

MONGOOSE PUBLISHING PRESENTS



Signs & Portents

6

Unusual Suspects

Huge Perp Scenario For The Judge Dredd RPG!

Serving The House

Exciting New Centauri Prestige Classes

Of Chariots and Acheronians

Exclusive Material For The Conan RPG!

Plus... Crusader Power Class, Jonny Nexus, Creature Feature, Cultural Templates For Fantasy Games, Gaming Symposium and Lots, Lots more!

MGP 5506

ISSN 1741-1254



9 771741 125017

SGP6 January 2004 \$5.95

www.mongoosepublishing.com



Judge DeMarco's appearance on the front cover means the Rookie's Guide to the Undercity is here!

Editorial

Hi All,

The single question I get asked most is what is the most satisfying thing about being a magazine editor. After all, I do very little of the actual creative writing myself, which, on the surface, you would think would be the best bit. In fact, it's true to say that when one of the editorial team asks me to create a page or two of fiction at short notice for a book I jump at the chance – there's nothing like having to be creative under pressure. That said, I just realised what it is I like most. Twenty minutes ago I was looking at the first 18 pages of this issue, and they were blank. Absolutely blank. Now they are half full. In 48 hours time they will be filled with text and I will be selecting art to support the articles.

That's what is really great about magazine editing. Collating all the stuff that comes in and melding it into one entity. To some people this comes easily – to others, it is an impossibility that reduces them to jelly. Nobody is more surprised than me to discover that I fit into the former category. There is actually quite a lot to this magazine business, as it turns out. Layout is just the tip of the iceberg; you have to deal with writers and artists, and you have to be prepared to reject work. This is more difficult than you might imagine. It transpires that writers are real people too and telling somebody that their well-crafted masterpiece is actually pants is no easy task.

There's something else really cool about running the magazine. I get to see a bit of just about everything Mongoose releases. Sometimes it's a bit like being a kid in a sweet shop. On one side there's CyberNet, on another Horror, and then there's Conan. All great new titles that I want to play characters in – except I don't have enough hours in the day.

Over the last month or so I have been involved in the Hyboria map project for the Conan RPG, which has been a real treat for me. As a teenager (some few years ago now) I was inspired by the late Tony Bath's series of wargaming articles to tabletop game in Hyboria myself. I spent literally weeks painstakingly hand drawing and colouring a map stretching between the Western Ocean and the Sea of Vilayet (Khitai was a distant rumour back then!), even going as far as using a single hexagon template to cover the whole map in hexes – yep, those were the days before personal computers and pre-drawn hex paper. As such, actually working on the official map to go in the main rulebook has been something really special. It has meant that I've been rather picky, as only anoraks can be, but I hope that it means that the end result will do the job.

Well, that does it for me this month. Enjoy.

Ian

Editor:

Ian Barstow

Managing Editor:

Matthew Sprange

Production Manager:

Alexander Fennell

Mongoose Staff: *Paul Tucker, Rich Neale, Mark Humphries, Ian Belcher and Ted Chang*

Artists: *Gillian Pearce, Ralph Horsley, Stephen Cook, Danilo Moretti, David Molinas, Rick Otey, Luis Real, Alejandro Villen, Chad Sergesketter, Andrew Hepworth, Scott Clark, Jason Brashill and Sarto*

Contributors: *Shannon Kalvar, Lizard, Ian Sturrock, Matt Sharp, Alejandro Melchor, Jonny Nexus, Johnathan M. Richards, August Hahn, Matthew Pritchard*

Statistical Analyst:

Steve Mulhern

ADVERTISING: *All ads are subject to approval by Mongoose Publishing, which reserves the right to reject any ad for any reason. Advertisers and/or agencies of advertisers agree not to hold Mongoose Publishing liable for any loss or expense from alleged wrongdoing that may arise out of the publication of such advertisements.*

Designation of Open Content

All rules mechanics, tables and other material derivative of Open Game Content and the System Reference Document are considered Open Game Content. All other text and artwork is closed content.
All Babylon 5 material, with the exception of open game content designated above is copyright 2003 Warner Brothers.
All Judge Dredd material, with the exception of open game content designated above is copyright Rebellion A/S
All Conan material, with the exception of open game content designated above is copyright Conan Properties International.
All Lone Wolf material, with the exception of open game content designated above is copyright Joe Dever.



