or more to offer fire support. Larger forces can afford the luxury of Recon Meks that have little combat capability, since their deficiency is more than made up for by the ability of the unit as a whole to make stand-off attacks or manoeuvre for position while the enemy remains unaware.

Recon Units

Any Mek with a decent sensor package can obtain information on the enemy. However, there is more to Recon than that. A good Recon Mek must be able to detect enemy units (not just Meks) at a considerable distance, identify targets and conduct other sensor-related tasks such as finding a path through a minefield.

Recon Meks are not expected to engage the enemy directly, so while they should have some self-defence capability (which also allows them to attack 'soft' targets) their primary weapon is their communications antenna. Recon units must use stealth or speed to avoid detection, and withdraw once discovered unless the threat is truly trivial.

The primary value of Recon units is to provide information, allowing problems to be avoided or situations to be exploited by the unit commander. However, they do have one very important secondary role. A Recon Mek in a forward position can call in artillery or fire support weapons on a target that otherwise could not be engaged. This is particularly effective if artillery fire can be dropped onto an enemy that has nothing to shoot back at,

or if missiles can be targeted via an indirect path onto an enemy command unit that is not otherwise visible to the launcher.

Recon can also be conducted by other units such as UAVs (Unmanned Aerial Vehicles) and conventional ground units.

Assault Units

Close assault Meks are generally fairly ineffective at long range and quite lightly armoured. Their heavy firepower enables them to take out most targets very quickly, but they are vulnerable in a stand-up fight. Effective use of close assault units therefore depends upon not fighting fair.

Whether the assault unit is a heavy Mek armed with a pair of particle accelerators or a cheap one with a couple of rocket packs as its only firepower, the principle remains the same. Assault units must engage at close range and saturate their target with fire. It is better to smother one target with overwhelming firepower than to spread it out among several enemy units. A sure kill is more use than several hurt Meks, and the shock effect of seeing a friendly unit go down in a maelstrom of rockets or charged-particle blasts can severely demoralise an enemy unit.

Effective recon is vital when committing close assault units. They must be able to approach the enemy without being engaged in a midrange firefight where their thin armour can be quickly breached. Use of cover is important. It may be possible to lie in ambush or approach the enemy using 'dead ground' not observable by the enemy.

Once a close assault is initiated, assault Meks must conquer or die. The usual pattern is a headlong attack, bringing massive firepower to bear on each target in turn, then a close melee where the specialist Meks have the advantage. Where an enemy unit cannot be annihilated in this manner, escape is often accomplished

by barging right through the enemy unit, forcing hostiles to turn their backs on Meks supporting the assault or let the close assault force go.

Withdrawal back the way the assault came is possible if the Meks have adequate midrange or stand-off covering fire, particularly if a withdrawal route has been pre-selected and covering units are set up to prevent hostiles from gaining good firing positions commanding the escape route.

Close assault is very much a 'shock' weapon, delivering a decisive stroke at the right moment. If the assault force is heavily shot up on the way to the target, there will be no shock. One way to get the assault force to the target is to engage the enemy at mid or long range with other Meks to 'fix' him, then work the assault force as close as possible in cover before beginning the rapid assault from a different direction. Hostiles already engaging targets to their front may be slow in responding to the new threat.

Close assault is a risky business, but it is a decisive tool in the right hands.

Engineering Meks

Engineering Meks have no place in a small squad (unless, obviously, its duties include engineering work). True, an engineering unit can be useful in preparing a defence or ambush, but the cost is better spent on a more generally useful unit. In larger units, engineering Meks can be used to strengthen a defensive position or clear enemy minefields. They are highly useful units in their chosen role but should be held in reserve until their talents are required, rather than being pushed into a combat role they are not suited for.

Fire Support Meks

Some Meks are obviously designed to fight at longer ranges. Their powerful cannon and missiles can batter enemies into submission. However, without good combined arms tactics these Meks are not used to their

best advantage. Most battles tend to become scrambles in which every Mek engages as best it can. This means that usually a fire support Mek will find itself under attack at close range, where it is least effective.

Good tactics require that the fire support units are held back, and the enemy is engaged by either close assault or generalist units, or even a skirmishing force of cheap light Meks, while the fire support units do what they do best – pick a target and kill it.



any enemy Mek that enters it. By controlling the movements of hostiles

should consider establishing a fire co-ordination protocol, enabling any commander to bring down artillery fire from neighbouring units.

If they are used, artillery Meks are best deployed well back or in a position of cover, to attack targets relayed to them by recon or front-line forces. This role can be filled by conventional artillery, but Meks have the advantage that they can keep pace with an advance, establishing new firebases behind the combat area as necessary.

For general notes on artillery use, see below.

Command & Communications Meks

C³ is vital to a good combat team. Without it, Mek officers are forced to rely on their own judgement, assisting one another as best they can but without an overall plan. As already noted, a well integrated team will beat a hero and his entourage – but a disorganised team will be overwhelmed by a band of hard-fighting warriors who can find their weaknesses (weaknesses that would normally be covered by the rest of the team) and exploit them.

Specialist comms Meks normally have powerful Electronic Warfare suites mounted on them. EW can be a great ‘force multiplier’, though it is something a commander must believe in – there is often no tangible proof that EW is helping the team win its battle, not in the sense of scoring hits on the enemy and causing targets to explode.

EW can be used offensively to disrupt enemy communications, which will not only cause teams to lose cohesion; it can cripple an offensive

Effective fire support requires good C³ (Command, Control and Communications) to avoid fratricide and to ensure that the most important targets are downed first. For this reason, it is not uncommon for unit commanders to assign themselves Meks that are good in the fire support role. This not only keeps the commander in a position where he can direct the action without being distracted by close-quarters self-defence, but places the all-important decision of where to allocate fire support in the hands of the commander himself.

Fire support is best used in a similar manner to close assault weapons – to saturate and shatter one target after another. Alternatively, harassing fire against dispersed targets may be useful to prevent an enemy from closing, or fire may be used to interdict an area by engaging

or even forcing them to remain in cover unable to shoot without taking heavy hits, the effectiveness of an enemy unit can be greatly reduced. This technique can be used to cover an assault force as it moves up.

Artillery Meks

Pure artillery Meks are not well suited to small units. Given the choice, a small-unit commander should choose a fire support Mek that can hold its own in a close fight rather than an artillery unit.

Fortunately, many artillery Meks have sufficiently good direct or midrange firepower that they can double as fire support units. Such Meks are a good choice for a small unit, where they will normally act in a fire support role but can engage distant targets using handoff targeting information from recon Meks or other units. A force made up of several small units

if the general in command cannot communicate with his front-line units. A recon unit that cannot call in artillery fire or missiles is harmless, and if it cannot even report what it sees, it is useless too.

Defensively, EW acts as a shield against certain types of weapon. Missiles can be jammed or decoyed (EW includes physical measures such as decoy launchers) and targeting locks can be broken by effective Electronic Countermeasures.

The most important use of a comms Mek, however, is to provide secure and reliable communications within a unit and with supports and allies. The comms Mek may or may not be a good choice for the unit's commander to pilot. Electronic Warfare is a complex business, and this may distract the commander from the task of running the unit.

Since it is not designed for heavy combat, the fact that a busy commander's Mek is not heavily engaging the enemy will not reduce the unit's effectiveness much. On the other hand, if the commander is a 'follow me!' type leader, a comms Mek is a poor choice as he will take it into the thick of the fight. This style of leadership is better suited to pilots of assault or general combat Meks. As a general rule, small-unit commanders *lead* their forces (often from the front) while those in command of larger units have so much to do that they usually stand back and *direct* their forces, entering combat only at critical phases or in self-defence.

A dedicated comms Mek is vital in a large unit. It is probably a luxury in a small force (less than 10 Meks) unless the squad has a specialist role or needs to co-ordinate a lot of support from artillery and aircraft.

Air Defence Meks

All units must be able to repel an airborne threat or shoot down reconnaissance drones. However, specialist Meks are not common,

nor necessary. Most missile systems capable of hitting a Mek can hit and destroy an aircraft, so for most units a specialist air defence unit is pointless. Indeed, it will absorb budget and crew that could be spent on the unit's main function – destroying ground targets.

It should be sufficient for most units to include a Mek with decent sensors and a missile system of some kind. For areas with a greater airborne threat a couple of air-defence robotic followers can be deployed. The only real advantage of anti-air Meks is that they are far more robust than robotic followers and not susceptible to interruptions in communications. For highly fluid operations this can be an important advantage.

Air defence Meks can also engage enemy missiles, and for this reason are sometimes assigned as 'goalkeepers' for command Meks in large units, or as escorts for supply convoys.

Combined Arms Mek Squad Composition

A small Mek unit cannot afford to operate a specialist unit in every role. Doing so would dilute the combat power of the unit too far. Thus a unit of a small size will normally be composed of decent midrange-combat units for the most part, with one or two specialised units in the roles where the commander thinks they will be most effective.

An aggressive commander is likely to add a couple of specialist assault Meks to his force, perhaps piloting one himself. His style of combat is to get close and bring on a melee in which his assault Meks can dump massive firepower into one enemy after another.

A cautious commander will probably want a good recon Mek in his force, allowing him to plan ahead and to learn as much about the enemy as possible.

Many small squads include a good fire support Mek, often one that can double as an artillery unit. This allows some flexibility and mutual support with adjacent units.

Whatever the composition of the unit, the pattern is the same: good recon to determine the nature of the threat, combat units forward to screen and engage the enemy, keeping them off the support units while the latter pick their targets and destroy them. The usual result when fighting a less well-organised force is for the enemy to be engaged by long-range (and often indirect) fire, and to have its strength 'written down' (i.e. degraded) a little before engaging. As the engagement develops, the combined arms commander has a good idea of the enemy's strength and can direct his forces to take out the major threats – or the command units – first. The forward units may take a fair battering, but the overall effect is to bring heavy firepower down on one enemy unit after another, disabling Meks faster than the one-on-one style of combat used by the enemy.

However, combined arms does not really begin to dominate until Meks are integrated with other unit types.

Integrating Meks with Conventional Forces

Mek commanders who ignore or discount conventional forces eventually wind up dead. Conventional forces are limited in some ways, but despite this can be a very useful component of a force if used correctly.

The Role of Infantry

The Poor Bloody Infantry, or PBI, are still an important part of the 2089 battlespace. They are of course not very mobile, lack firepower and remain astonishingly vulnerable to battlefield weapons (even those carried by other infantry). Yet they also have strengths.

Infantry are at their best on the defensive, in close terrain. In the urban environment they are deadly. Infantry can move (albeit slowly) through very difficult terrain. They can wedge themselves into places from which they cannot be easily dislodged. Infantry can create killing grounds with mines and explosive booby-traps, and with suitable weaponry they can engage Meks and damage them severely.

Infantry are obviously best used when dug-in as a pivot, a fixed defensive position upon which to manoeuvre or a backstop through which to withdraw if things get tough. A callous commander might use the relative immobility of infantry to cover his retreat.

However, infantry have other uses.

Infantry recon teams are not fast but can move stealthily, getting quite close to enemy forces to call in an attack or report on dispositions and numbers. They can be used on the offensive to deal with enemy personnel and heavy weapons positions. This is particularly important in close urban combat, where infantry squads can cause serious damage to Meks then melt away; friendly infantry operating in conjunction with Meks can clear infantry anti-Mek units and keep satchel charge-armed assault squads off the Meks while they deal with anything holding up the infantry.

Finally, infantry can conduct routine security work. Units are cheap

enough that several can be maintained just for base security and general guard work – and of course, since they are so cheap it is a safe bet that forces strapped for cash will try to use infantry anywhere they can, no matter how marginally useful they may be.

The Role of Vehicles

Heavy armoured vehicles are much cheaper than Meks, and have comparable combat capability. However, they are less mobile and are more vulnerable in many ways, especially in urban combat, so have been largely supplanted in the frontline combat role.

This is not to say that vehicles are no longer any use on the battlefield.



As a rule they tend to be lighter and faster than their forebears of a century before, but they can mount weapons deadly to a Mek.

Vehicles, especially wheeled ones, are a cheap alternative to Meks, and in many armed forces they are used instead of Meks. In the combat role they are normally encountered as infantry transports and weapons carriers. The latter is a catch-all term for a fairly light vehicle carrying weapons ranging from antipersonnel machineguns to missiles and mid-calibre cannon. Non-combat roles include reconnaissance, field ambulance, command post and logistics vehicle.

Heavy (usually tracked) vehicles are normally encountered as artillery mounts, engineering vehicles and occasionally as traditional main battle tanks. The latter can be outmanoeuvred by Mek forces, which can move much further and faster (this is termed 'strategic mobility') but in an engagement remain dangerous. Even though they present an easier target than a Mek, heavily armoured vehicles can be difficult to kill and can dish out some serious damage.

Forces with Meks available tend to relegate heavy armour to a defensive role, protecting bases and other critical installations. Tanks are occasionally used in a set-piece assault where their massive frontal armour can defeat many

weapons. However, it takes a long time to move tanks into an area and set up such an assault. Meks are able to move up, strike, and depart, keeping the enemy guessing about their dispositions and perhaps achieving surprise.

Mek forces can make good use of vehicles. They make a reasonable substitute for Mek engineering units and logistics transport, and good mounts for anti-aircraft systems. Vehicles are also useful for scouting and communications-relay duty. They are sometimes also used for Mek-recovery work after an action.

In combat, the best use for vehicles is in support of Meks. Mek-Destroyers mounting a missile system or heavy cannon (often with no turret; just a gun on a hull) are excellent fire support units. If the enemy can be kept away from them, they can take over the fire support role described for Meks.

Vehicles are used to transport artillery too. While not as mobile as Mek-mounted howitzers, vehicle-mounted artillery is much cheaper, allowing it to be deployed en masse. Systems range from the cheap Rockertruck-type multiple launcher system to highly sophisticated mobile artillery systems. Since artillery is not intended to go anywhere near the enemy, it does not need to be up to Mek defensive nor mobility standards. Artillery systems are the commonest vehicles used by Mek commanders.

Many Mek commanders like to use vehicles to support their infantry component as well as transporting them. Most APCs mount a machinegun, grenade launcher or light autocannon for this role, but specialist infantry support vehicles exist. These include assault gun/engineering vehicle hybrids, designed to clear obstacles and give direct support to an infantry component. Most commanders do not bother with them, using Meks as

necessary instead for support and letting the infantry clear their own obstacles.

The Role of Artillery

Indirect artillery fire is very much a 'fire' weapon, i.e. it has no shock effect (unless nuclear weapons are used) but is used to interdict areas, disrupt and disorder the enemy, and to inflict attrition. Artillery never took an enemy position, but a heavy enough bombardment can destroy one. Artillery-deployed minefields can be used to slow an enemy, to harass him, or to channel him into a killing ground.

Artillery (whether mounted on a Mek or otherwise) can support other units effectively, can wear down an enemy and crumble his positions adequately, and can fight to defend itself very badly indeed. Artillery must be protected, usually well to the rear with an infantry security component, some air defences, a few combat

vehicles and maybe even some Meks to protect it. Artillery is a powerful weapon when used correctly, but without good Command & Control from the battlefield, it is virtually useless.

The Role of Air Units

Mek forces rarely contain an air element other than some UAVs for reconnaissance. This is a useful task, which can also be carried out by manned air assets.

Fighter aircraft are mainly useful for keeping enemy missiles and air units off the friendly force, though they can also be used to kill UAVs and thus deny the enemy reconnaissance information.

Helicopters, Fighter-bombers, strike aircraft and strategic bombers may be on call to support a Mek unit. As a rule, heavier units tend to be used to interdict reinforcement and resupply routes and to attack fairly large and static targets such as command installations, bases and artillery concentrations. They are also sometimes used as missile platforms, launching salvos of missiles that are then guided in by reconnaissance units.

Lighter air assets may function in a tactical strike role, taking out targets on the battlefield or just behind it. The classic role here is to knock out enemy artillery and fire support Meks that cannot be engaged by other means.

Air assets can strike deeply into enemy territory, and can be used in quite subtle ways. Air-laid minefields can channel an enemy force into a killing ground or away from a vulnerable area, and a similar effect can be created by strike missions into a given area. Strikes can break up



an assault before it begins or make resupply difficult. It is also possible to use air power to make a ground victory more complete, for example by taking out a bridge needed for the retreat or repeatedly blasting a river crossing being used by enemy forces. Air strikes (or an airdropped minefield) just behind an enemy position may pin the defenders in place, preventing their escape from an overwhelming assault.

Conclusions: A Combined Arms Strategy For 2089

It should by now be apparent that combined arms tactics and strategy offers the Mek commander significant advantages on the modern battlefield. While the WarMek is most definitely the major combat asset, operations can be made more cost-effective by replacing some Mekes with conventional units, and units can be made more combat-effective by adding relatively cheap conventional units.

A combat unit should include recon, communications and fire support elements alongside its main combat assets, and a 'fire brigade' of assault Mekes is useful for quickly dealing with major threats.

A command Mek mounting one or more UAVs or a vehicle-mounted UAV launcher is a useful tool for tactical air reconnaissance. Good communications are vital if best use is to be made of this information.

A conventional artillery park is a good investment, along with sufficient infantry assets to secure it against a minor raid. Vehicle-mounted air defence systems and weapons carriers can secure the rear area and the supply route, freeing Mek assets for forward operations.

Vehicle-mounted fire support weapons (Mek Destroyers or Guntracks) may provide heavy firepower cheaply.

For urban combat, an infantry component is absolutely vital if Mek casualties are to be kept down. Infantry and Mekes must train together to be able to operate in mutual support.

With these assets available, a combined arms force commander can conduct a battle in the following manner:

Recon assets locate the enemy and UAVs provide additional detail. Fire is called in from the artillery park, disrupting and 'softening up' the enemy. The main Mek force then advances to contact, covered by long range fire from fire support Mekes and vehicles. Artillery engages enemy artillery support, and air assets are called in to strike these units. Electronic Warfare assets jam enemy communications to cause maximum confusion. With the enemy's attention firmly on the midrange combat units and their fire support, close assault units move up and begin to deliver shock, saturating and destroying one target after another. When the enemy force breaks, pursuit is as close and rapid as possible, leaving conventional assets to secure the battle area as the Mekes exploit their victory. If possible, artillery and/or air assets interdict the enemy line of retreat to cause delay or inflict additional casualties. Pursuit is maintained as long as practicable, then Mek forces fall back on their conventional supports for resupply.

As previously mentioned, a force handled in this manner will defeat an equal or greater 'value' of Mekes just lined up for battle, and will inflict a more meaningful defeat. Mek Warfare is all about using fire (crumble)

and shock (smash) in the right proportions, in the right place, and at the right time.