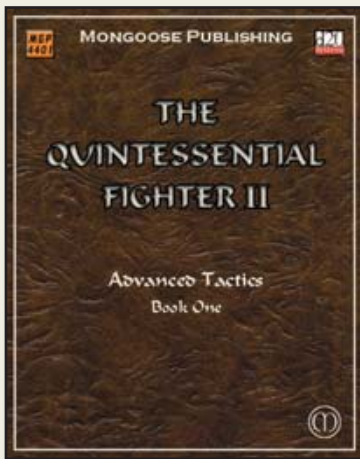
Copyright © 2003 Warner Bros.
BABYLON 5, characters, names and all related indicia are trademarks of and © Warner Bros.
WB SHIELD: TM and © Warner Bros.
(s03)

Printed in China

Babylon 5 created by J. Michael Straczynski

EYE ON MONGOOSE

New Releases This Month

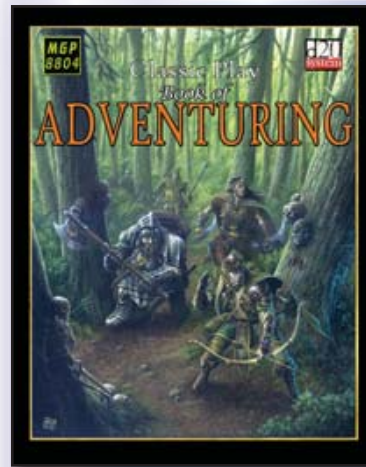


The brand new Advanced Tactics Series takes an advanced look at the whole range of class and racial sourcebooks from Mongoose Publishing, all designed to greatly widen a player's options for his fantasy characters. More than simple continuations, the second series of Quintessential books slot seamlessly into

any fantasy-based campaign, giving advanced alternatives for characters of one class or race within the game, allowing both players and Games Masters the chance to give mid- and high-level characters new options without overpowering or unbalancing the game as a whole.

With the help of this sourcebook, any character choosing the fighter class will have a wealth of alternatives and options for expanding his range of abilities. With career paths, fighters can customise their advancement and gain special benefits from their chosen branch of training. Legendary Classes offer a subset and expansion of their combat prowess that may take them to epic levels and beyond. Multiclassing offers the fighter complementary abilities, while superior tools can enhance his performance. Tricks of the Trade expands the range of tactics a fighter can use in the field, while Weapon Mastery and Attack Moves describe a series of advanced techniques that a fighter can master for even more devastating effects.

Fighters are characters that are easy to create, but the wealth of options and opportunities, as well as the variables of combat make them one of the more challenging classes, tactically, for they must use their head as well as their sword arm to survive the changing conditions of combat. *The Quintessential Fighter II: Advanced Tactics* is a 128-page book that provides all the necessary tools for the fighter to become a legend.



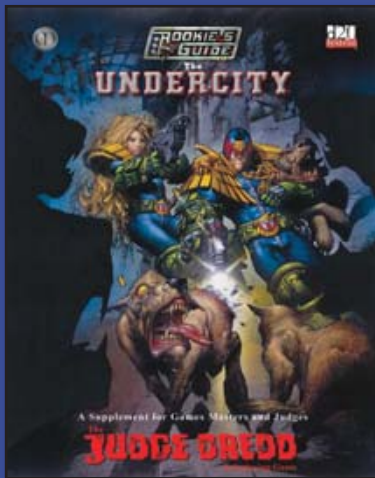
What is a good adventurer? Is it the daredevil who leaps over a chasm in the hope that he can jump far enough to grab the dangling chain, swing from the chandelier and strike the head cultist before he can finish his unholy ritual? Or is it the careful planner who skulks in the shadows, assessing

the dangers around the demonic altar, sets up a trap and, with a clever ruse, tricks the cultist into stepping on it? Is a good adventurer the loner who fights a personal crusade against evil or the loyal friend who lays down his life to give his friends a fighting chance?

There are as many definitions of 'adventurer' as there are adventurers themselves, each with a right to a place in this book. Adventuring is a dangerous and fickle career, and there are as many heroes as there are villains who have gained fame and fortune by setting out into the unknown, armed with wits or brawn, weapons or magic, willpower or stamina. Or a mixture of all of them.

Even the word 'adventuring' lends itself to much confusion, for common people consider a self-professed adventurer with a mix of awe and fear, for they are not sure if they are dealing with a selfless crusader or a ruthless mercenary, but they can be certain that he is a person with extraordinary abilities, with the potential to solve any problem that ails them, or to bring equally extraordinary grief.

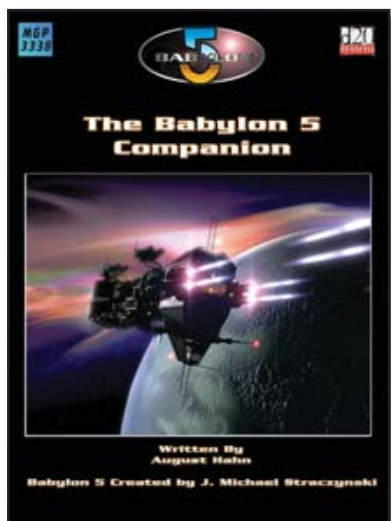
This 256-page hardback book presents everything a character needs to become a successful adventurer, starting from detailed advice on how to get the most of every piece of equipment to what to expect when travelling outside the boundaries of his own world.



The average citizen of Mega-City One regards the subterranean Undercity as an urban myth. Most citizens believe the old cities were destroyed when the construction of the Mega-City began, with only the occasional dilapidated structure – landmarks such as the Empire State Building or the Statue of Liberty – salvaged as historical landmarks. Only a few citizens know that the east coast landscapes of pre-war America continue to stand in the cold darkness beneath City Bottom, a subterranean mausoleum preserving these archaic structures for all time.

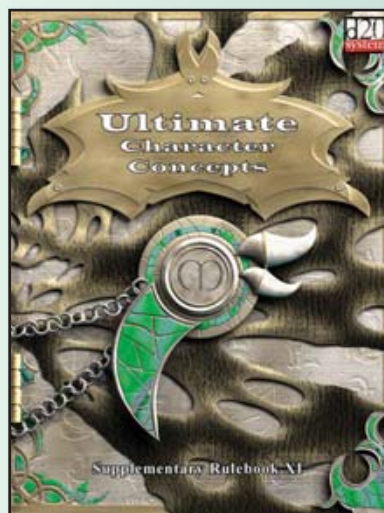
In the constant darkness of the buried cities a new civilisation has developed. Almost completely cut off from human progress and sunlight, mankind has been forced to rapidly adapt to life in the shadows. A stable mutant strain has developed at an incredible rate, producing squat, twisted creatures capable of seeing in absolute darkness, called troggies. In addition, refugees of the terrible disasters that regularly beset the Mega-City seek out the Undercity's dubious protection. Vicious criminals fleeing from the judges locate cracks in City Bottom, risking life and limb to squeeze through and make a bid for freedom down below. Cursed Earth mutants avoid the Cursed Earth's harsh environment by chipping at Mega-City One's foundations until they can enter the Undercity. Hundreds of Citi-Def units eagerly embark on training missions into the Undercity every year – many fail to make the grade and either become hopelessly lost, or killed by the troggie natives, hungry for food.