Combined arms is the best, the most cost-effective – the *only* – way to apply crumble and smash on the modern battlefield. Co-operate, or die!



POWER CLASS: MERCENARY

Patrick Younts

I've been really impressed with all the new S&P Power Classes so far, but it's fair to say that the Mercenary really is something rather special, so enjoy Patrick Younts' great new class and ensure that the rest of your party pay you the gold pieces you so clearly deserve...

Introduction

The mercenary is the master of mass warfare. A hardened fighting man well versed in all facets of strategic and tactical combat, the mercenary performs a vital function in training and bolstering the militaries of most civilisations.

Often, the mercenary is viewed with a combination of scorn, fear and reluctant admiration – during wartime, a mercenary is valued for his tactical genius and battlefield prowess, but in peacetime he is seen as an overly violent thug and, more importantly, a burden on the kingdom's resources. Mercenaries rarely give much thought to the opinions of others, since they are too busy training and carousing away their hard earned pay.



The Mercenary

Adventures: Mercenaries rarely, if ever, adventure for altruistic purposes. The acquisition of wealth, power and prestige are foremost in their minds at all times. With the proper cash incentive, however, a mercenary will quite willingly align himself with any cause.

The vast majority of mercenaries are members of permanent, or semi-permanent, free sword companies. Mercenaries of this sort trade their freedom for regular wages and will have little to no time for

dungeon delves and other traditional adventures. Instead, their lives are an often brief cycle of marching, training, fighting, healing and carousing.

Independent mercenaries who align themselves with a traditional adventuring band will be most comfortable in adventures involving heavy combat. They thrive in situations where their martial prowess can be brought to the fore, but have little patience for matters of intrigue or diplomacy.

Characteristics: Mercenaries are swords for hire, hardened men and women who trade blood for gold. A mercenary's strength is his adaptability – where a fighter learns a wide range of feats, the mercenary learns to adapt his fighting style to match that of his employer, allowing him to blend seamlessly into any party.

A mercenary also commands a wide range of useful skills, as he is able to customise his skill list, giving him a versatility that few other adventurers can match. Further, he is a natural leader and strategist, well versed in all aspects of planning, organising and leading a prolonged military campaign. As he gains in power and experience, soldiers flock to his banner, so a high level mercenary will adventure at the head of a well-trained, absolutely loyal army.

Alignment: Mercenaries are a diverse group, drawn from all nations and all walks of life. As such, they may be of any alignment. Lawful mercenaries most often find employ in the armies of benevolent kingdoms or churches, while Chaotic mercenaries often find themselves allied with small, elite strike forces, for example the average adventuring band.

Religion: Understandably, most mercenaries pay homage to the gods of war and, though they may favour a particular war god, they are careful to offer proper and diligent sacrifice to all. Most mercenaries offer at least lip service to the gods of fate and wealth as well, and cautious mercenaries always leave a sacrifice to the gods of death, that they might survive to collect their pay.

Background: A mercenary could conceivably come from any background. Many are former soldiers, who, chafing at the low pay and endless monotony of guard duty, fled their duties for the fast paced and comparatively wealthy life of a free sword. Others are former peasant conscripts who found they had a taste

for war and no desire to return to the joyless, oftentimes backbreaking life of a peasant farmer. Still others are third or fourth generation mercenaries who carry heirloom blades into battle – for them, it is a matter of honour and few born into the life of the mercenary ever willingly leave it.

The mercenary fraternity is a close-knit one. Though individual mercenaries, or entire mercenary bands, can and do have blood feuds with one another, on the whole they prefer to keep things on the level of friendly rivalry. After all, mercenaries who face each other one day often stand shoulder to shoulder under the same banner the next.

Races: The bulk of mercenaries are of human, half-orc or dwarf stock, as those races place the most value on warfare and the role of the professional warrior. Elves, gnomes and halflings, who, as a whole, prefer to settle their problems through peaceful mediation, rarely have the stomach for the mercenary's bloody life.

Other Classes: Mercenaries get along and function well with members of most other classes. They are most comfortable in the company of other fighting men, the fighter, ranger, barbarian and, to a lesser extent, the paladin, as those classes share an understanding of the rigors of the battlefield. They have a great appreciation for the divine power of clerics, particularly those who preach the dogma of the gods of war, but have little in common with druids, who, as a rule, view large scale warfare as a destructive waste of natural resources. Bards, especially skalds and battlefield heralds, are welcome in any mercenary troop, as their songs of battlefield glory both raise morale and serve as free advertisement for the group's prowess. Rogues are viewed with a mix of respect and suspicion - their stealth skills make them useful, but their penchant for thievery and excessive greediness, even by mercenary standards, makes them

a serious profit risk, something no mercenary will tolerate. Finally, most mercenaries try hard to cultivate good working relationships with wizards and sorcerers, as their spells are a vital component of any well prepared army.

Game Rule Information

Abilities: Strength is of supreme importance to a mercenary, as it allows him to both dispatch foes quickly and stand firm against the crushing press of bodies locked in mass combat. Constitution and Wisdom are valuable as well, the former helps the mercenary survive his dangerous career and the latter keeps him resolute in the face of death. Charisma is also useful, since experienced mercenaries often find themselves in positions of authority. Finally, a mercenary with a high Intelligence can command a larger fee, as his wide range of skills are an asset in any army.

Alignment: Any (usually neutral)

Hit Die: d10

Starting Gold: 3d6 gp.

Class Skills

The mercenary's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Handle Animal (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Knowledge (fighting styles) (Int), Profession (commander, siege engineer) (Int), Ride (Dex), Speak Language(none), and Swim (Str).

In addition, the mercenary can pick any four of the following skills as class skills: Appraise (Int), Balance (Dex), Bluff (Cha), Disable Device (Int), Disguise (Cha), Escape Artist (Dex), Gather Information (Cha), Heal (Wis), Hide (Dex), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Open Lock (Dex), Search (Int), Sense Motive (Wis), Sleight of Hand (Dex), Spot (Wis), Tumble (Dex), Use Rope (Dex), and Survival (Wis).

Skill Points Per Level: (4 + Int bonus) x 4.

Skill Points Each Additional Level: 4 + Int bonus.

Class Features

All the following are class features of the mercenary.

Armour and Weapon Proficiency:

Mercenaries are proficient with all simple and martial weapons. Mercenaries are proficient with all types of armour (light, medium and heavy) and with shields. Note that armour check penalties for armour heavier than leather apply to the skills Balance, Climb, Escape Artist, Hide, Jump, Move Silently, Sleight of Hand, and Tumble. Also, swim checks suffer a -1 penalty for every 5 pounds of armour and equipment carried.

Feat Adaptation: To be an effective free sword, a mercenary must learn to easily adapt his fighting techniques to mesh with those of his employer's forces. A 1st level mercenary has the ability to adapt his fighting style to gain the use of his allies' feats. 1/day, with a successful Knowledge (fighting styles) skill check (DC 20), the mercenary can temporarily sacrifice one of his existing feats to gain the use of an ally's feat. If the skill check is successful, he gains the benefits of the adapted feat, but no longer benefits from the feat he sacrificed - in essence, the mercenary's permanent feat slots are actually semi-permanent. At the end of every full day, the mercenary must succeed at another Knowledge (fighting styles) skill check if he wishes to retain use of the adapted feat, though the DC of the check is reduced to 15. The mercenary can retain the adapted feat for an indefinite period, so long as he continues to succeed at his skill checks - should he fail, he loses the adapted feat, regains the use of his sacrificed feat and is considered to have used 1 Feat Adaptation use for the day.

At 4th, 10th and 18th level, the mercenary gains additional uses of the Feat Adaptation ability, allowing him to temporarily gain the use of multiple feats. In addition, he can now adopt feat chains - so, for example, a 4th level mercenary could use Feat Adaptation to gain the use of both Power Attack and Cleave by using both of his semi-permanent feat slots.

There are restrictions as to what feats the mercenary can adapt with Feat Adaptation. First, Feat Adaptation only applies to feats assigned to slots gained by level advancement (at levels 1,3,6,9,12,15 and 18, respectively). Next, in order to adapt a feat, the mercenary must meet or exceed all base attack bonus, ability score and skill rank



requirements, as well as possess all necessary feats. So, for example, a 1st mercenary who wishes to gain the use of Improved Disarm must possess both an Intelligence of 13+ and the Combat Expertise feat. For the purposes of what may be adapted with Feat Adaptation, the mercenary is still considered to possess his sacrificed feats, so a 1st level mercenary cannot sacrifice Dodge to gain the Mobility feat. Finally, the mercenary can only use Feat Adaptation to adapt feats on the fighter's bonus feat list, or those feats marked as [Fighter] - other feats may be authorised by the Games Master, but under no circumstance may Combat Casting, Extra Turning, Skill Focus, Spell Focus, Spell Penetration, Tracking, or Item Creation or Metamagic feats be adapted.

Bonus Feat: Mercenaries quickly become accustomed to the rigors

of non-stop training and battle. At 3rd level, the mercenary gains a bonus feat from the following list - Endurance, Great Fortitude, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Skill Focus (fighting styles), or Toughness.

Leadership: At 6th level the mercenary receives the Leadership feat for free.

Intuitive Understanding: Beginning at 7th level, a mercenary becomes so skilled at studying the mechanics of a fighting technique that his mind and body intuitively adapt themselves to its use, even if he does not possess the natural aptitude or training normally required to utilise it fully. When using Feat Adaptation to learn a feat, he can ignore a single ability score or skill rank requirement of that feat. So, for example, if he wishes to use Feat Adaptation to utilise Expertise, he can ignore that feat's requirement of an Intelligence score of 13+.

At 13th level, a mercenary gains the ability to ignore a single required feat when using Feat Adaptation. So, for example, a 13th level mercenary could use Feat Adaptation to gain the use of the Improved Disarm feat, without having the required Intelligence of 13+ or the Expertise feat. As with his Feat Adaptation ability, the mercenary cannot use Intuitive Understanding to ignore the feats Combat Casting, Extra Turning, Skill Focus, Spell Focus, or Spell Penetration, nor make it ignore Item Creation or Metamagic feats.

Armour Acclimation: By 8th level, a mercenary has become so accustomed to wearing heavy armour that he no longer suffers the normal armour check penalties when doing so. The armour check penalty of any armour and shield worn by the mercenary is reduced by 2, to a minimum of 0. At 14th level, the mercenary is so accustomed to his armour's bulk that he no longer suffers speed penalties when wearing medium or heavy armour. In order to benefit from armour acclimation, the mercenary's armour and shield must be of at least masterwork quality.

Human Mercenary Starting Package

Armour: Scale mail +4 AC, medium armour, base speed 20 ft., armour check penalty -4, spell failure 25%, weight 30 lb.

Weapons: Ranseur (2d4, crit. x4, Large-sized, weight 15 lb., piercing, reach), short sword (1d6, crit. 19-20/x2, Small-sized, weight 3 lb., piercing), dagger (1d4, crit. 19-20/x2, range 10 ft., Tiny-sized, 1 lb., piercing)

Skill Selection: Pick a number of skills equal to 5 + Int modifier.

Skill	Ranks	Ability
Appraise	4	Int
Craft (armoursmith or weaponsmith)	4	Int
Gather Information	4	Cha
Heal	4	Wis
Hide	4	Dex
Intimidate	4	Cha
Knowledge (fighting styles)	4	Int
Listen	4	Wis
Move Silently	4	Dex
Profession (commander or siege engineer)	4	Int
Ride	4	Dex
Search	4	Int
Sleight of Hand	4	Dex
Spot	4	Wis
Survival	4	Wis

Feat: Weapon Focus (ranseur)

Bonus Feat: Skill Focus (fighting styles)

Gear: Backpack, waterskin, 1 week's trail rations, bedroll, flint and steel.

Gold: 3d6 gp.

Alternative Mercenary Starting Package

Same as human mercenary, except

Race: Dwarf, half-elf, or half-orc

Armour: speed 15 ft. for dwarf

Weapons: battleaxe (1d8, crit. x3, Medium-sized, weight 7 lb., slashing) for dwarves and half-orcs

Skills: Pick a total of 4 + Int. modifier

Bonus Feat: None

Alternative Mercenary Starting Package

Same as human mercenary, except

Race: Elf, gnome or halfling

Armour: Studded leather armour +3 AC, speed 30 ft. for elf, speed 20 ft. for gnome and halfling, armour check -2, spell failure 20%

Weapons: Longbow (1d8, crit. x3, range 100 ft., Large-sizes, weight 3 lbs., piercing) and longsword (1d8, crit. 19-20 x2, Medium-sized, slashing) instead of ranseur and short sword for elves, light crossbow (1d8, crit 19-20 x2, range 80 ft., Small-sized, weight 6 lb., piercing) instead of ranseur for gnomes and halflings

Skills: Pick 4 + Int. modifier

Bonus Feat: None

Gear: Quiver and 20 arrows for elves, quiver and 10 bolts for gnomes and halflings

The Mercenary

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Save	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1	+1		+2	+0	+2	Feat Adaptation 1
2	+2		+3	+0	+3	
3	+3		+3	+1	+3	Bonus Feat
4	+4		+4	+1	+4	Feat Adaptation 2
5	+5		+4	+1	+4	
6	+6/+1		+5	+2	+5	Leadership
7	+7/+2		+5	+2	+5	Intuitive Understanding (ignore attribute)
8	+8/+3		+6	+2	+6	Armour Acclimation (reduced penalties)
9	+9/+4		+6	+3	+6	
10	+10/+5		+7	+3	+7	Feat Adaptation 3
11	+11/+6/+1		+7	+3	+7	
12	+12/+7/+2		+8	+4	+8	Leadership Bonus +1
13	+13/+8/+3		+8	+4	+8	Intuitive Understanding (ignore feat)
14	+14/+9/+4		+9	+4	+9	Armour Acclimation (improved speed)
15	+15/+10/+5		+9	+5	+9	
16	+16/+11/+6/+1		+10	+5	+10	Leadership Bonus +2, Second Cohort
17	+17/+12/+7/+2		+10	+5	+10	
18	+18/+13/+8/+3		+11	+6	+11	Feat Adaptation 4
19	+19/+14/+9/+4		+11	+6	+11	
20	+20/+15/+10/+5		+12	+6	+12	Leadership Bonus +3

Leadership Bonus: The exploits of skilled mercenary bands are the stuff of legend and fireside tales. As a mercenary's fame grows, soldiers flock to his banner. At 12th level, and again at 16th and 20th level, the mercenary gains a +1 bonus to his Leadership score.

Second Cohort: At 16th level, a mercenary attracts a second cohort. To determine the level of the second cohort, halve the mercenary's leadership score (rounding down) - the mercenary's Leadership bonus is not reduced.

New Skill Uses

Knowledge (fighting styles)

The Knowledge (fighting styles) skill represents a character's familiarity with the fighting techniques of various cultures, whether they be the simplistic but powerful blows of an orc barbarian or the precision strikes of an elven master fencer.

Check: With a successful skill check, the character knows the basic details of a particular fighting school - he recalls the general history of the school, including famous practitioners of the past and present, and knows the feats, techniques and skills most often associated with its practitioners. The DC of the check depends on the style's notoriety. Schools or warriors that are famous kingdom-wide are DC 10, while a sword style taught only to the children of a single remote halfling village would be DC 30.

Additionally, if a character with this skill spends a minimum of 3 rounds observing an opponent engaged in combat, he can gain great insight into that opponent's fighting techniques. With a successful skill check, opposed by the target's Bluff check, he learns, in general terms, the fighting ability of his opponent - he knows if his opponent's level is higher, lower, or equal to his own, and any feats the opponent used while being observed are known to the character. Assuming the *Quintessential Fighter* is used in the

campaign, the character knows the details of any fighting style abilities his opponent possesses as well.

Retry: A second opposed Knowledge (fighting styles) skill check can be attempted, though the opponent gains a +5 bonus to his Bluff skill check.

Special: Fighter, mercenary and monk characters with the Knowledge (fighting styles) skill can use it, instead of Bluff, when making opposed checks to disguise their fighting style. Characters with 5 or more ranks in Bluff gain a +2 synergy bonus to their opposed skill check when doing so.

It is recommended that Game Masters include Knowledge (fighting styles) as a class skill for the fighter and monk classes.

Profession (commander)

Characters with the Profession (commander) skill have an understanding of the complex logistical issues related to training, supplying and fielding large military

forces; he knows how to establish and protect supply lines, how to best conduct field training and other exercises to see maximum benefit, how to organise troops and establish chains of command and how to create and enforce discipline within the ranks. A character with this skill also has an intimate knowledge of strategy and tactics, and is able to effectively direct troops on both a grand, army-wide scale and on a smaller, individual level.

Below are some common uses for the Profession (commander) skill, as well as their associated DCs. Many of the uses listed below include additional rules for use with *Mongoose Publishing's Open Mass Combat System*, which can be found in the *Quintessential Fighter*.

Efficient march (DC 20): The character's army, or adventuring party, can attempt a forced march for 10 hours before needing to make Constitution checks.

Efficient deployment (opposed): Wise deployment of troops can ensure victory before the first blow is struck. If at least an hour is spent studying terrain and consulting with his subordinates, and if he wins a successful skill check opposed by the enemy leader's Profession (commander) skill, the character manages to deploy his troops in such a way that he gains the battlefield advantage. He, and all his troops, gain a +1 bonus to their initiative check at the beginning of battle. If used with the *Open Mass Combat System*, the +1 initiative bonus applies to the first 4 rounds of combat. A character with 5 or more ranks in the Bluff skill gains a +2 synergy bonus to his skill check.

Issue battlefield orders (DC 20): In the chaos and din of war, it becomes almost impossible for a commander to keep control of his forces. Once battle is joined, a successful skill check is required to dispense orders.

Skill checks are not required in battles involving less than a score of opponents on each side.

Rally troops (DC 30 or see text): Though commanders might wish it otherwise, soldiers are not immune to the effects of fear and exhaustion and even the most hardened troops will turn tail in the face of overwhelming opposition. With a successful skill check, a commander can rally fleeing troops, fire their courage and drive them back to the screaming heart of the battlefield. When used with the *Open Mass Combat System*, a successful skill check (DC 30) grants a fleeing unit a +2 bonus to their next morale check. A successful skill check can also reverse *fear* effects, such as those caused by dragon fear - the DC of the check is equal to the save DC of the *fear* effect. With a successful check, all *fear*-affected allies within vocal range immediately attempt another save, with a +2 morale bonus to the roll. An issue battlefield orders check can be made in conjunction with a rally troops attempt, allowing the commander to rally troops all across the battlefield. A character with 5 or more ranks in Intimidation gains a +2 synergy bonus to rally troops checks.

Organised retreat (opposed): A wise commander knows there is no shame in an organised withdrawal. When used in conjunction with the *Open Mass Combat System*, a successful skill check, opposed by the enemy general's Profession (commander) skill check, allows a unit using the withdraw action to retreat without provoking an attack of opportunity.

Efficient Recovery (DC 20): The majority of casualties in mass combat occur after the battle is over, as wounded soldiers succumb to the effects of disease, or bleed out, or are slain by battlefield scavengers. When used in conjunction with the *Open Mass Combat System*, a successful skill check adds +5% to the number of unit hit points regained after a

battle. An additional +1%, to a maximum of +15%, is regained for each point the skill check exceeds 20 by.

Profession (siege engineer)
A siege engineer is a trained artilleryist and sapper. He is responsible for training and directing an army's artillery crews, and is also the commander's chief consultant on matters pertaining to artillery placement and destruction of enemy fortifications. A siege engineer is an invaluable member of any army, and no smart mercenary general dares plan a battle without one.

Below are some common uses for the Profession (siege engineer) skill check, as well as the associated DCs. Again, many of the uses listed below include additional rules for use with the *Open Mass Combat System*.

Efficient placement (DC 20): If at least 1 hour is spent studying terrain, the siege engineer can, with a successful skill check, place his artillery in an advantageous position, giving him a commanding view of the battlefield. The range increments of all his ranged artillery pieces are increased by 20%.

Quick strike (opposed): With a successful skill check, opposed by the enemy general's Profession (commander) skill check, the siege engineer reduces the circumstance penalty of his artillery piece's initiative check to -2, instead of -4. This skill use presumes the use of the *Open Mass Combat System*.

Fast reload (DC 20): With a successful skill check, the reload time for all artillery pieces is reduced by 1 full round action. In regards to a battering ram, a successful check allows the ram to be used every 2 rounds.

Efficient aiming (DC 20): With a successful skill check, the character reduces by 2 the number of minutes required to reposition and aim his artillery pieces.

Increase structural damage (DC 30): With a successful skill check, the structural damage inflicted by a single artillery piece is increased by 1 die size. So, for example, a heavy catapult which normally inflicts 3d6 structural points would instead deal out 3d8 points of structural damage. The increased damage is the result of precision aiming, so the weapon's reload time between each shot is increased by 2 rounds. During those 2 rounds, the siege engineer must perform several difficult calculations, so he may take no other actions in those rounds. A new skill check, attempted at the conclusion of the second round, is required with each shot – the artillery piece still inflicts normal damage with a failed check. Rules for structural damage can be found in the *Quintessential Fighter*.

New Feats

Band of Brothers

You draw inspiration from your troops and they, in turn, draw inspiration and courage from you.

Requirements: Cha 13+, Profession (commander) 9+ ranks, Leadership.
Benefits: For every 20 troops under your command, you gain a +1 morale bonus to Will saves, to a maximum bonus of +5. The bonus only applies while you are in the presence of your followers, as when leading an army into battle. Conversely, all followers and cohorts within a 100 ft. radius of you gain a +1 morale bonus to Will saves, so long as they can see you.

Blood Bond

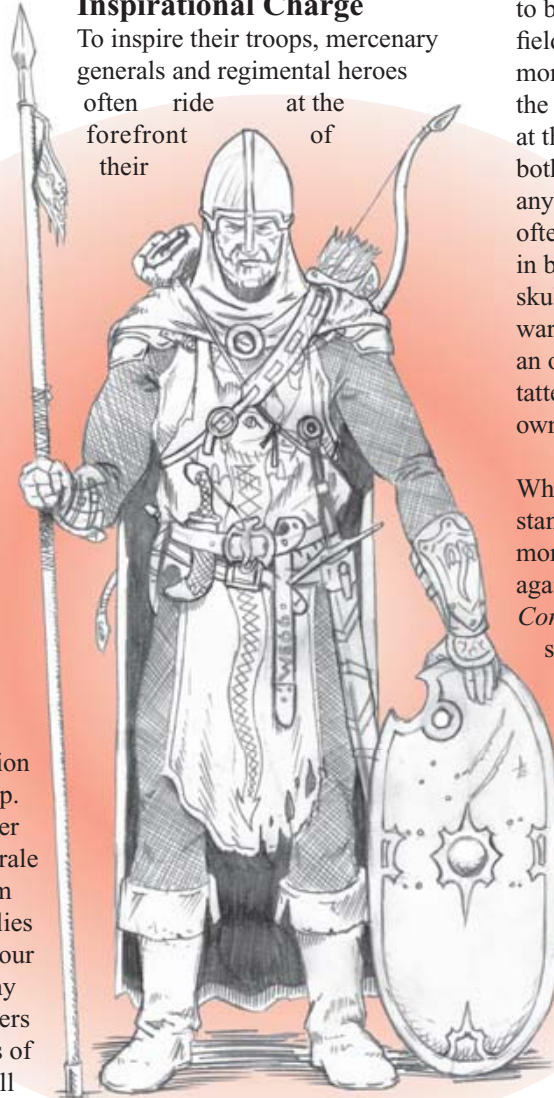
When you stand at the head of your army, your battle fury knows no bounds.

Requirements: Cha 13+, Profession (commander) 9+ ranks, Band of Brothers, Leadership.
Benefits: Each time one of your followers dies, while within a 100 ft. radius of you, you gain a +1 morale

bonus to attack and damage rolls in the following round. If more than one follower dies in a round, you a cumulative +1 morale bonus for each, to a maximum of a +5 to attack and damage. You gain bonuses only from those followers who are killed by enemy action.

Inspirational Charge

To inspire their troops, mercenary generals and regimental heroes often ride at the forefront of their



army, charging headlong into the massed ranks of the enemy in an effort to inspire their troops. You are one such general.

Requirements: Ride skill, Mounted Combat.

Benefits: When you perform a mounted charge attack, all allies within visual range gain a +1 morale bonus to attack and damage rolls and to all Will saves made in the following round.

New Equipment

Battle Standard

A battle standard is a large square flag bearing the heraldry or symbol of an army or free sword company. Battle standards are borne into battle on long wooden poles, so that they soar high enough above the conflict to be seen from anywhere on the field, acting as both rally point and morale-boosting symbol. Outside of the field, battle standards are carried at the front of the army, serving as both a warning and advertisement to any who see it. Battle standards are often decorated with trophies claimed in battle, like the shattered helmet, or skull, of an enemy general, a broken war horn, sword hilt or crown from an overthrown kingdom, or even the tattered remnants of vanquished foes' own battle standards.

When carried into battle, a battle standard provides its army with a +1 morale bonus to all saving throws against *fear*. If the *Open Mass Combat System* is used, the battle standard provides a +1 bonus to all morale checks. **Battle standard;** 50 lb.; 300 gp.

Wagon, Field Hospital

A field wagon hospital is a godsend to wounded soldiers. A wide-bodied, canvas-topped heavy wagon filled with all manner of medical equipment, including 6 stretchers, wrappings, splints, thread and needle and all manner of herbs, the hospital wagon trundles about the battlefield, the field surgeons that man it administering field surgery and first aid to grievously wounded soldiers. The equipment is stored on small shelves that run along the inside of the wagon and in reinforced boxes that ring the wagon's outside. A field hospital wagon is very heavy, requiring a team of four draft horses to pull it. A field hospital wagon grants a +4 competence bonus to all Heal skill checks. It carries enough supplies to be used in conjunction with 40

Heal skill checks. Restocking the field hospital wagon costs 250 gp. If used in conjunction with the *Open Mass Combat System*, a field hospital wagon increases the number of all unit's hit points recovered after a battle by 10%. In this case, it is exhausted after a single mass battle.

Field Hospital Wagon; 300 gp.

War Drum, Grand

A grand war drum is fully 10 feet in diameter and weighs so much that it must be carried into battle atop a heavy wagon. A grand war drum is a potent psychological weapon, one that builds allied morale while shattering the confidence of enemy forces. The booming sound of a single grand war drum carries for more than a mile, but when an entire group of grand drums is played in unison, the sound rolls across the battlefield like thunder.

When played, a single grand war drum adds a +1 morale bonus to all saves against *fear* and imposes a -1 morale penalty to opponent's *fear* saves. Extra grand war drums add cumulative bonuses and penalties to saves, to a maximum of 5. The morale bonus gained from grand war drums stacks with that gained from a war horn. When used with the *Open Mass Combat System*, war drums provide bonuses to unit morale checks. Each grand war drum requires two musicians, each with at least 4 ranks in the Perform (drums) skill.

Grand War Drum; 200 lb.; 150 gp.

War Drum, Marching

Mercenary commanders use groups of drummers to set the marching pace, as a steady drum beat keeps a soldier's mind focussed and sharp during the long, boring march to war. When played by a drummer with at least 4 ranks in the Perform (drums) skill, war drums increase the pace of overland movement by 2 miles per day. One marching war drum is necessary for every 100 soldiers in the army.

Marching war drum; 5 lb.; 10 gp.

War Horn

War horns are a vital part of any large military force. They are used to relay orders, to signal a charge or retreat and to rally troops when morale is failing.

When used in battle, a war horn grants a +2 morale bonus to its followers' saves against *fear* for the first 1d4 rounds of combat, and a -1 morale penalty to enemy *fear* saves. If carried by an army's general, or more likely his aide, it also provides a +2 competence bonus to Profession (commander) skill checks, save for those pertaining to efficient recovery.

War Horn; 2 lb.; 10 gp.

New Armour

Barding, Horned

Horned barding is a suit of reinforced barding with twin, forward facing 4-foot curved spikes mounted on its shoulders. During a mounted charge, a mount equipped with horned barding can make a single attack, at the base attack bonus of its primary attack (+2 for the charge), to attempt to skewer its opponent – this extra attack is in addition to the rider's charge attack. The horn has statistics equivalent to a light lance and inflicts double damage on a charge attack (triple damage if the rider possesses the Spirited Charge feat). Horned barding can only be attached to masterwork half-plate or full plate barding – it adds 10% to the armour's weight and 20% to the armour's cost.

Imposing

Often, a general or regimental champion will wear a set of armour that heightens his presence, inspiring awe in his troops and abject terror in his enemies. Armour designed to be imposing is larger and heavier than normal armour of the same sort, allowing its wearer to loom over 'lesser' warriors, and is usually constructed with sharp points and heavy rivets and covered with military symbols and imagery. More bloodthirsty sorts will paint their

armour black or red, or both, and invariably festoon their armour with more grisly trophies as well; severed finger bones, rings of teeth, scalps or even mummified, shrunken heads are common accoutrements. Imposing armour adds a +3 competence bonus to all Intimidation skill checks. Imposing is an option that can only be added to masterwork suits of half-plate or full plate armour. It increases the armour check penalty by 1, the weight of the armour by 10% and the armour's cost by 10%.

Shield, Reinforced Arm

In lieu of wearing a normal shield, many mercenaries choose to have the armour of their off-hand arm reinforced, giving them extra protection while still allowing the use of both arms. A reinforced arm can also be worn by itself and, in this fashion, is popular with barbarians and berserkers.

A reinforced arm functions as a small steel shield. You can fight using your off hand, as you would with a buckler, but suffer a -2 penalty to attack rolls when doing so. This penalty stacks with those for fighting with your off hand and, if applicable, for fighting with two weapons. A reinforced arm can also be used to shield bash and still retains its armour class bonus when doing so. A reinforced arm can be sundered as a normal shield would, but cannot be dropped or taken away – a broken reinforced arm seriously hinders the combat effectiveness of its wearer, imposing a -2 penalty to attacks made with his primary hand and rendering the reinforced arm incapable of making attacks. A reinforced arm shield is considered a masterwork item, and can benefit from any special ability that can be placed upon a shield, save *animated*.

Sealed

Obviously, magic is a potent force on the battlefield, with a competent spellcaster able to lay waste to massed ranks of fighting men with relative impunity. Worse, a simple

spell can easily lay a mighty general or hero low, dealing a crushing blow to army morale. Among the most feared spells on the battlefield are *stinking cloud* and *cloud kill*, against which normal armour offers no defence. To combat the threat of these spells, generals, heroes and elite units often wear suits of sealed armour. To build a suit of sealed armour, the armourer inserts alternating layers of silk and cloth into the joints of the suit, providing a near airtight seal. To complete the seal, the wearer ties a damp cloth around his neck – before wading into the spell *cloud*, he pulls the damp cloth over his nose and mouth and then closes his visor. A suit of sealed armour provides a +2 circumstance bonus to all saving throws against airborne poisons, gasses and the effects of *stinking cloud*, *cloud kill*, or other, similar, spells or spell-like effects. Only masterwork suits of half-plate or full plate armour can be sealed - sealing armour adds 5% to the cost of the armour and, because of the extra stiffening at the joints, it increases the armour check penalty by 1.

Protection from Cloud Attacks

When mercenary armies enter pitched battle against spellcasters or armies known to use virulent poison gas attacks, like goblins for example, they take precautions to protect themselves against such attacks. A simple wet cloth tied around the mouth and nose adds a +1 circumstance bonus to a single save against airborne poisons, gasses, viruses and the effects of *stinking cloud*, *cloud kill* or other, similar, spells and spell-like abilities.

New Weapons

Arrow, Explosive

An explosive arrow is tipped with a thin, hollow arrowhead filled with a minute amount of explosive powder. On a successful critical hit, the arrowhead explodes, causing massive injuries and internal trauma.

Spiked Knuckle

A spiked knuckle is a 3-inch reinforced steel spike, mounted on a metal grip that fits comfortably over a metal gauntlet. It is often carried as an off-hand weapon by mercenaries, who use it to, quite literally, punch through heavy armour. When used against an opponent in medium armour, the spiked knuckle grants a +1 circumstance bonus to hit. Against heavy armour, the circumstance bonus increases to +2. A spiked knuckle is immune to resist disarm attempts.



Shield Bonus	Armour Check	Armour Penalty	Arcane Spell Failure	Weight	Cost
Reinforced arm	+1	0	15%	5 lb.	160 gp.
Weapons					
Simple Weapons – melee					
Cost	Damage	Critical	Weight	Type	
Tiny					
Spike knuckle	5 gp.	1d3	x4	1 lb.	Piercing
Martial Weapons - ranged					
Large					
Arrow, explosive (10)	10 gp.	1d6	x4	4 lb. (10)	Piercing

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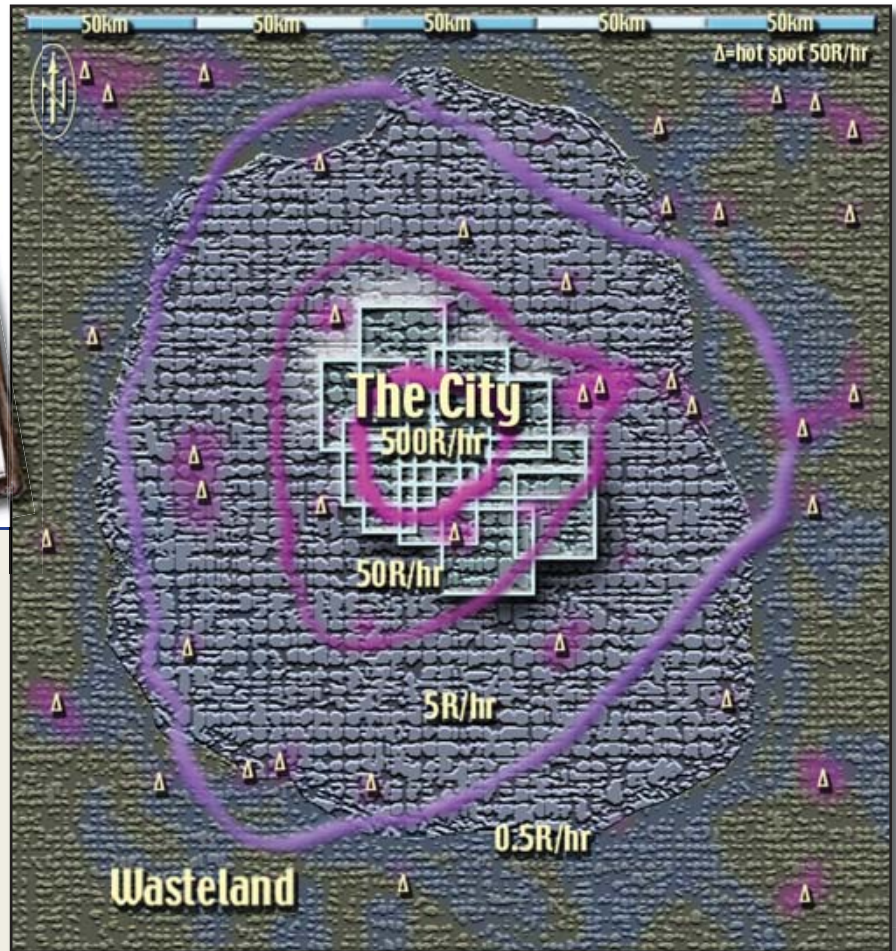
You'd Be Bananas Not To Buy It!

AFTERMATH

An OGL Cybernet Setting by Tim Hitchcock and James Scotto-Lavino



The relative peace of the ward was shattered when its doors heaved in. Amidst a cacophony of bumps and scrapes, doctors and emergency services personal rushed a gurney through a heavily tiled hallway. Dr. Mark Langston took a quick look at his patient and knew it was already too late. 'She did it. She finally killed herself,' he thought as he recognised her instantly. Her name was Jodi Moliero, and she had a terrible habit of venturing too close to the blast site, and too close to the city. In a different hospital, her chances would be even worse, but these doctors were all too familiar with severe cases of radiation poisoning. Even so, it didn't look good. In the treatment centre, the doctors went straight to work, trying to remove the poisoning as quickly as possible. Mark had to hand it to Jodi, though. Even in her death throes, she was fighting like an animal. Suddenly, with a ferocious lunge, she grabbed him by his collar. He instinctively recoiled – something he would later regret – before her terrifying appearance; eyes wild, skin sore and blistered, her mouth full of blood and foam. 'They killed him!' she screamed, 'They took out his guts and - I - swear - to - you - he was still alive!' An instant later, she fell back and was dying again. Her body gave out in a matter of minutes. Dr. Langston stood frozen for a long time – locked in thought. She had seen something. There were a lot of conspiracy theories about the city and what went on there, but none of it was taken seriously. This was different. He could feel the shift in attitude of everyone there. She had seen something, that was for sure, and he was going to find out what that was.