This 64-page source book is a comprehensive guide to the Undercity and its inhabitants for *The Judge Dredd Roleplaying Game*. It details the Undercity's geography, habitats, population, dangers and wonders, as well as providing lots of new characters, weapons, vehicles and equipment. Games Masters now have a new stratum of Mega-City One society to explore, an exciting and unusual setting for one-off scenarios or lengthy campaigns.



Containing hundreds of new rules, tweaks and background material, the new, 200-page hardback Babylon 5 Companion is a vital guide for players and Games Masters intent on exploring the galaxy. This supplement builds upon the main rulebook, expanding areas such as the worker class and living styles, as well as adding a wealth of new equipment and spacecraft. Players will be delighted with the huge amount of new options open to their characters while Games Masters will be given all the tools they need to create epic and believable campaigns set in and around the Babylon 5 Diplomatic Station.

Lavishly designed and including screen stills from the original series, this new supplement is essential reading for all Babylon 5 fans.



The Ultimate Character Concepts is a giant 256 page hardback compiling and expanding upon the most popular Character Concepts, creation options and customisation ideas that have appeared in our d20 supplements since the game system was released, all brought up to date to be fully-compatible with the 3.5 revision.

If you don't know about Character Concepts then you are in for a real treat. Character Concepts are a core idea for the Quintessential series of sourcebooks from Mongoose Publishing and provide a range of templates for each character class that will allow a player to quickly and easily provide a ready background for every new character he generates. As well as providing both a small bonus and penalty to his character's capabilities, each Character Concept gives a ready base for roleplaying, thus greatly shortening the time taken during character creation, as well as granting that oft-needed inspiration so important for a player to feel 'at home' with his new character.

Any one Character Concept may be applied to a character as it is being created. The listed bonuses and penalties are applied, any role-playing description modified and adjusted to take into account the template and then the character is ready to play!

Caption Competition #6



Caption Competition #3 Winner!



This month's competition has been won by Jim Vassilakos of San Bernardino with:

'Of course size matters!'

A copy of OGL Horror will soon be causing him to lose sleep.

Enough of the nice, fun-loving pictures. OGL Horror is out right now, and this is a little sample of the easygoing artwork that inhabits its pages.

This month's winner can look forward to a copy of the new Mongoose Pocket Player's Handbook...oer!

Mail your answers and details to:

ibarstow@mongoosepublishing.com

or post them to:

Caption Competition 6
Signs & Portents
Mongoose Publishing
PO Box 1018, Swindon
Wiltshire SN3 1DG
UK

Closing date: January 30th, 2004

EYE ON MONGOOSE

New Releases This Month

FEATURE RELEASE:

CONAN

THE ROLEPLAYING GAME



'Know, o prince, that between the years when the oceans drank Atlantis and the gleaming cities, and the years of the rise of the Sons of Aryas, there was an Age undreamed of, when shining kingdoms lay spread across the world like blue mantles beneath the stars – Nemedias, Ophir, Brythunia, Hyberborea, Zamora with its dark-haired women and towers of spider-haunted mystery, Zingara with its chivalry, Koth that bordered on the pastoral lands of Shem, Stygia with its shadow-guarded tombs, Hyrkania whose riders wore steel and silk and gold. But the proudest kingdom of the world was Aquilonia, reigning supreme in the dreaming west. Hither came Conan, the Cimmerian, black-haired, sullen-eyed, sword in hand, a thief, a reaver, a slayer, with gigantic melancholies and gigantic mirth, to tread the jeweled thrones of the Earth under his sandaled feet.'