INTRODUCTION

Aftermath is a CyberNet setting based on one particular city within a world decimated by nuclear war, linked now only by computer technology. Aftermath focuses on a 250 square kilometre area that includes a city recovering from nuclear and biological fallout. Bombing razed most of the city's identifiable landmarks, while fallout and viral contagion created areas of quarantine. There are many references to what is simply cited as 'The City' and its name was left out intentionally to make it easier for the Games Master to make it his own.

HISTORY

Although, the known surviving world is based on independent

cities, each with a surrounding area of 'liveable' wastelands which in turn lead to vast tracts of abject devastation containing no known life, the details here focus on our particular city.

The bombs that struck the city detonated in two stages; the first was atomic (which levelled many of the skyscrapers in the area) and the second was biochemical. The two-stage attack was designed to target survivors of the initial blast who fled to shelters to avoid fallout. These same places were hit the hardest when biochemical agents, heavier than air, floated to the ground. The city was evacuated before the attack, but some stayed and many survived in a devastated region now known as 'The Wastelands'. Some have

been alive for forty years in that quarantined area, dodging the effects of radiation sickness and Variola Genestrain #217 (VG#217) for which treatment, but no cure is available.

Recently a new hope has emerged. In a landmark deal with the government, a multibillion-dollar company called Lanitrex was granted full use of the land to revitalise it. A leader in GeneTech research, their previous work not only dealt with the improvement of the human body through genetics and the immunisation issues that accompany it, but also enhancement of the immune system to other harmful diseases. This, along with the namesake they attained by their ability to cleanse adversely affected land, made them an ideal candidate for the situation. In addition, they would provide civic organisations like police, fire and sanitation departments.

In the 23 years since they have been there, Lanitrex created the basic structure of a hermetically sealed inner city. They work from within the city on a cure, and outside the city by reducing nuclear fallout. They even have the help of the citizenry. Hand-selected people from the Wastelands that agree to be research subjects are given a series of vaccines – meant to stave off the virus’s means of transmission. Vaccination grants them admittance to the inner city where jobs and housing are provided. The only thing Lanitrex requires is that the people allow their bodies to be studied in the event of death. As of now, Lanitrex has been unable to reverse the effects of VG#217 and the percentage of death due to virus has remained roughly unchanged. Still, with so many willing test subjects and constant research, it can only be a matter of time before progress is made. In addition, Lanitrex’s city shields its citizenry from the effects of radiation. If there’s one place the efforts of Lanitrex can be seen clearly, it’s the blast site. In a little over two decades, radioactive materials have been neutralised around its city’s

borders. The radius of replenished land grows every day.

One day it is hoped to make contact with a neighbouring city and begin the reconstruction of the countries ruptured by the war.

THE VIRUS

Variola Genestrain #217 is a manufactured strain of the smallpox virus that was designed for use in biological warfare, specifically as a secondary strike tactic to be combined with nuclear weaponry and duplicating symptoms of radiation poisoning. It is most notable for its high level of contagiousness, delayed onset and pernicious yet less visible symptoms – particularly the inverted ulcerations of the pax, which appear on the exterior epidermis as nothing more than cellulite or papules. The sub-dermal symptoms are far more insidious including confluent lesions that form on capillaries and arteries. Once full-onset takes place, symptoms increase to include high fever, discoloration, confusion, vomiting and general malaise.

THE DARKER SIDE OF LANITREX

27% of Wasteland residents die of VG#217. Lanitrex has, long ago, discovered the antiviral, but they keep that fact a secret. All Wasteland citizens that are admitted to the city are secretly cured of it. However, they give 27% (the same death-toll percentage) a different vaccine — one laced with ‘twisters’. Twisters are strands of artificial DNA that latch onto a living human’s existing DNA and slowly re-codify it over the course of several years, a process that eventually kills the recipient. The DNA re-codification alters the individual’s organs to an increased level of functionality as well as making them highly tolerant to transplant. In the final stages of transformation, symptoms are engineered to duplicate those of VG#217. The subject dies, his body becomes property of GeneTech through contract of admittance, and it is collected and sent to an organ processing facility known as Morgue IV. Cause of death is blamed on the

virus and the body collected in the name of Lanitrex’s hunt for the cure.

A recipient of the twister shot that has completed genetic re-codification is extremely valuable to those members of society able to afford the luxury of new organs. Twister shots are administered to members of society that both the government and Lanitrex consider expendable.

THE WASTELANDS

Any area within the fallout radius outside the protection of the city dome is considered Wasteland. Wasteland residents live with nuclear fallout and the virus. Since VG#217 is classified as highly contagious, the area is quarantined. However, every Thursday aid is sent in the form of Red Cross vans, filled with boxes of food and medicines. The vans drive into AntiRad complexes – buildings covered on all sides by 5-foot slabs of concrete. Due to continued work with the architecture, the authorities were able to reduce radiation seepage to a tolerable level and they have enough technology and supplies to eliminate some of the exposure. In layman’s terms, this means they can spend hours outside without incident provided they remain consciously aware of the amount of radiation they are absorbing.

RADIATION

The mushroom cloud created by the detonation of the nuclear warhead spread a tremendous amount of radioactive debris. The closer one gets to the impact site, the higher the radioactivity. The amount of radiation a human body can absorb in a given area is measured in RADs (Radiation Absorbed Dose); a technical term for describing the biological effects one has to a dose of radiation. This effect also varies when considering length of exposure. Being out in the sunlight for 10 hours in a day is much worse than being out in the sunlight 10 hours in a week. This is also true of radiation. A certain amount of exposure is okay, as long as it’s treated properly. To keep

things simple, players should avoid travelling outdoors for prolonged periods without special protection and travelling from Wasteland complexes toward the city without special aid or equipment is almost impossible. The amount of RADs players will absorb will exponentially increase as they move toward the blast site. Near the complex, no more than 12 hours can go by without symptoms: headache, nausea, vomiting, depression with fatigue, and later: infection, blisters, bleeding and fever. A device that monitors RAD levels is also helpful to avoid moving in the wrong direction, helping locate 'hot spots' – small areas of accumulated radioactive debris. These devices are widely available. Use the sidebar to determine how RADs affect a character.

THE EFFECT OF RADs

30 to 70 RADs: For each day of full exposure character must make a successful Fort save (DC 12) or suffer the loss of 1d2 points of Constitution.

71 to 150 RADs: For each 6-hour period of full exposure character must make a successful Fort save (DC 15) or suffer the loss of 1d4 points of Constitution.

151 to 300 RADs: For each 3-hour period of full exposure character must make a successful Fort save (DC 20) or suffer the loss of 1d6 points of Constitution.

301 to 500 RADs: For each hour of full exposure character must make a successful Fort save (DC 25) or suffer the loss of 2d6 points of Constitution.

501+ RADs: For each half-hour period of full exposure character must make a successful Fort save (DC 30) or suffer the loss of 3d6 points of Constitution.

OCCUPATIONS IN THE WASTELANDS

While job placement within the city is assured before entry, outside in the Wastelands jobs are more specific.

Here are some possibilities:

ACADEMIC: Education professionals are actually plentiful in the Wastelands. The web provides access to a tremendous wealth of information, and in a setting lacking in entertainment there are those who find succour in knowledge. In addition, there are still makeshift schools that need teachers. Academics should have at least a general knowledge of radiation and its effects on people.

ADVENTURER: In and around the wilderness, much is off-limits. These rules, instated by government officials and company policies, are largely unenforceable. There are buildings and subway tunnels left largely intact and a whole web to hack. Companies outside the quarantined area have little hope of getting in and finding criminals. Need I say more?

ATHLETE: In most cases, sports require large open areas. People shy away from these areas due to the harmful agents in the air and ground. However, martial art type sports can be accomplished in a more compact setting, and these are the common athletes in the Wastelands.

BLUE-COLLAR: This occupation encompasses an overwhelming percentage of those in the Wastelands. There are buildings to be made, rubble to be cleared, and just about any kind of sanitation and reconstruction work you can think of. A lot of the time, smarter blue-collar workers can get government or company sponsorship and gain access to hazard gear when working in dangerous areas.

CELEBRITY: What celebrity could be living in the Wastelands? One that was there forty years ago is the easiest answer. Younger celebrities could be writers, journalists or actors made popular by web shows. Also, people in the rest of the world are interested in what's going on inside, and someone could gain celebrity status by contact with

outside reporters or taping dangerous exploratory missions for broadcast.

CREATIVE: There is plenty of room for art in the Wastelands. Most of it is digital art considering that a computer is the easiest obtainable tool for an artist. This includes graphic artists, writers, web page designers and anything else that can be created and broadcast digitally. Anything physical begs the question, where are the materials coming from? The answer may give a creative character more depth.

CRIMINAL: There is much to be scavenged throughout the city, even forty years later. This is a dangerous business because of radiation, but this goes on within barricaded areas too. Prevalent in places where people have little, they are more willing to go that extra step to get more. Criminals can be found in the Wastelands, but those that would steal from each other face stiff penalties. Those outside a gang are generally illegal webcrawlers.

DILETTANTE: The term 'favours for favours' applies here especially when it comes to the dilettante. Most of these find their way into the city faster than the others, and the ones that don't can quickly burn through their resources trying to improve their situation. A slacker isn't appreciated, but can be easily exploited. Those with sway outside the city either keep that fact a secret or have a certain (perhaps-unhealthy) measure of confidence.

DOCTOR: As sickness is rampant, so are doctors. With the right instruments, doctors can cure a certain amount of radiation sickness.

EMERGENCY SERVICES: Those that have the courage to enter hazardous areas will always find plentiful work in the Wastelands. There are dangers everywhere: radiation, virus infection, acids, unstable structure, etc. Where there are dangers, there are accidents. Emergency services people are never bored.

ENTREPRENEUR: Cleaning up a city brings with it many opportunities. Who is rebuilding? Who supplies medicine? Who runs the hospitals? Contracts change hands faster here than anywhere else in the world. Businesses stand to gain where there is work to be done. Entrepreneurs have been able to negotiate lucrative profits in any number of ways on a practically daily basis. This includes those that are able to provide valuable goods or services for those around them.

INVESTIGATIVE: The government and Lanitrex have reached an agreement, but those in the wilderness were not involved in the decision-making process. Many wonder if their interests are even being acknowledged, and there are unique opportunities for inquisitive people. In addition to police work, even in the wilderness, some have access to money and have need for people with investigative skills.

LAW ENFORCEMENT: The police department is somewhat crude, but very much the same as you would find anywhere. Of note, there is an interesting dynamic between the cops and feds from Lanitrex, and the ones scraped together by those in the wilderness. However, this should not profoundly affect gameplay.

MILITARY: These individuals will always have some ties to the government. This includes, but is not limited to, peacekeepers and members of the Red Cross who bring aid. Vans full of supplies are also prized targets and, sometimes, armed escorts are needed. Government intervention is fairly common and can easily be worked into any campaign.

RELIGIOUS: ‘No one in a foxhole is an atheist’. This is very true. This land is wracked with ailments and thus is filled with people in need of wisdom and guidance. The religious try to fill this need. Nevertheless, there are those who would seek to exploit this emotionally charged setting. Religious types here can be

of any alignment, background and motivation.

RURAL: The wilderness can be considered a rural community. While eating crops produced on irradiated land is illegal, the skills and feats that accompany this profession are applicable. Also, small domes and greenhouses exist here that use imported soil.

STUDENT: Part of what makes a citizen of the wilderness eligible for admission to the city is scholarly aptitude. As such, many people in the Wastelands attend regular classes. Testing remains basic and standardised, so many students actively seek ways to expand their knowledge base by pursuing specialisations through experience. It is not unusual for students to find themselves in various internships in any number of places.

TECHNICIAN/SCIENTIST: Scientists and engineers are among the occupations most prized and sought after by idealists and dreamy youths seeking to better life for everyone around them. There is no shortage of these positions, and corporate sponsorship is not hard to obtain for qualified individuals willing to work in these dangerous areas. Some of the more gifted are granted early admittance for citizenship in the city, but many stay in the wilderness for various reasons.

WHITE COLLAR: It’s hard to find white-collar people in the area, but some do exist. Most tend to be recluses, locking themselves away from the reality that surrounds them. Most are highly skilled to be afforded the luxury of a desk job.

THE CITY

Due to the economic success of Lanitrex, the city has expanded rapidly over the last decade. While some of the original city still exists, most of it has been replaced and the rest overshadowed by newer construction. The new sections of the city consist of steel girders covered

with hardened sheets of acrylite – a lightweight, high-strength acrylic plastic sprayed into position and solidified with catalysts. This style of framework and spray-coating construction allows huge structures to be built in under a month. Naturally clear, acrylite can be tinted to any colour giving the modern sections of the city a sort of kaleidoscopic, crystalline appearance. Each tier is divided by sectors that range in height from 500 metres to 1 km and cover a few square kilometres of surface area. The tallest buildings are located on the lowest tier where it’s possible to build deeper foundations. On the upper tiers, buildings are no taller than 300 metres. Foundations of taller structures hang below the tier surfaces, and are countered with cables and struts that create spider-webbed tangles of steel hundreds of metres above the tiers beneath them. The city’s sealed environment also reduces such structural threats as high winds and inclement weather.

The social stratification of the city is reflected in its design. The city’s few older buildings, remnants from the previous century, line the western border. Newer acrylite structures span out from the original city, growing both upwards and outwards, including a large series of structures that arch over the older city. Sealed acrylite walkways, roads and highways connect buildings hundreds of feet above the ground, creating a series of tiered environments, isolating different communities by their proximity to the ground. On Tier I, most of the older acrylite structures are clear, so it is possible in several areas to look up from the ground level and see into Tier II.

Tier I starts at ground level and continues up to the height of the city’s oldest structures. Architecturally, it contains a mix of acrylite construction and historic buildings, some dating back to the late 19th century. Most of the older structures suffered heavy damage from the nuclear blast so few of them are entirely original. While

some of the restoration work on older buildings is of good quality, the majority of the work is focused on functionality over form. In pre-Lanitrex sections, most of the buildings contain radiation reduction construction such as reinforced concrete walls and aluminore blocks. Older structures are also the largest deposits of recyclables, and even areas that were completely devastated have been converted to profitable salvage operations, providing resources to companies requiring brick, stone, steel, rubber, and glass. Citizenship on Tier I is mostly lower and middleclass.

On the upper tiers, typical construction consists of acrylite panels and fluorescent cable lights. Since acrylite can be collared and textured, almost any style of construction can be achieved. Contemporary design is smooth and sleek, utilising curved walls and sliding panels. Many structures glow with backlit translucent panels and walls fitted with massive plasma screens, projected images, holographic structures, and LCD displays creating a shifting urban landscape. Citizenship on Tier II is mostly middle class and upper-middle class while Tier III is strictly upper class citizenry. All the main government buildings are on Tier III as are the headquarters of the city's most powerful corporations.

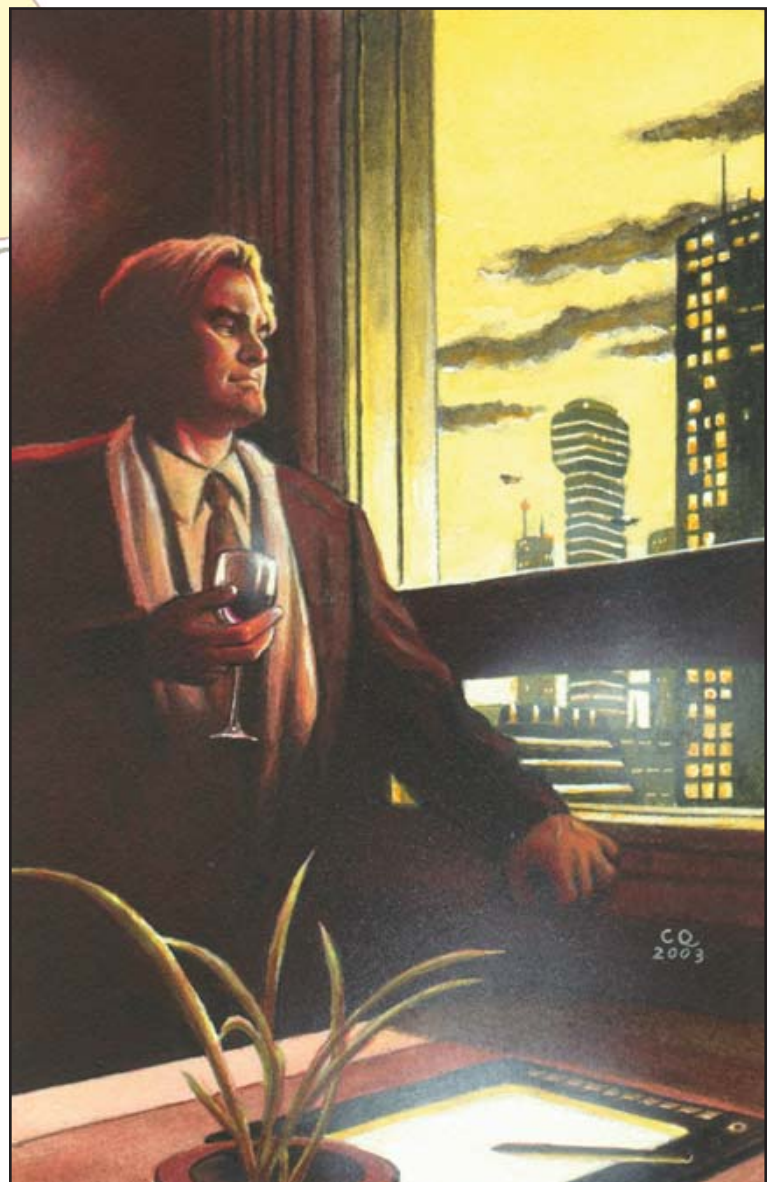
In order to live in the city, a person must agree to be a test subject. He must allow himself to be vaccinated, work at a corporate or government job, and give his body to Lanitrex for research in the event of death. Getting into the city unauthorised is highly unlikely for two reasons. First, it is located within 50 kilometres of the actual blast site and radiation outside resides at highly intolerable levels. Second, it is located within an area already quarantined by the government. Once an individual becomes a citizen, he is legally free to venture almost anywhere within the city. Most of the sectors are unregulated, however the

current system of law enforcement creates loopholes whereby citizens of different backgrounds can be deterred or prevented from entering select areas. Corporate-owned regions can be extremely strict with both their legal policies and treatment of those they consider trespassers. At the opposite end of the spectrum, gangs and criminal organisations create tangible deterrents to unwanted visitors in their sectors.

CITY GOVERNMENT

The role of the city government is similar to a contract broker, arranging

of its civic and social services. The government itself provides few programs and services on its own, except with regard to activities in Tier I and other areas where the majority of the population are not economically self-sufficient. Even government-run programs and services are subsidised by large amounts of corporate funding. Corporate subsidisation is used as a city taxation exchange. The exchange is preferable to corporate executives who can direct the majority of their financial contributions into special interest services that directly



and regulating negotiations between the citizens and private corporations that provide the city with the majority

support corporate interests in the sectors that sponsor them. The welfare of the people then becomes

the responsibility of the residents who choose which corporations they choose to service their sectors by electing officials who bid for corporate contracts.

Corporations holding contracts have powerful influence on their sectors. While obligated to provide the service contracts they bid for (such as sanitation, education, climate control or general maintenance); how they perform these tasks is strictly up to the policies as written in their individual contract proposals. Such contract proposals always hold the company's interests with the highest regard, therefore it is of great importance for elected officials to research the interests of a corporation and make contracts with at least two different companies in order to prevent one from getting out of hand. Good negotiations result in balanced sectors with ample services and job opportunity. Poor negotiations can easily result in corporate abuse that can create limited jobs, low wages and a decreased quality of life.

CITY JOBS

The majority of the citizens work for large corporations. This is not to imply that most citizens hold corporate positions; on the contrary most perform menial labour, they are simply in the employ of large companies. Typical jobs include technological and mechanical manufacturing, service, repairs, construction, data processing, food service and civic services such as law enforcement, city maintenance and sanitation. Middle class white-collar jobs include consulting, advertising, corporate public imaging, programming, data security and analysis, and banking. The upper class includes doctors, lawyers, politicians and CEOs. Large corporations tend to focus on a variety of services and product research, development, and sales in profitable fields such as medical and computer technologies. Larger corporations often bankroll smaller companies to handle things like manufacturing as well as

entertainment, news, education, importing and exporting, food production, and distributors. Even with the majority of the citizens on a direct corporate bankroll, there is still plenty of room in the city for small time entrepreneurs who run their own speciality shops, restaurants, bars, or provide other personal services. The mood, décor and clientele of independent businesses can vary greatly, but as a rule of thumb most successful businesses cater to the local inhabitants so they tend to follow established sector compliances.

Sectors with dominant corporate control have fewer independent businesses with entrepreneurs focusing on legitimate ventures such as the retail of luxury items, dating services, entertainment, news or food services. Sectors under less corporate control attract more dubious entrepreneurs interested in high risk but lucrative trades such as illegal weapons, pirated information, drugs, prostitution, or black-market foods and medicines. Such locations are usually fronted under the guise of nightclubs, bars or small retail shops dealing with imported goods or technologies. While some profligate fronts exist in the upper tiers, most of them are located on Tier I. More than a handful of the Tier I fronts receive covert corporate funding for as disdainful as some of these operations might be, CEOs occasionally require their services.

CITY EDUCATION

Like most services, education varies from sector to sector and tier to tier. While all education is corporate funded, programs in the economically-dependant sectors are government operated. Students can attend a government run school up until the 10th grade, after which they must apply to a corporate sponsor if they wish to continue. Otherwise they can apply for labour training, either with city support or with a corporation. In the upper tiers, the education is run entirely by corporations who gear students

towards careers that suit the ends and needs of their corporate sponsors. The more economically secure a sector's parent corporation is, the better educated the residents will become. Students can also take part in corporate exchange programs that allow them the opportunity to receive their educations from different corporations.

DEFENCE CONTRACTS AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

As part of its initial restoration efforts Lanitrex controls all of the city's defence contracts. The Lanitrex Defence Department deals with both attacks from outside sources and large-scale internal disorder. While they also have their hands in basic law enforcement units, most corporations also have their own police forces – for obvious security reasons. Regardless of who sponsors and trains a police unit, all law enforcement agents are required to license themselves with the City Department of Law Enforcement, which includes the registration of photos, fingerprints, DNA, retinal scans, as well as strict psychological profiling.

While Lanitrex provides police units for most of Tier III and the city government offices, there are over a hundred smaller law enforcement companies scattered throughout the upper tiers. In addition to standard police protection, many of these companies specialise in everything from surveillance to defence to recovery of stolen information. Competition between these groups can be fierce and occasional flare-ups occur when opposing groups are hired by rival companies to achieve the same goal.

On Tier I police protection is limited at best and, in many sectors, dangerously insufficient. The general poverty of the lower sectors limits the citizen's ability to hire well-trained cops, making them even more attractive to criminals and gangs. The few well-trained law enforcement

units work sectors with sanitation facilities. On occasion, the LDD might send a few patrols through Tier I to put down large-scale riots or crime syndicates that have grown big enough to pose a significant threat to corporate or government operations, but for the most part citizens are on their own.

THE LEGAL SYSTEM

The city has a rather codified legal system, which strictly prohibits activities that endanger or injure an individual or his holdings. Penalties for theft of ideas or identity are likewise stiff and treated with a minimum 3-year sentence. Criminals are tried in government-run courts, however the accused has the right to be tried in his own sector, which often means that petty crimes committed outside the sector carry lesser sentences. On the other hand, penalties against white-collar criminals tend to be extreme.

THE LEGALITIES OF SUICIDE

Suicide is legal within the city limits, provided you first register for a LSTL (lawful self-termination license) with the City Census Department. There is generally a thirty-day waiting period until the license goes through, but any time following registration is considered legal. Registration must be done in person and the applicant is required to provide proof of citizenship, vaccination records, and both blood and DNA samples. The entire process takes about 20 minutes. Non-citizens or anyone without a vaccination record are not eligible for full-licensure, but can still request a medically assisted suicide. It is unlawful to kill a LSTL holder as the license is for self-termination only, however the sentence for such an act is only considered a felony. Lighter sentencing is provisional on the condition of the LSTL holder's internal organs, which technically belong to GeneTech upon the moment of death. Additional fines are levied against those who damage a LSTL holder's organs as part of a deliberate assault or murder.

Medically assisted suicides are performed in special Isocare units located outside the morgue-processing plants. Isocare is a government program, but it is funded by directly from GeneTech. The deal is that bodies hosting GeneTech vaccines are recouped by the company for organ harvesting, and shipped directly to a Morgue IV facility. Bodies that don't contain GeneTech vaccines are recycled at the government morgue-processing plants where they can be properly converted into any number of practical products from medical resources to fertiliser. A LSTL allows the individual a bit more freedom, but ultimately the post-mortem transfer of ownership of the LSTL holder's organs to GeneTech legally bares methods that would damage future investments. Should organs become destroyed by the act of suicide (such as poisoning or laceration), then the LSTL holder's next of kin is responsible for compensating GeneTech for their loss. Finally, a LSTL holder cannot perform acts of suicide that cause public disorder, property damage, or endanger citizens. Again, should the LSTL holder be convicted of any such crimes (post-mortem) the law holds his next of kin financially responsible.

CITY CLIMATE CONTROL

The City Climate Control is the result of one of the oldest corporate contracts. The CCC is run with government labour, however it is funded entirely by Lanitrex and the corporation has the power of veto over any decisions of management and operations. Lanitrex also provides representatives for each of the department's elected officials to counsel them on details of the corporation's needs. The CCC is also responsible for the administration of mandatory vaccinations.

HEALTHCARE AND HOSPITALISATION

Most of the healthcare and hospitalisation facilities are owned and operated by Fielding and

Weiss, Inc. Fielding and Weiss own hundreds of large facilities on Tier II and III, almost monopolising the industry for the entire city. While Lanitrex produces medical technology including medicines, radiation therapies and GeneTech, their facilities are almost entirely research-based and few offer any professional healthcare. Their sole provisionary facilities are limited to the highly restricted GeneTech transplant centres on Tier III, Morgue IV UNITS and free clinics they sponsor for the Red Cross. Other facilities also exist as most corporations attempt to provide at least a few private treatment centres for their higher-ranking executives.

EMERGENCY CONTROL UNITS

Emergency Control Units are big business in the upper-tiers. Emergency Control encompasses such urban hazards as fire, gas leakage, flooding and structural damage. Because the city's environment is sealed even seemingly small dangers have the potential for major destruction. Badly damaged pipes can flood out entire sectors and an explosive car wreck can destroy the atmosphere for several blocks. Well-trained units learn how to run sector evacuations and contain hazards, quickly preventing large-scale damage and injury. Most of the ECUs are independently owned and funded, however, as one of the city's initial restoration companies, Lanitrex has the most immediate knowledge of city construction and hazard reductions. While the company removed itself from selling ECUs they still provide the best ECU training, and those educated in a Lanitrex facility can command much higher paying positions. Because Tier I is in the unique position of being the city's foundation and most potentially volatile section, they have some of the best trained, highest paid ECUs. Tier I ECUs are government run, but comes from all major city corporations.

SANITATION

All sanitation operations are handled by Recycom, a Tier I based company that maintains operation centres throughout the city. Work is plentiful and consistent, and employees require a minimal amount of training. They also have the opportunity to work on the upper tiers, a right usually reserved for senior employees or those noted for outstanding company service. The sectors that house sanitation facilities are some of the few economically independent areas of Tier I. Depending on the importance of security, some of the Tier II and III companies have in-house sanitation crews. Such staffers are generally employed to control access limitation to sensitive areas. Consequently, in-house sanitation crews are usually without their own processing facilities, making them reliant upon Recycom's staff to cart waste and recyclables to their facilities on Tier I for processing.

ROADS AND HIGHWAYS

To reduce potential damage to the city's exterior walls caused by high-speed car accidents, all major highways are encased in huge steel cages that coil through the city like massive chrome serpentine spines. Most areas also have sensors that detect crashes and trigger the release of impact reduction foams and sprinklers. Like most of the city, the cages are illuminated 24/7 by fluorescent cable lights. On the ground level, roads and highways were restored to the pre-existing layouts, while on the upper levels they are built on acrylic-covered steel bridge frames paved with recycled rubber and glass. Driver's licenses are still issued and regulated by the government but the system is funded by the automotive industry. The automotive industry is still in good shape, but cars are required to run on electric conversion engines to reduce pollution in the controlled environment. This makes owning and running a car expensive. Smaller, independent companies provide the

remaining transportation services such as cabs and buses.

AG-SECTORS

Food production is another Lanitrex-controlled industry, established as part of the initial city restoration process. Because of the radiation, travel to and from the city is difficult and expensive, driving up the cost of imported foods to the point where they are considered luxury items. Lanitrex immediately recognised the city's need to become agriculturally independent if its efforts were to succeed. Food production is now widespread and there are multiple ag-sectors on all three tiers. Most of the food production is focused on plants as they are used to supplement oxygen production as well as produce food. The majority of plants are grown using hydroponics and consist of high-proteins like soy, legumes and wheat-hybrid grains. Other ag-sectors raise fish, poultry and cattle. Cattle sectors are also important as they produce a significant amount of recyclable methane, a valued fuel.

ENTERTAINMENT

The most popular form of mainstream entertainment are M.M.O.V.R.P.Gs (massively multiplayer on-line virtual roleplaying games); elaborate roleplaying games played over a net interface where individuals control a virtual simulatant character that interacts in real time with other player controlled simulants. Scenarios are realistic and elaborate, involving player-driven plots. Many people become addicted to their simulatant lives and develop severe psychological damage such as schizophrenia and multiple personalities, especially when combining more mature scenarios with hallucinogenic drugs.

Movies and television are also popular, but they often reflect the over dramatisation of virtual on-line gaming.

Sports are only slightly less popular, if only due to the city's special

limitations and lack of the ability to compete nationally or internationally. Teams are sponsored by sectors and include indoor arena competitions such as baseball, football, soccer, basketball and hockey. Just as popular are individual sports such as wrestling or boxing. GeneTech has allowed many of these sports to attain new levels of barbarity as replacement organs and gene-splicing have allowed athletes to become faster and stronger, as well as create significant reduction in injury recovery time.

CONSPIRACY THEORISTS

While most citizens are happy to live within the safety of the city's acrylic cubes, there remain a few malcontent conspiracy theorists convinced that the city is a Lanitrex constructed trap designed to manipulate population into ignorance and complacency while it harvests their organs for profit. These societal outcasts meet in small, clandestine groups intent on gathering evidence against Lanitrex and creating networks to sneak victims out of the city. While most sensible citizenry disavow such allegations and refuse to participate in their illegal activities, there are a select number of CEOs from Lanitrex's competitors that secretly fund such organisations, inspiring them to at least stir up little bad publicity for Lanitrex. While these insurgents occasionally make headlines with small acts of insurrection, ultimately they are not taken seriously by the masses and are of little threat to Lanitrex.



Jonny Nexus

DEALING WITH DUMBO

A character with an Intelligence of three is dumb. Really, really dumb. It puts him in the bottom half-percent of human intelligence. Forget about asking if he can read, ask if he can tie his own shoelaces (or save time, and just buy him some Velcro boots). Let me put it another way: a dog has an Intelligence only one point lower.

Now I've had lots of fun playing intellectually-challenged characters, because it gave me a license to act in the funniest, stupidest way possible – and as an additional bonus it covered up the fact that as a player, I usually have only a limited idea of what's going on.

But this article is not about how to roleplay a character with an Intelligence of three. I've read several such articles, and I expect you have too. Those articles are largely superfluous because it's easy to roleplay a stupid character – if you really want to.

And that's the nub of the problem.

Many



times a character will have an intelligence of three merely because his player didn't want to discard an otherwise (i.e. except for the three) good set of rolls, and figured that Intelligence was a stat that his combat-monster – and feat heavy – fighter simply didn't require.

Thanks to my friends Mark and Bog Boy who came up with the joke that started this article, and who rather sportingly gave me permission to use it.

In short, this article is not about roleplaying a moron. It's about the fun you can have forcing the 'morosity' into someone else's Intelligence three character. Imagine that someone in your group has created a character with an Intelligence of three, but instead of playing him as the barely sentient imbecile that he should be, is instead playing him as an average witty conversational Joe who merely isn't very good at learning spells or technical skills.

Quite frankly this isn't on. Why – when the rest of you are getting skewered because of your low Dexteritys, snuffing it due to your low Constitution, or being turned into mindless automatons on account of your low Wisdom – should he get away scot free? He shouldn't, and all you have to do to stop him is suggest one – quite reasonable – house rule to your GM:

Whenever a situation arises which requires some kind of intellect to comprehend, characters should have to make an Intelligence roll to avoid a failure to understand what is happening. Characters can 'take 10' on these rolls.

The last sentence is very important. Forcing all characters to make the roll would be ludicrous. The GM should instead pitch the DCs so that only characters of significantly below average intelligence have to roll.

Now I guess at this point you might be asking yourself what the point of this change would be? Well, I'm afraid that I can't give you a fixed set of rules to follow. In play you'll have to think on your feet to take advantages of situations as and when they occur. But I can give you some examples of the fun you could have once the rule comes in.

FINDING A 'RING OF INVISIBILITY'

Imagine a scenario where you've found an expensive-looking gold ring. (It's even better if it has arcane unreadable writing around the inside – and let's face it, to Dumbo, pretty much any writing will qualify as arcane and unreadable).

A curious Dumbo slides the ring onto a finger, at which your characters (all of them) immediately shout: *'Where have you gone? We can't see you any more!'*

You can further enhance the effect by 'looking around' for him (as though unable to see him).

Then – when he takes the ring off his finger – you all shout: *'Oh wow! You've come back! Where did you go?'*

And if Dumbo fails his 'Save vs. Stupidity' roll he now believes he has a *ring of invisibility*.

Of course, Dumbo's furious player knows that it isn't any such thing, because he heard the GM's description of what actually happened – which was nothing. But that's player information that he's duty bound not to use. So when, a little while later, your characters are attempting to sneak into the Duke's castle, you can say: *'Hey [Dumbo]! Why don't you put on your ring of invisibility and sneak past the guards?'*

And he has no option but to do it, because his character genuinely believes he'll be invisible. (At least, he will up until the point where the guards attack him).

FINDING A 'RING OF HASTE'

This is similar to the above scenario, except that when he puts the ring on, the other characters all say: *'Whaaaat's haaaappppeening? Yooov'e gonnne alllll fasssst!'* ...In extremely slow voices, all the while moving with extremely slow movements, until he takes the ring off.

One failed 'Save vs. Stupidity' roll later and Dumbo will believe he's got a ring that allows him to move and act twice as fast as normal. Imagine how surprised he'll be when he gets into a combat, puts on the ring, and – another failed 'Save vs. Stupidity' roll later – finds that every single person in the combat is apparently wearing a similar ring, because they're all moving just as fast as him.

'POTIONS'

You can have similar fun with 'potions' – or 'bottles of water', as people with Intelligences above three refer to them. Imagine a scenario where you've found a number of glass vials containing some kind of liquid. Dumbo takes a small sip...

For a few seconds you act out a scenario to make him think that something has changed (i.e. either the 'invisibility' or 'haste' examples given above) then you simultaneously act as though the effects have worn off¹. Now some of the rules lawyers among you are probably about to point out to me that potions don't work that way: taking just a sip of a potion of *invisibility* doesn't make you go invisible for a few seconds. Yes, I know that, as clearly do you. But Dumbo doesn't because he's a moron, and that's all that counts.

SCOUTING

Dumbo makes an excellent scout – scout being defined here, of course, as someone who goes ahead of the party and finds traps. If ever his player declines a suggestion to walk into a darkened room simply ask him what

dangerous things Dumbo can see in the room. The player might then point out that there is a relationship between Dumbo's inability to see possible monsters and the fact that the room is currently pitch-black, but as soon as he starts using words like 'relationship', 'possible' and, well, 'fact', he's now actually building the case for the prosecution.

DIVVYING UP THE PARTY TREASURE

Dumbo might qualify as barely sentient, but I bet that when it comes to divvying up the party treasure his player will be beaver away with a calculator: working out exchange rates between gold, silver and copper pieces; calculating the values of found magic weapons (factoring in a reduction to compensate for street prices) and then subtracting them from the haul of the characters who ended up with them; and finally coming up with a set of figures accurate to two decimal places.

But wait a minute: this is Dumbo we're talking about! He might possibly have grasped the concept that the bright bits of metal are pennies, and those pennies buy sweets, but that's surely about as far as it goes.

Now I'm not going to say that someone that stupid doesn't deserve a fair share of the party treasure (although to be honest, I'm tempted to), but I'm pretty damned sure he wouldn't have the first clue about what share he was actually due.

So just give him a few pennies, and if his player complains, just ask how good Dumbo's arithmetic is. Unless you're feeling generous of course, in which case you can give Dumbo a sword and tell him it's magic. (Any shiny-looking sword will do. It ain't like Dumbo's gonna know the difference).

WHY SAY GOODBYE?