The Nemedian Chronicles (from The Phoenix on the Sword, by R. E. Howard)

IT'S JANUARY 2004 AND YOU KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS - NO, NOT THE NEW YEAR. IT'S TIME FOR CONAN! [CUE KETTLE DRUM ROLL]

IF LIKE ME, YOU HAVE BEEN IMPATIENTLY BANGING YOUR HEAD ON WALLS, CAR WINDOWS, TREES, ETC., THEN THE RELEASE DATE CANNOT COME QUICKLY ENOUGH. HAVE NO FEARS, IT'S NOT LONG NOW! I CAN'T WAIT TO GET MY HANDS ON A COPY AND CREATE MY FIRST KOZAK HETMAN...MOVE OVER, OLGERD VLADISLAV.

IN THE MEANTIME, WE THOUGHT YOU MIGHT LIKE A FINAL TASTER OF WHAT IS TO COME.



Welcome to the Hyborian Age, a time of mighty-thewed barbarians, evil sorcerers, corrupt priests, tyrannical kings and unnatural monsters. This is the first and most famous of all sword-and-sorcery worlds, the time of Conan the Cimmerian, a thief, a reaver, a slayer, yet destined one day to rule the most powerful nation of the age. The stories of Conan, as chronicled by the writer Robert E. Howard, form the basis and inspiration for the game that is destined to be the most exciting fantasy release of the year: Conan The Roleplaying Game.

The Hyborian Age is named for the Hyborian kingdoms, the pre-eminent powers of the age, which are the most culturally and technologically advanced lands on Earth, their kings' thrones maintained through longbows, plate armour and feudalism. These kingdoms make war against one another more often than against the real threats all around them; the wild Picts, raiding northmen, avaricious Hyrkanian nomads and the dread sorceries of Stygia to the south. Beyond Stygia and the plains of Shem lies the continent of Kush, black and unknown, a land of jungles and deserts; far to the east are more kingdoms, perhaps almost as advanced as the Hyborian lands, but little more than legend: Vendhya and Khitai are the most prominent.

Conan The Roleplaying Game allows players to take the on the roles of characters from this rich and vivid world, whether Hyborians or any of the other myriad races who people the tales of Conan. As Howard's hero did, they can learn the skills of the thief, the mercenary soldier, the desert nomad and other roles on their way to greatness.

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

Be aware that to work for Mongoose Publishing, you will have to sign a contract with us. There will also be a commissioning form for each specific story. Any work which you then generate specifically for Mongoose Publishing under the terms of that agreement will belong to Mongoose Publishing, together with all the publishing rights.

Who do I write to?

Signs & Portents
Mongoose Publishing
PO Box 1018
Swindon
Wiltshire
SN3 1DG
UK

email: ibarstow@mongoosepublishing.com



Tales from

MONGOOSE HALL

Ian Barstow

Last month saw more character deaths, new party members and more generally inept planning. It's time to find out if the reconstructed team can cope with Caspers' increasingly strange behaviour. Read on...

Casper's Diary

flanking parties get attacked, whilst Raygar gets completely ignored. Things would have been rather tricky if it were not for Slurp, who proceeds

some reason though I decide to cheat a bit, and as we circle each other I snap one of Grendal's mystery twigs. This has an interesting result, as a bolt of lightning flattens the hobgoblin. He's not dead – just rather badly singed.

The following morning we head off, Slurp informing us that we are just over a day from the hobgoblins' fort. This is the first mention of there being a fort. Previously it was a camp, now it's a fort. This time tomorrow it will probably be a citadel. Still, enough of the negative waves, Moriarty. We have an uneventful day and settle down to camp, no more than ten miles from our target. With this in mind we decide to put out pickets to avoid ambush. This rates as massive planning on our part, and Slurp and Tythas head out to watch the road ahead.

Less than an hour later they are back. A dozen hobgoblins are heading our way. At this point making camp in the middle of the only road for 100 miles may be considered to be an ill-thought-out plan. We decide to make the best of another bad show by leaving Raygar in the camp as a decoy while the rest of us split up and hide in the dark to ambush the dopey hobgoblins who will obviously be drawn by the fire and the sight of a single victim.