I think it's pretty obvious that after a few session of this treatment – assuming that you haven't gone soft-hearted, or screwed up your GM management – gaming life for Dumbo's player will be falling significantly short of the level of fun he was anticipating. He is, after all, just a not-that-bright-himself power gamer who's found himself stuck in a world of cruel logic puzzles set not by the GM, but by his fellow players.

In short, he's probably wanting out. I call this the 'Wanting Out Point' (or WOP) and it's pretty easy to detect when Dumbo's player has reached it – it's when he agrees to be scout without attempting the save. He'll be throwing himself into all sorts of dangerous situations, dreaming of the blessed relief of death, and the chance to start anew with a blank character sheet and a certain number of dice².

But why stop now when *you're* still having fun? I know that when people discuss the various spells that raise the dead (Reincarnation, Resurrection, the other one) it tends to be in terms of cost verses benefit, or gold pieces verses combat usefulness³ – but I think that's a bad way to do it. This is a game not a contest. It's not about winning, or maximising effectiveness – it's about having fun.

And I can't think of anything more fun than giving yourself a whole second set of chances to torment poor Dumbo.

A FEW FINAL TIPS

Now some of you might be thinking that you're going to have a hard time convincing your GM to allow all the 'Save vs. Stupidity' rolls I've described above. You might feel that I've exaggerated the difficulties that Dumbo (or any of his fellow morons) will face when attempting to cope with life. After all, you might say, an Intelligence of three is low, but dogs have an even lower Intelligence of two, and they seem to get by okay.

That's true. But dogs have evolved to operate on extremely limited brainpower. They're designed to be morons. We are not. Dogs don't need brains because they have a whole load of hard-wired genetic instinct. We don't.

So in conclusion: Dumbo's stuffed, and you're just the guys to do the stuffing.

¹You might want to work out some hand signals for this.

²Under the terms of the D20 license I'm not allowed to tell you the precise number of dice this will involve, nor how many sides they will have.

³Much like the question of whether to spend a few hundred pounds in veterinary bills on a mongrel dog with a street value of less than a tenner – although at least when Timmy is having his future decided, the decision is not usually swayed by whether someone's got an eye on his dog basket.

Q&A

This month Bob Roberts and the crew answer some of the more obscure questions readers have sent in...

Q: Can you please put a .PDF-File on your homepage, where you convert the imperial length to metres ?

A: We have given this a great amount of consideration and the answer is forget it. Do it yourself. How hard can this be?

Q: je cherche les plans et stats du whitestar de B5 pour une partie que je joue.

For this particular question we decided to open it up to the whole office, as none of us is totally fluent in Greek.

A: (Paul) Le sange dans la arbre.

A: (Rich) Princess Anne.

A: (Ted) I believe in a thing called love.

A: (Doghouse) Marks & Spencer Y-fronts.

A: (Bob) Je regret rien.

A: (Ian) Get back to work you lot.

Q: Dear Bob, are you married? You seem the sort of person I could settle down with.

A: Is that you again, mother? Stop calling me at work.

Q: How many arms does a four-armed monk have?

A: What is the race of the monk?

Q: Could you send me all your Conan stuff in PDF form please as I believe information should be free.

A: Tough. We believe in a thing called love.

Q: Is the Monkey advertisement in this issue a serious game?

A: Get a grip.

Q: I don't like my gaming group. Can I come and play with you guys at Mongoose Hall?

A: What makes you think we like each other?

Q: Is Marcus Kaide a real person?

A: In 1977 this man was convicted of a crime he did not commit. Sentenced to life imprisonment in a maximum-security jail, he escaped into the Los Angeles underground where he now survives as a soldier of fortune. If your character is in trouble, and no-one else can help, and you can find him...actually, no.

Q: Do I have to be a girl to play Macho Women With Guns?

A: I've told you before, stop calling me at work dad.

Caution! Some or more of these questions may not actually be real.

Then again...



Last month we revealed the first 50 uses for an *Immovable Rod*, but that was only the tip of the iceberg (actually it was half the iceberg, but who's counting?) Batten down the hatches and prepare for impact as the rest of the edifice appears from the sea...

Immovable Rod: This rod is a flat iron bar with a small button on one end. When the button is pushed (a move action), the rod does not move from where it is, even if staying in place defies gravity. Thus, the owner can lift or place the rod wherever he wishes, push the button and let go. Adventurers have found the *immovable rod* useful for holding ropes, barring doors, and all sorts of other utilitarian tasks. Many adventurers have found it useful to have more than one. Several *immovable rods* can even make a ladder when used together (although only two are needed). An *immovable rod* can support up to 8,000 pounds before falling to the ground. If a creature pushes against an *immovable rod*, it must make a DC 30 Strength check to move the rod up to 10 feet in a single round.

Moderate transmutation; CL 10th; Craft Rod, *levitate*; Price 5,000 gp.

PART 2

101 USES FOR AN IMMOVABLE ROD

Johnathan M. Richards

51. An *immovable rod* hung in mid-air also makes a handy fulcrum, for use with a board or pole.

52. With enough practice, you might even use an *immovable rod* as an off-hand weapon. It would be serviceable at deflecting weapon blows as-is (and would deal damage as a club) but with a quick touch of a button it stops even the mightiest of hammer blows. (Imagine the look on the stone giant's face!)

53. Moving an *immovable rod* could be used as a 'test of strength' similar to the one Odysseus' wife placed upon her suitors when everyone thought her husband was dead. In that case the test was to string Odysseus' powerful bow but moving an activated *immovable rod* could be used for the same purpose.

54. Here is an immobilising trick for the daring: Sneak up to a sleeping creature with a tail, slam an *immovable rod* onto the tail and activate it while pressing down with all of your might, then back away quickly. The creature should then be pinned in place, allowing you and your party to bypass it without harm. (Watch out for ranged attacks, though!) This works better against mammals (dire tigers, hell hounds) than it does against reptiles, who often have hard scales preventing a really good tail squishing. Also note this is not effective against intelligent creatures, like sphinxes, which can simply reach over and deactivate the *immovable rod*.

55. On a small boat, an *immovable rod* can be used as an above-water anchor.

56. With a long rope tied to an *immovable rod* and a flying familiar, homunculus, or similar ally (perhaps a pixie or mephit) to activate it, you have an improved grappling hook which can be placed directly on target without making a sound.

57. An *immovable rod* can be used to steady a crossbow or blowgun when accuracy is paramount.

58. Unlike a *handy haversack*, which sends required items to the top of the extradimensional space at will, anything placed in a *portable hole* falls to the bottom and retrieving it quickly is not always easy. However, you can use an *immovable rod* to hang important items (like a magic sword) inside a *portable hole*, toward the top where they are

easily accessible. Since a *portable hole's* interior is its own little mini-universe, the *immovable rod* remains in position with regards to the extradimensional space but does not prevent the *hole* from being moved around.

59. With two *immovable rods* and a means of sustained flight, you could conceivably construct a small wooden dwelling a mile or so above the ground. (Talk about a hideout!) Just be sure to firmly attach the floor to the rods in such a way as to prevent it tipping over. (*Sovereign glue* is probably your best bet.)

60. Balancing a shield on top of an *immovable rod* while in the desert during the daylight hours provides you with a bit of shade during rest breaks.

61. An *immovable rod* comes in handy for hunters, providing a convenient place to hang large game while letting the blood drain from the body.

62. As a sneaky way to win arm-wrestling matches (especially those involving high wagers), cast *invisibility* on an *immovable rod* and place it immediately behind the starting point of your hand. No matter how hard your opponent pushes your hand, he will not be able to budge it; simply let him wear himself out trying to do so, then pin his arm down when he is all out of strength.

63. An *immovable rod* hanging immobile in the air makes a handy back scratcher for those really hard-to-reach places.

64. Activating an *immovable rod* inside the hold of a moving ship either causes the ship to come to a sudden stop (possibly throwing sailors from the crow's nest and rigging and toppling those standing on deck) or, if the ship is moving fast enough, causes the *immovable rod* to break through the ship's outer surface upon impact. In either case, this probably is



An *immovable rod* will never tell you that you're ugly.

not something you want to do to your own ship but it might be an appropriate tack against an enemy vessel.

65. Similarly, you could swim in front of an enemy vessel and plant an *immovable rod* in its path so it runs into it, possibly causing a hole below the waterline (never a good thing for a ship).

66. Activating an *immovable rod* in the hold of a ship might be interesting during a storm, especially if enemies surround you. As the waves bounce the vessel around, the *immovable rod* – which remains stationary with the planet, not the ship – appears to 'fly' all over the place. Since you

are aware of it and your enemies are not (at least initially), it is kind of like having an invisible partner striking out blindly against random targets.

67. Here is another simple door alarm: Activate an *immovable rod* horizontally, about waist high, so it is an inch away from a door and situated such that opening the door triggers the activation button on the rod. Then stack coin after coin on top of the *immovable rod* and get some sleep, confident that anyone attempting to enter the room while you snooze will deactivate the rod and cause it and the coins to fall clattering to the floor. Obviously, the hinges on the door must be on your side for this to work; wooden

or stone floors work well whereas thickly carpeted floors do not.

68. A variation of this theme might be the old standby whereby you activate the *immovable rod* up by the top of the door and balance a bucket of water on it. When the door opens it hits the button on the rod, deactivating the magic item and sending the bucket of water down on the intruder's head.

69. For a more lethal version of the above trap, substitute green slime for the water; just be sure to use a stone bowl instead of a wooden or metal bucket. Also, be warned the green slime could end up eating away your *immovable rod* once the trap is triggered if you are not careful. (Perhaps you will wish to anchor the rod via a short rope to a spike hammered above the door.)

70. You might use an *immovable rod* to immobilise an animated statue or golem before it moves. (These 'creatures' often remain silent and still until 'triggered,' whether by opening the door they are guarding, passing by without saying the password, or whatever.) If the statue is standing up against a wall, place the *immovable rod* against one of its shins, directly above and across the foot and activate it. This 'pins' the statue's foot in place, so if it animates and attacks it will have to first slide its foot out sideways, granting you at least one round of free attacks. Of course, if you have two *immovable rods*, they can be placed diagonally to trap the creature's foot in an angle so it cannot move at all. Note gargoyles often pose as immobile stone statues but they possess the intelligence to simply reach down and deactivate the rod (or rods).

71. With some *sovereign glue*, you can attach all kinds of useful items to your *immovable rod*. (Optionally, you might just tie them tightly with strong rope or cord.) Attaching an *immovable rod* to the end of a spear

of any length allows it to be set to receive a charge without you having to be right there as well. This allows you to back up a bit and engage in ranged attacks against your charging foe.

72. An *immovable rod* attached to a shield with *sovereign glue* allows you to 'hang' it in mid-air and reaps the benefits of cover while freeing up both hands. Of course the shield remains stationary, so this works best in situations where you are planning on remaining in the same area (perhaps defending a narrow dungeon corridor) rather than instances where you will be wading into *melee* combat.

73. If you activate the above-mentioned *immovable rod*-glued-to-a-shield horizontally, it makes a handy platform upon which you can perform actions requiring a little more standing room. It is certainly easier firing a crossbow or casting a spell while standing on a surface the size of a shield than it is while balancing on something the size of a ladder rung.

74. If you attach an *immovable rod* to an *everburning torch*, you can 'hang' it in the air so you have a steady light source while keeping both of your hands free. This also allows you to reposition the lighting to best effect. A similar effect of limited duration occurs when you cast a *light* spell on an *immovable rod*.

75. Optionally, if you hang it high up in the air (you might need some sort of flight or levitation magic to do so), an *immovable rod*/*everburning torch* combo makes a handy flare, visible for miles around depending upon the weather conditions.

76. An *immovable rod* makes a handy place to tie your rope when you need to climb down a vertical shaft or pit to rescue a friend (or simply remove the treasure resting below).

77. On top of a castle's battlements, an *immovable rod* can play an important part against enemies storming the castle's walls. Tie a rope around the middle of the rod and activate it level with the top of the crenelations but about 4 or 5 feet out. Balance a sturdy board across the castle battlement and the hanging *immovable rod*. Now place on the board whatever you want to dump down on your enemies: Rocks, broken glass, vials of acid, stone bowls of green slime – you are limited only by your imagination. When you are ready for action, deactivate the *immovable rod* (you will probably need to hit the button with a pole or something). The board tips forward onto the enemy forces below, spilling its deadly contents. The *immovable rod*, however, gets pulled up by the length of rope you wisely attached to it and is ready for another similar use. Obviously, you do not need an *immovable rod* to throw rocks down from a castle wall but using the rod allows you to hurl down up to 8,000 pounds at a time!

78. You could practice your unarmed fighting techniques by hanging a punching bag in mid-air from an *immovable rod*. The 'punching bag' can be easily improvised with a large sack filled with dirt or sand.

79. At a carnival or fair, you could use an *immovable rod* to create a 'dunking booth,' where the object is to throw a ball and hit the button on the rod, deactivating it and causing the volunteer to fall into the pool of water below.

80. Guys might like hanging their shaving mirrors in mid-air so they can get a close shave each morning while out adventuring.

81. With sufficient practice, you could even hang a small mirror from an *immovable rod* (or have it attached with *sovereign glue*) and reflect ray attacks around corners by aiming at the mirror. Note, however, some attacks (like gaze attacks)

specifically do not work when 'bounced' off a mirror.

82. *Immovable rods* do not always have to be used with rope to benefit climbers. You could, for instance, climb to the top of a ladder steadied by your friends and activate an *immovable rod* so it holds the ladder still. (This is useful in reaching a trap door on the ceiling in the middle of a large room.) This allows everyone to climb up the ladder in turn and you can pull both the ladder and the *immovable rod* up with you when you are done. A length of rope and an *immovable rod* cannot really be used in the same scenario; how are you going to get up to the top in the first place to anchor the rod?

83. Okay, since you asked: Give the *immovable rod* – with a rope already tied around its middle – to the smallest person in your party. (Halflings and gnomes are excellent choices.) The strongest two party members each grab the rod holder by an arm and an ankle, swing her back and forth a couple of times and then fling her for all they are worth. At the apex of her journey (hopefully before she hits the ceiling) she activates the *immovable rod* and presto! – one rope ready for climbing up to the ceiling.

84. An *immovable rod* makes a handy place for a wizard to prop his spellbook when preparing arcane spells.

85. You can also use an *immovable rod* to 'hang' a scroll or map up against a wall, tree, or other vertical surface (kind of like using a refrigerator magnet) so you and your companions can all study it together.

86. Tying your fishing line to an *immovable rod* allows you to doze off while fishing without worrying about a big catch pulling your fishing pole out of the ground where you stuck it.

87. An *immovable rod* is the ultimate paperweight, guaranteed to keep



Sometimes it's best not to ask.

your papers from being blown away by even the strongest of breezes.

88. For a really secure place to stash your valuables, you will need a pair of *boots of levitation*, a means of providing your own oxygen or doing without (an iridescent spindle *ioun stone* works well, as does a *necklace of adaptation*), a sack to put your valuables in (a *bag of holding* allows extra storage capacity), some rope and of course an *immovable rod*. Pack your goodies in the bag, tie it securely shut with the rope and tie the other end around the middle of the *immovable rod*. Put on the magical boots, find a good starting place – one whose exact location you will be able to find again

– and levitate straight up. Keep going until you reach the upper atmosphere. Not high enough? Then keep going; eventually you will leave the atmosphere behind you and wind up in the vacuum of space, with your home planet far beneath you. Whenever you think you are high enough, activate the *immovable rod* and start the long levitation back down to the ground. Whatever you do, do not forget where on the ground you started your vertical ascent, or you will have a tough time finding your valuables again!

89. Here is a lethal trap for you: Ensure the door to your treasure vault opens outward. Get a slab of marble, granite, or the stone of your choice carved into a rough cube with

a 'handle' on top. Place this block immediately inside your vault and *levitate* it directly over the entrance. When it is in place, slip an *immovable rod* under the stone 'handle' and activate it. As long as the block weighs less than 8,000 pounds, it will remain where it is long after the *levitation* spell wears off. Now all you have to do is deactivate the rod whenever anyone steps below the block. If you do not want to stand up there yourself and trigger the trap you can assign the duty to your homunculus, *unseen servant*, or (if you are one of those friendly sorts who likes to animate the dead) a skeletal servant. Of course, you could also probably rig it so a tripwire a couple inches off the floor pushes the button on the *immovable rod* and squishes the intruders below.

90. While adventuring in the great outdoors, you can hang a clothesline between two *immovable rods* to allow your clothing to dry quickly after washing them by the stream.

91. An *immovable rod* activated while sticking out between the spokes of a cart or wagon's wheel makes a handy 'parking brake' when the vehicle is stopped on the side of a hill or incline. Even if the wheels are not spoked, you can place the rod behind a wheel to prevent the vehicle from moving downhill.

92. You can also use an *immovable rod* as an 'emergency brake.' If the wagon you are in gets unhitched from the horses pulling it, you can slap an *immovable rod* in front of the wagon and activate it. Just be prepared for the sudden lurch, as it is liable to send you flying!

93. Tie a rope to both an activated *immovable rod* and the end of an arrow or a spear of any length and you get the landbound equivalent of a harpoon on a whaling ship. If the creature you hit with the weapon tries to flee, it either pulls the weapon out of its body forcefully (causing additional damage) or it

remains tethered to the *immovable rod*, on a short leash as it were.

94. An *immovable rod* makes it easy to place your valuables up high enough at night to be out of reach of your gnome and halfling companions, especially those of a larcenous bent. Of course, this assumes you are of Medium size yourself.

95. An *immovable rod* can help stabilise your broken leg while you recuperate in a healing temple. You have seen people with their legs in traction, right? Same principle.

96. Placing and activating an *immovable rod* on a banquet table (perhaps hidden under a decorative flower display or similar centrepiece) prevents the table from being tipped over.

97. If you are a wizard with one of those 'revolving bookcase' secret doors in your library, you can 'lock' the secret door with an *immovable rod*. Just place the rod behind a book in the bookcase on the side that normally swings forward and trigger it. That way, even if somebody discovers your secret door, they will not be able to activate it until they find and disarm the *immovable rod*.

98. Two *immovable rods* attached to a length of sturdy chain can immobilise even a sleeping dragon. You just need two people who can move silently up to the dragon, drape the chain over its neck and activate the rods. Just be aware the larger dragons often have Strength scores high enough to overcome the DC 30 Strength check required to counteract an *immovable rod*. (In which case are you ever in trouble!) You might also bear in mind walking in front of even an immobilised dragon sets you up for a nasty bit of breath weapon retaliation!

99. A captured enemy tied to a chair with an activated *immovable rod* standing on the chair seat between

his legs will not be able to stand up and try the old 'smash the chair against the wall to make my escape' routine. Just make sure the chair is already backed up against a wall when you activate the rod. (It does not do much good if the chair is in the middle of the room where he can just scoot it out from under the rod.)

100. An *immovable rod* placed just out of the reach of a rust monster's antennae might keep it preoccupied for awhile. (Iron is one of a rust monster's favourite metals and *immovable rods* are made of iron.)

101. Finally, let us end with something really preposterous. Imagine this, if you will: Two gnomes have got hold of the amulet controlling a shield guardian. They have adapted the construct by using *sovereign glue* to attach an *immovable rod* to the side of each foot. Now, they each strap themselves onto one of the shield guardian's feet (using human-sized belts encompassing the construct's leg and the gnome's waist) and use it as a means of aerial locomotion. Each gnome activates and deactivates his *immovable rod* in turn, so the shield guardian walks ponderously through the air. (The whole thing would probably look a lot fiercer without the gnomes' whoops of gleeful mirth.) From their aerial platform, the gnomes can cast ranged spells, activate wands and cause all kinds of mischief without too much fear of retaliation.

These are just some ideas as to various uses for an *immovable rod* or two. No doubt there are many others and players will undoubtedly have a great time coming up with new and even wilder uses for their Player Characters' *immovable rods*. As with all magic, the only limits are those of your imagination and that has always been one of the hallmarks of fantasy role-playing games.

Design and Conquer

by Adrian Czajkowski

Ahem. "Rikki Tikki Tavi" by Rudyard Kipling is of course a very special book to me, the centre ground of the mongoose's place in literature.

A complex piece of work, it has been seen over the years in many ways: an animistic fable, an action story of bravery and courage, even a shameless tale of late colonial oppression...



But not as a miniatures wargame!

My king cobra bites your Indian Army Colonel for 3.

Okay. Roll for poison.



DEEP RAIN

By Mark Charke



SUMMARY

Slosh, a gnome, is making it rain. This has attracted a black dragon-bard and a strange new creature, the **glick**. Characters will have to deal with water hazards generated by perpetual rain as they try to stop the rain before the town of Midcenter has to evacuate.

This scenario is a mystery. Players must try to figure out who, or what, is causing the rain. There are several persons introduced to help make the mystery challenging. Players may even decide other problems, such as having a black dragon in the area, outrank the rain and try to deal those first. **Players should NOT read this article.**

PREPARING FOR THE GAME

ABOUT TEXT BOXES

Information in text boxes is meant to be read to players when it is relevant. It is possible that players will change events making these texts invalid. It then falls to the Games Master

A scenario for 3-5
adventurers of between
8th-10th level.

to make corrections on the fly but the scenario has been designed will multiple outcomes in mind and a certain amount of flexibility.

[Read: Text Box] These references will tell you when or during what encounter the text box should be read. It is good to read the text boxes at least once ahead of time.

RUNNING THE GAME

In this document you will find all the new rules, Non-Player Characters and monsters you need to run the game as well as information about the town of Midcenter. There are four planned encounters. These are not necessarily hostile. The players should have these encounters at least once each which should lead them to deal that encounter immediately or return to it later.

The order of events is not necessarily that important but they should have all the encounters as they explore the town and surrounding valley.

STARTING THE GAME

[Read: Introduction] If possible, copies of the map should be available to the player characters. The characters begin on the trail, so if

you want to have them meet up, they should do this in another town.

ENCOUNTER 1: CITIZENS OF MIDCENTER

[Read: Midcenter] This town is home to about fifty people, most of them farmers and their families. Todd Van Groot (see Non-Player Character description below) is the mayor, if you could call him such. The waters have driven many people out of their home and the tavern is busy with guests. The prices are low because there is so much business.

These people are fairly open-minded. Only quite unusual player characters would cause them concern. Certainly anyone claiming to be the cause of the rain or demonstrating the ability to cause rain would be met with anger.

As the Games Master feel free to introduce as many Non-Player Characters as you need, making up extras if you wish. There is a selection of Non-Player Characters fleshed out below.

Goal: The citizens want the rain to stop. They would even be willing to pay the party to do so (Up to 250 gp with good haggling – Diplomacy check (DC 30)). This is a chance for the party to make friends and solve a problem for them. It should be obvious enough that the rain is magical that the Games Master does not have to point this out to the players. Later encounters will provide clues that will lead the players to the culprit.

INTRODUCTION

'It is raining. It is raining like it has never rained before. Even the farmers, so eager to get a little of the moist stuff back on their crops, are spending their days worrying about the swamps that their fields have become.

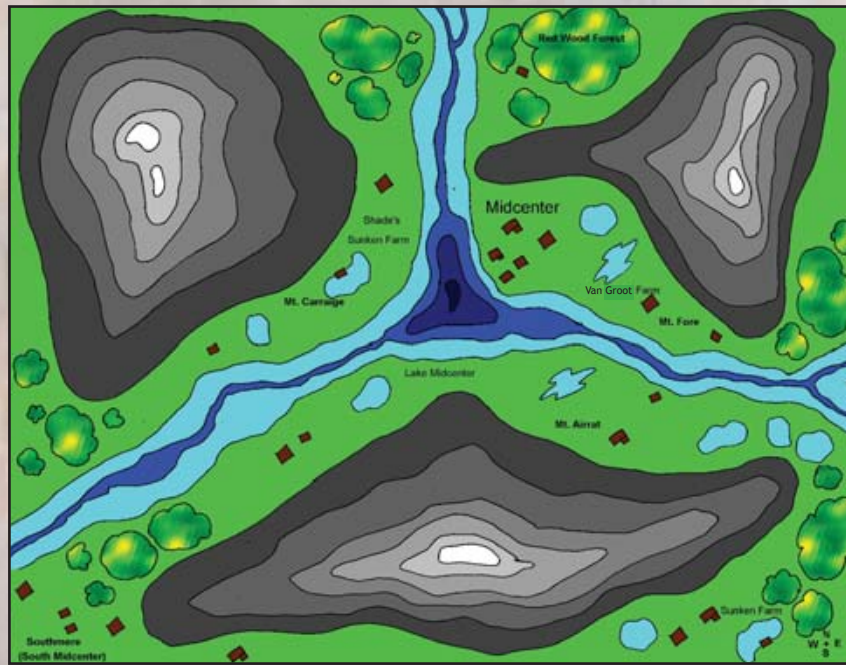
'This adventure begins as you enter the water-logged village of Midcenter, looking for respite from the rain on the trail. The village is situated at the bottom of a fertile valley and already there are deep pools of water in every rut and bump in the road. There are lights in the windows and smoke pouring from the chimney of a worn wooden building that is unmistakably the local tavern.'

MIDCENTER

Midcenter is a muddy little town, with a heavy emphasis on the mud these days. Visibility is limited but there are several sturdy wooden buildings that seem to be keeping most of the water out. There is a tavern which doubles as an inn, a smithy nearby, stables for horses and a provisions store. Scattered around are farmhouses. Some of them are under a foot or two of water and it's obvious the citizens have moved out for the moment.

Midcenter is at the bottom of a valley made by mountains. There is a nearby lake that has been made much larger by the rising waters. It does not threaten the town but several more feet of rain and it might.

There is nothing particularly special about the town. It might be quite scenic if you could see more than fifty feet through the constant downpour. The mountain peaks are all but invisible.



ENCOUNTER 2: SIRI, THE DIVA-DRAGON

[Read: The Virtuoso] Sira is introduced when the players first enter the Worm Food tavern. If the players decide not to go into the tavern, they are just as likely see her in town or hear about her performances from other townsfolk.

Without being too obvious, the players should get the idea that she is exotic and far too talented to be performing here. Sira is from far away and no one here knows where she came from, or even where she is staying.

Sira leaves town after her performances. (There are other nearby towns, several days' walk away so this is not unreasonable.) When she is confident that no one has seen her, she will revert to her natural form and carry on as a dragon. She may continue searching for a lair, hunt for food or go for a swim in Midcenter Lake.

Goal: The best thing the party can do is learn about Sira and make a peaceful arrangement between her and the townsfolk. Her love of music would be critical in this negotiation. The worst thing the party can do is anger her, in which case they may be in for a fight.

If the rain stops, Sira might leave of her own accord, but not if she has found something interesting in the town. If the party contains a bard, this will be useful for negotiations but might keep her interest in the town.

ENCOUNTER 3: SLOSH THE GNOME

[Read: Slosh] Slosh is a gnome who showed up a month prior to the coming of the rains. He visits town on a regular basis and he is the only gnome in the area. He is a quiet individual and keeps to himself. Townsfolk know he is a little odd but they are certain he is harmless.

Slosh is a worshiper of Gharan, the god of slimes and oozes. Slosh wants to become an ooze himself and has misinterpreted his god's wishes. Slosh believes he must drown the

THE VIRTUOSO

The tavern is old and worn. Above the door is a wooden sign depicting a poorly carved cooked turkey with the words 'Worm Food'. It looks like someone made an attempt to carve the 'o' in 'worm' into an 'a' but it is only visible close up. Inside, over the quiet muttering of the crowd, you can hear the most beautiful voice you've ever heard. It is an angel singing, for no one else could reach such amazing highs and fall to such rumbling lows.

The crowd is seated around the diva singing on a slightly raised stage. She is a beautiful, dark-skinned lady with long shimmering black hair reaching down to her waist. In her hands is an unused but masterfully carved set of pan flutes. When she finishes her solo opera, she laughs and drinks a mug of ale in a single gulp. She collects an old hat full to the brim with donations and heads out of the tavern, directly past you.

entire town to satisfy his god. Gharan thinks this is hilarious and has done nothing to deter Slosh from his course of action.

Slosh is always muttering to himself. He may reveal important information but will not actually mention he is causing the rain. He praises Gharan lot. He may mention he loves the rain and that he hates his flesh and wishes he were 'above the flesh'.

Gharan: Wise players may research the deity Gharan. The blacksmith and provisions store clerk are aware that Slosh worships 'Gharan' as some sort of god but they have never before heard of him. No one in town has. The party will have to access outside help or use divination to find out about Gharan. A Knowledge (religion) check DC 25 will provide them with the fact that Gharan is the god of slimes, oozes and all things subterranean.

Slosh's Lair: [The SW Sunken Farm on the Map] Slosh has taken over an abandoned farm some distance from town. Getting to the farm almost assures encounters with the Glick which leave Slosh alone.

Several ghar, sentient oozes, guard Slosh when he is outside of town. There should be at least one per party member.

Goal: Stopping Slosh is the main goal of the adventure, even if players do not realise it at first. The best thing they can do is convince Slosh to stop the rain or move it to an unpopulated area. They could do this by tricking him into believing it is his god's wish, by negotiating with him or by flat out bribing him. Neither should be easy and should require some well-played negotiation.

An alternative is fighting him. Slosh is a fairly powerful cleric of Gharan and may not be easy to defeat, especially with his ghar protectors.

If players come up with another method of stopping the rain, this

should not be discouraged. Simply dispelling the rain will not deter Slosh. He will restore the rain within about 10 minutes.

Slosh is a villain and he would not hesitate to slay the citizens of Midcenter if it suited his wishes. Slosh hates non-oozes and thinks everyone should become an ooze, or die.

In any marshland fight, Slosh will take advantage of the water leading party members into dangerous areas. See Marshland Environment rules below.

SLOSH

He comes into town, an odd little gnome who might be mistaken for a child playing with toys, at a distance. He has a several odd technological gadgets on his person, always one in hand. What they do is anyone's guess. It does not look like he knows their function either and is trying to figure it out.

He stops at the blacksmith to collect a number of odds and ends and then he is off to the provisions store. When he finally gets up close, you can see that he is a little misshapen with one eye bigger than the other.

ENCOUNTER 4: THE GLICK

The glick are magical creations that are roaming the marsh-like areas around Midcenter. The first time the party goes beyond the town they should encounter the glick at least once with at least 1-2 glick per player character.

Each day the party spends outside the city they should have a 25% chance of encountering glick again. There are about 100 glick in the whole area. If the players kill them and destroy the bodies of all 100 they should vanish, otherwise their numbers should increase.

See the Marshland Environment rules later as the marsh hinders the party but assists the glick.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

The following creatures from *Core Rulebook III* would be appropriate to add as random encounters for this scenario; giant owl, hag (green), hill giant, ooze (any), ooze mephit, shambling mound, stirge, treant, troll, water elemental (up to greater), will-o'-wisp.

Don't be afraid to keep reminding the players that it is raining! [*you could always throw the odd bucket of water over them...Ed*]

ENDING THE GAME AND REWARDS

Any time the players have resolved the rain, the game can be concluded. The party should receive standard experience awards for all the monsters and/or Non-Player Characters they have defeated. Story awards are listed below.

Todd Van Groote, the Mayor, will pay up to 500 gp to the party for getting rid of the rain. He does not really want to though. He is willing to give them a farm if they are interested in staying. Some townsfolk have left permanently and there are several vacant properties. Todd will not pay the party additional money, nor provide them with magical rewards.

If the party leaves successful, they will be welcome back at Midcenter for future adventures and may find the town a base for future operations.

Midcenter: Each player who befriends or makes effective use of a Non-Player Character in Midcenter should receive 1000xp as a bonus.

Sira: Resolving the situation with Sira, without violence, is worth as much as if they had defeated her. Award experience as if the players had defeated a CR 11 encounter.

Slosh: Resolving Slosh without violence is also worth as much as if they have defeated him. Award experience as if the players had defeated a CR 14 encounter.

Glick: If the party can get rid of all the glick in the area, award them experience as if they had defeated a CR 10 encounter.

MIDCENTER

TODD VAN GROOTE

Fighter 3 CR: 3; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 3d10; hp 16; Init +2; Spd 30ft., AC 16 (touch 12, flat-footed 14); Base Atk +3, Grp Atk +5, Melee Atk+8 melee (1d10+4 19-20/x2, +2 *bastard sword*); AL LG; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +2; Str 14, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 14. Height 6 ft.

Skills and feats: Climb +5, Craft (blacksmith) +8, Craft (weaponsmith) +8, Spot +4, Swim +2, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (bastard sword), Weapon Focus (bastard sword), Power Attack, Combat Expertise, Improved Disarm.

Possessions: *Bastard Sword* +2 (*holy avenger*).

Todd Van Groote is a retired adventurer and the unofficial Mayor of Midcenter. He does not care much for the title and prefers to be called Todd. He walks with a limp, an old injury to his knee.

He has a suit of chainmail and a *bastard sword* +2 with the symbol of an owl in flight worked into the guard. There is a hefty chip out of the blade about midway up but it is clearly a masterwork weapon with a light blue sheen and there is no other damage to the blade, not even scratches. Close inspection will reveal that this blade is made out of adamantine. An *identify* spell will reveal that it is actually a *holy avenger*.

If the party involves Todd with any of their encounters he will quickly gain enough experience to gain a level. His knee will miraculously heal and he will have gained his first level in paladin.

PLACES OF INTEREST

The Van Groote Farm: Todd has a moderate farm where he lives with his son, Fletch. His wife was killed many years ago by the last monster Todd slew. Fletch is still young but has the potential to become a great paladin. Todd is fairly well off,

having made a reasonable amount of money when he adventured and he is generous enough without being arrogant about it. (Todd has several thousand gold pieces he keeps in a bank in a nearby town. This is in addition to his armour and sword.)

Fletch is still a 0-level child but can be treated as having the Exotic Weapon Proficiency (bastard sword) because of all his training with his father's sword. Fletch also wields the weapon as a holy avenger.

The Smithy: Smith Stubar curses often at the rain because his forge is soaked. He never built a proper roof because it got too hot.

The Tavern: Konrad runs the tavern. He is a friendly fellow, quick to turn a gold piece to feed his family. His son Pyotr does a lot of the cooking and his wife serves the tables. The upper levels of the tavern serve as an inn for guests and it's crowded now with farmers whose houses have been flooded.

Konrad cannot read or write well and has misspelled 'warm' when naming his tavern so it is called 'Worm Food', even though he has since tried to re-carve the sign.

Goods Store: Old man Adamus runs this store. He wears thick spectacles and a calm, slightly haughty manner about him. Adamus is a 3rd level sorcerer. He does not make this well known but he is the one person to speak to for material components and all things magical. A spellcaster is likely to notice he carries reagents in his store. Adamus is loath to adventure and happy to run his store and enjoys his simple magic. His stats are not included here.

Shades' Farm: Shades is one of the farmers evicted by the rising waters. He is more concerned about his daughter Amelia who has warts, which he blames on the gnome Slosh after she rejected his advances. (A

EXPERIENCED

Fighter 3/Paladin 1 CR: 4; Medium humanoid (human); HD 4d10; 21 hp; Init +2; Spd 30ft., AC 16 (touch 12, flat-footed 14); Base atk +4; Grp +5; Atk +8melee (1d10+4/19-20 x2, +2 *Bastard Sword*); AL LG; SV Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +2; Str 15, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 14. Height 6 ft.

Special Qualities: Aura of Good, *detect evil*.

Skills and feats: Climb +6, Craft (blacksmith) +9, Craft (weaponsmith) +9, Spot +5, Swim +3, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (bastard sword), Weapon Focus (bastard sword), Power Attack, Combat Expertise, Improved Disarm.

Possessions: *Holy Avenger Bastard Sword* +2, chain shirt.

remove curse will remove the warts but a *cure disease* will not. Slosh did indeed curse her.)

RULES AND MONSTERS

MARSHLAND ENVIRONMENT

Water represents a hazard that causes tripping and drowning. It is not an overly dangerous environment but the unprepared adventurer burdened with heavy armour and equipment could find a muddy death. A little forethought and preparation can reduce this hazard to an annoyance; using rafts for heavy equipment and poling ahead to find soft areas or hiring a guide who knows the area.

Tripping (trip check): Characters who run across a wet and slippery surface, or other difficult surface, may trip. To avoid tripping characters make a 'trip check', a Reflex saving throw DC 10. Armour check penalties apply and trip checks suffer a -1 penalty for each 5 pounds of gear carried.

Other modifiers: Greased surfaces, suffering attacks of opportunity, leg injuries and other conditions add +5 each to a trip check (at your Games Master's discretion).

Slick Wet Surface: This surface would be wet bark, wood, polished stone or ice. Movement is unhindered but trip checks are required just to walk on this surface.

Ankle Deep Water: 3 inches (Small-sized), 6 inches (Medium-sized) or 1 foot (Large-sized). Trip checks are required each round of running or charging across ankle deep water.

Knee Deep Water: 6 inches (Small-sized), 1-2 feet (Medium-sized) or 3 feet (Large-sized). Base movement is reduced by 10 feet per round. Trip checks are required for each round of running or charging through knee deep water.

Shoulder Deep: 2 feet (Small-sized), 4 feet (Medium-sized) or 6 feet (Large-sized). Movement is halved and you cannot run. Trip checks are required if you stumble over unseen objects or are fighting a current. You can use your Swim check instead of your trip check if you wish.

Quicksand: A Spot or Search check (DC 20), or Survival check (DC 15) locates quicksand. You sink one foot per round, unless you make your trip check. Quicksand applies a -5 penalty to trip checks. You can use your Swim check instead but it suffers an additional -5 penalty.

If you succeed at your trip check, you can pull yourself up 1 foot or, if you are at the top you can make a 5-foot step. If others can help you with rope or poles, they can give you a +2 synergy bonus if they make their trip checks.

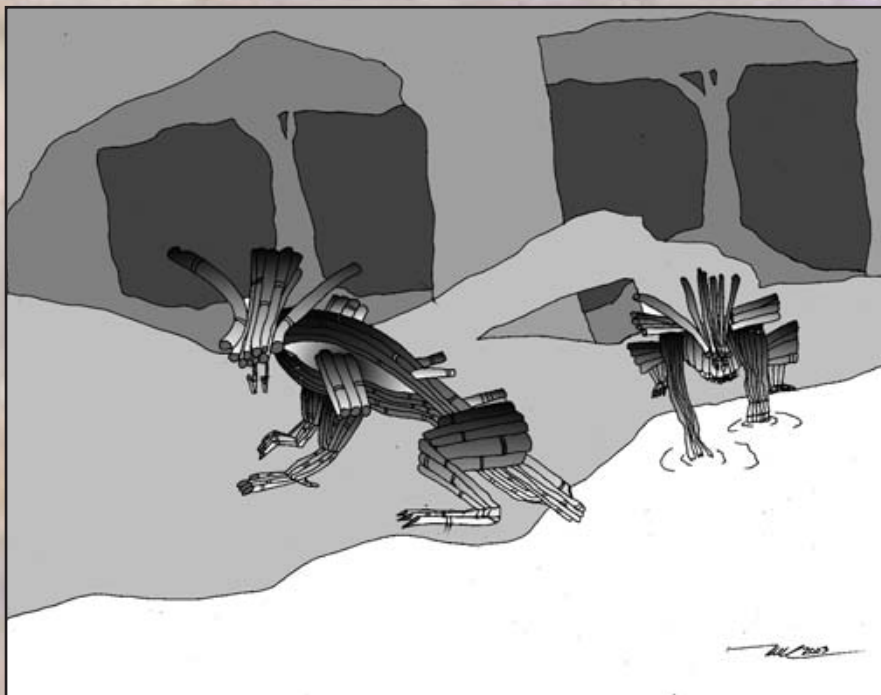
Once your head is submerged (which happens quite quickly if you fall prone into quicksand), you are suffocating.

Underwater Quicksand: If the quicksand is in knee- or shoulder-deep water replace the trip check with a Swim check which does not suffer either -5 penalty for quicksand. Creatures with a swim movement rate can automatically escape.

Mudslide: A mudslide is dangerous when a large amount of dirt and rock above you gives way and either falls on you or rushes down at you. You must succeed at a trip check or take 1d6 subdual damage and become grappled and suffocating. If you are hit, you may use Escape Artist or Dexterity check DC 15 to escape. Armour check penalties apply to this check and the check suffers a -1 penalty for each 5 pounds of gear carried.

Instead of trying to escape you can spend a round shedding clothing and removing armour. You can remove at least 10 pounds of gear at round. (See *Core Rulebook I* for rules on removing armour.)

Lightning: If Slosh is angered, he can start calling down lightning bolts. These bolts are fairly accurate and inflict 1d6 damage unless the target makes a Reflex saving throw DC 20 to negate the damage. Arranging to start the



Mark's quirky representation of his glick creatures.

lightning takes Slosh ten minutes (and would have to be done every 24 hours) but afterwards he can call down a bolt every 1d6 rounds, targeting anyone he can see.

Glick

Medium Plant

Hit Dice: 3D8+3 (16 hp)

Initiative: +4

Speed: 30ft., swim 30ft.

AC: 19 (+4 Dex, +5 natural)

Base Attack/Grapple: +2/+2

Attack: Reed thrash +6 melee (1d6)

Full Attack: 2 reed thrashes +6 melee (1d6)

Space/Reach: 5 ft. by 5ft.

Special Qualities: Blindsight 60 ft., plant, fire vulnerability

Saving Throws: Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +1

Abilities: Str 11, Dex 18, Con 12, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 8

Skills: Hide +12, Listen +6, Spot +5, Survival +5

Feats: Weapon Finesse (reed thrash)

Environment: Any marsh

Organisation: Solitary or stand (4-7)

Challenge Rating: 3

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Neutral

Skills: Glick gain a +4 circumstance bonus to Hide and Survival in marsh environments (included above).

Glick are a magical creation made up of a mass of flexible polished black tubes that have the appearance of bamboo. They can twist and bend their mass to look roughly like another animal or they can relax and take on the appearance of a stand of bamboo shoots from 6 to 10 feet in height. Glick have roots coming from the bottoms of their bodies. They take nourishment from the earth, from water and from sunlight but they also supplement their diet with meat, small animals, deer or even passing humanoids.

Who made the glick is uncertain. They possess qualities of treants, bamboo and frogs suggesting a magical cross between these species. Slain glick that are carefully dried out

produce exceptionally strong bamboo rods which can be used to make masterwork staffs.

Blindsight 60feet (Ex): Glick have no eyes or ears but they can feel light and vibrations giving them blindsight extending out to 60feet. As a result they can never be surprised or flanked. They are somewhat vulnerable to attacks from beyond 60feet and may flee or try to hide from such attackers

Fire Vulnerability (Ex): Glick take double damage from fire attacks unless the attack allows a save, in which case it takes double damage on a failure and no damage on a success.

Plant: Immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning and polymorphing. Not subject to critical hits.

Skills: Glick are always coated in a thin slick fluid giving them a +4 bonus to Escape Artist checks. They also receive a +4 racial bonus to Hide, Listen and Spot.

COMBAT

Since glick do not need to breath, they can lay in ambush under the surface of their swamp waiting for prey that is slowed, and noisy, because of the water. A stand of glick will attack the same target all at once. Glick hiding under marsh waters gain a +4 circumstance bonus to their Hide checks. Because of photosynthesis, their 'skin' releases bubbles at a very slow rate, something an experienced adventurer can learn to watch for (negating their bonus to Hide).

Glick attack a target quickly. If it does not fall within the first 1-3 rounds, they will flee. A strand of glick will scatter in different directions but probably come back together somewhere else. Sometimes the glick will return to see if their prey succumbed to its injuries. Glick are not especially clever and are likely to fall for fairly simple tricks.

SLOSH

Male gnome Cleric 14 of Gharan ; Small humanoid; HD 14d8+73; hp 141; Init +6; Spd 20ft., AC 16 (touch 12, flat-footed 14); Base Atk +10; Grp +7; Atk +14 melee (1d6+3 mace +2); Full Atk +14/+9; SA Spells; SQ gnome racial abilities, turn undead, AL CE; SV Fort +16, Ref +6, Will +13; Str 12, Dex 15, Con 20, Int 10, Wis 18, Cha 8. Height 3 ft.
Skills and feats: Craft (alchemy) +2, Concentration +19, Heal +6, Knowledge (religion) +4, Listen +6, Spellcraft +14, Great Fortitude, Empower Spell, Extend Spell, Improved Initiative, Toughness.
Class features: Turn or rebuke undead
Spells per Day: 6/6+1/6+1/5+1/5+1/3+1/3+1/2+1), Domains of Water and Plant, Spell DC 14 + spell level.

Spells Memorised: (Orisons) *create water* x2, *inflict minor wounds* x2, *purify food and drink* x2, (1st) *command*, *curse water* x2, *obscuring mist* x2, *entangle*, *shield of faith*, (2nd) *bull's strength*, *bear's endurance*, *bull's strength*, *darkness*, *hold person*, *resist energy*, *fog cloud*, (3rd) *bestow curse*, *blindness/deafness*, *dispel magic* x2, *water breathing* x2, (4th) *control water*, *freedom of movement*, *magic vestment (extended)*, *poison*, *spell immunity*, *command plants*, (5th) *flame strike* x2, *slay living*, *ice storm* (6th) *harm* x2, *inflict critical wounds (empowered)*, *cone of cold* (7th) *control weather*, *acid fog*, *word of chaos*.

Magic Use: Slosh uses *magical vestments* to increase his Armour Class, *bear's endurance* to give him an additional 14 - 42 hit points and *spell immunity* against such spells as *fireball* and *lightning bolt*. Slosh often uses *harm* and then *cone of cold*.

Equipment: *Mace* +2, *wand of lightning bolt* (8d6) with 25 charges remaining, scroll of *control weather* x10.

Slosh worships a little known deity of slimes, oozes and all things

subterranean, Gharan. He has misinterpreted the wishes of his god but his messages are desperately vague at best. Slosh is very self interested and prefers to talk about himself and does not really care about other people. He will not offer help and only by paying him very well can the party expect his co-operation. If Slosh feels that the party is trying to stop the rain, he will not help them and instead avoid them as much as possible.

SIRA DEL KIRON 'BLACK WAKE' THE SIBILANT

Large Female Young Adult Black Dragon (Earth), Bard 1

Hit Dice: 16d12+1d6+51 (158 hp)

Initiative: +2

Speed: 60 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor), swim 60 ft.

AC: 26 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +15 natural)

Base Attack/Grapple: +16/+24

Attack: +20 melee (2d6+6, bite)

Full Attack: +20 melee (2d6+6 bite), +17 melee (1d8+2, 2 claws), +17 melee (1d6+2, 2 wings), +17 melee (1d8+6, tail slap)

Space/Reach: 10 ft./ 5ft. (bite 10 ft.)

Special Attacks: Breath weapon, darkness, frightful presence, spells

Special Qualities: Blindsight 60 ft., damage reduction 5/magic,

darkvision 120 ft., immunity to acid, sleep and paralysis, low-light vision, spell resistance 17, water breathing

Saves: Fort +13, Ref +14, Will +13

Abilities: Str 19, Dex 14, Con 17, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 12

Skills: Hide +17, Listen +20, Move Silently +13, Perform (pan flute) +11, Perform (singing) +16, Search +20, Spellcraft +11, Spot +20, Swim +10

Feats: Aerial Sweep (from *Slayer's Guide to Dragons*), Eschew Materials, Hover, Multiattack, Skill Focus (Perform), Weapon Focus (Bite)

Environment: Any marsh

Organisation: Unique

Challenge Rating: 10

Treasure: See below

Alignment: Neutral

Breath

Weapon: Sira can breathe a line of acid 80 feet long. This inflicts 10d4 damage or half on a successful Reflex save DC 21.

Aerial Sweep:

While hovering, Sira can make a tail sweep attack in addition to bite and claw attacks.

Frightful

Presence (Ex): Whenever Sira attacks, charges or flies overhead creatures within 150 feet with less than 16 Hit

Dice must succeed at a Will save (DC19) or creatures with 4 or fewer Hit Dice become panicked for 4d6 rounds and creatures with 5 or more Hit Dice become shaken for 4d6 rounds. Creatures that succeed are immune to Sira's frightful presence for one day. Other dragons ignore Sira's frightful presence.

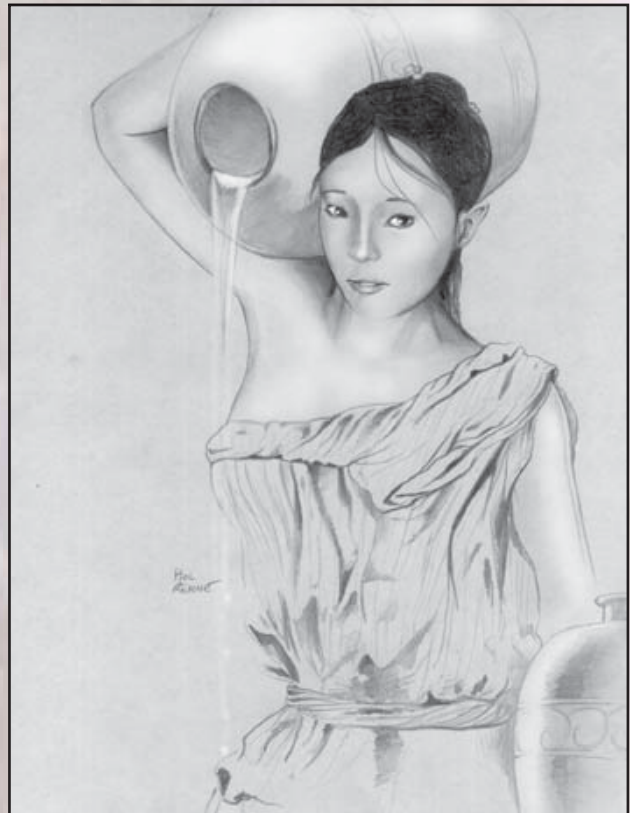
Languages: Sira can speak the language of black and evil dragons, neutral dragons, common and gnomish.

Magic Items: *Pipes of haunting*, *pipes of sounding*, *wand of polymorph self* (50 charges), *wand of polymorph self* (24 charges), *bag of holding I*.

Spell-Like Abilities: *Darkness (Sp)*: 3/day, as darkness, but 50-ft. radius, caster level 5th.

Water Breathing (Ex): Can breathe underwater indefinitely and can freely use breath weapon, spells and other abilities underwater.

Spells per day: Bard: 2. DC 11 plus spell level. Sorcerer: 5/4. DC 11 plus spell level.



Spells Known: (Bard): *Cantrips - dancing lights, lullaby, prestidigitation, summon instrument*. (Sorcerer): *Cantrips - detect magic, flare, ghost sound, message; 1st - charm person, ventriloquism*

Treasure: Sira carries 10d10 x100 gp and 500 gp worth of gems at any one time in a *bag of holding* around her neck which also holds her magical items. She also has a collection of musical scores and books worth about 200 gp.

SIRA

Her parents abandoned Sira when their lair was overrun by a band of adventurers. She was sold at auction and purchased by an elderly bard. He treated her as his daughter, albeit a very large one. They travelled, unwelcome anywhere for very long, until he died naturally of old age. Sira is now search for a lair of her own.

She is not evil but she is not especially fond of humans either, except bards and musicians. She loves music and can be drawn out by the playing of instruments. Her careful use of a *polymorph* wand

allows her to attend musical events she might not otherwise be welcome at. As a result she would not flinch at the opportunity to acquire further magical items that could allow her to assume other forms. She also collects musical instruments of all sorts and goes to great lengths to receive training in them.

Sira does a great deal of singing and has a beautiful voice capable of reaching highs and lows that would make a human singer cry. Sira is usually careful to hide herself while singing unless she has scouted the area. A Listen check, opposed by her Perform (singing) check is required to both locate the source of her singing and determine that she is a dragon singing. Most hearing her are left unsure as to what she is and she enjoys letting people think she is a siren or other monster.

Sira is named for her fondness of flying low over water and dragging her claws through the water creating waves. She loves to swim and loathes being very far from a large body of water. She is in excellent shape, depending on her endurance to outrun older dragons.

COMBAT

Sira prefers to fight near water or, ideally, underwater. She fights at range using her breath weapon often, unless her opponents are bards or have musical magical items she wants. In this case she will melee using subdual damage on bards and musicians (taking a -4 penalty to her attacks). If she does not want to fight, or there are only a few opponents left, she will use her bardic music abilities, *fascinate* or *suggestion* to try stop the battle. If she must flee from a battle she uses her *polymorph* wand to hide or flees to deep water.

Sira is very patient for a black dragon if there is something she wants. She has been attacked by older dragons and dangerous monsters before and she has a healthy amount of humility.

Ghar

Medium Ooze

Hit Dice: 5d8+25 (52hp)

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

Speed: 30ft., climb 15ft.

AC: 20 (+3 Dex, +7 natural)

Base Attack/Grapple: +3/+3

Attack: Slam +5 melee (3d4 + paralysis)

Full Attack: 2 slams +5 melee (3d4 + paralysis)

Space/Reach: 5 ft. / 10ft.

Special Attacks: Paralysis

Special Qualities: Alter self, disarm, ooze qualities

Saves: Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +1

Abilities: Str 10, Dex 16, Con 20, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 6 (15 in humanoid form only.)

Skills: Climb +5, Escape Artist +19, Listen +10, Move Silently +11, Spot +10, Survival +3

Feats: Alertness, Improved Initiative

Environment: Subterranean

Organisation: Solitary (normally)

Challenge Rating: 5

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Always Chaotic Evil

Ghar are servants of Gharan, the god of oozes and slimes. Ghar are intelligent oozes that have full control of their semi-liquid bodies. They often assume a humanoid form to interact with other humanoids or lure prey away from crowds and other humanoids.

Alterself (Ex): Ghar can change their forms for up to 15 hours at a time to appear to be a humanoid creature, usually a human male but occasionally a female drow. The change is a full round action. The assumed form does not have clothing. It must acquire some to complete its disguise [*unless it's in a nudist camp, of course – Ed*].

They can slip through cracks, gratings, and under doors at half their normal movement rate. They can also cling to walls and ceiling and move at half their normal movement rate.

Blindsight 60 feet (Ex): A ghar's entire body is a primitive sensory organ that can ascertain prey by scent and vibration within 60feet.

Disarm (Ex): As a full round action the ghar can mould itself around its opponent's weapon absorbing the weapon into itself. When doing this, it gains a +8 bonus to its Disarm check and does not provoke an attack of opportunity. Each round the character can make an opposed Strength check as a full round action to retrieve the weapon. The ghar has a +8 bonus to this check as well.

Ooze: Immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning and polymorphing. Not subject to critical hits.

Skills: Ghar have a +16 racial bonus to Escape Artist.

COMBAT

In ooze form, they can lash out with two pseudopods, globs of ooze, which inflict 3d4 damage and are coated in a paralytic slime which causes paralysis for 2d6 rounds unless a Fortitude save DC 17 is made. The ghar in humanoid form can stretch its arms out into blobs to make its pseudopod attack but may choose to use conventional weapons, or even its fists, if it wishes to remain disguised.

Ghar Society

Groups of ghar can be found where people worship Gharan, otherwise they tend to be solitary. They prefer to live underground with other slimes and oozes.

Some say ghar were once human priests so vile and evil that they sacrificed their true forms to Gharan for these powers. Others believe they are simply intelligent oozes.





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