Yes indeed, the hobgoblins adopt a bull's horn formation and both our

Ian's Roleplaying Tips #528

Use Your Brain

This may be another obvious one. However, the hobgoblin 'ambush' is a perfect example of an abject lack of thought. Firstly, we blindly assume that the hobgoblins will walk straight up the road. Second, we forget that they can see better in the dark than we can. Must I go on?

to roll a most impressive series of criticals and wades through the hobgoblins in fine style.

Finally, we capture one alive and, having taken time out to knock back a copious amount of the ever-popular yellow liquid, we are in a condition to question him. This brings about an interesting situation, as we debate just how unpleasant to be to the hobgoblin. Bulwei doesn't really care very much (well, it's not actual combat) whilst Eresindo is morally against torture. So am I, being a healing halfling, but I put together a series of five questions which Slurp is prepared to ask.

These don't work as well as I expect, and the hobgoblin is just rude instead. He then spits on me, which pushes my increasingly fragile stability over the edge and I decide to challenge the creature to unarmed combat. For

Surprisingly this upsets Raygar, who reveals himself to be a man of high principle by throwing the hobgoblin a sword! To say I am taken rather off guard is a bit of an understatement. So now I am unarmed against a sword-wielding hobgoblin who looks a bit charred at the edges. This is not good. I take a couple of fresh sword cuts before getting elbowed out of the way by Slurp who sees this as now being a free-for-all with Hobgoblin In the Basket potentially on the dinner menu. Another grotesque critical later and I'm left wondering if poisoning Raygar's wine is contrary to my temple teaching.

So, the party is as united as ever and we know nothing more about the hobgoblins than we did before. Time to press on then, I'd say.

The following morning we soon catch sight of the watchtowers that surround the hobgoblin fort, obliging us to come up with another novelty plan. This one is mine so I'll tell you all about it. I've been taken prisoner by a nasty band of hobgoblins – the rest of our party wearing the clothing of the creatures we killed previously – who are taking me back to the fort. We get close, kill the tower guards and use the tower to scout the fort.

Ian's Roleplaying Tips #36

Don't Upset The Regulars

When you are the new guy in a group, it's advisable to find your feet slowly. Arming one of the enemy isn't the way to make friends and influence people. Mark is fortunate in that he is quite a funny guy who has since settled in well, but I've seen this happen before and some players never get past it.

OK, that's the plan. We will now pause to give you time to consider all that is likely to go wrong with this. Time's up. First thing is that the guards don't believe it, which could

be a problem. Ad-libbing, I suddenly fall from Rex and attempt to escape towards some ruins north of the looming fort, screaming abuse at my captors. Bizarrely this works, and the guards come down to help out, getting themselves killed for their trouble.

That's the good news. Now, for the bad news – the ruins aren't uninhabited. In fact, they have more than their share of hobgoblins who are presumably from their archaeology institute doing

a dig. I do a quick U-turn and head back for Rex as the rest of the party pulls up in disorder. On the plus side we then discover something new about the hobgoblin fort – it has catapults. We discover this when a huge rock turns Bulwei's horse into mush, necessitating a hurried retreat as we vanish into the distance.

This leaves us with a difficult decision to make. We have clearly not discovered enough about the fort to report back to our army but we have rather blown any surprise we might have had, reducing our options somewhat. A flapping of wings at my shoulder reminds me that Guy is still about, and we decide to send him on an aerial reconnaissance. Thoughtful of me, no? Guy bravely volunteers to go, and he flaps off gamely, while we circle south of the fort to await his return.

Eight hours later Guy hasn't come back. I'm getting very twitchy, being as Guy is my only true friend. Casper has been getting more and more introverted of late as I decided to play him true to type – a medically minded loner. He's not a complete pacifist, but the unnecessary violence disgusts him. This, however, is very difficult to simulate in a gaming group environment where simply leaving a party and creating a new character is highly unsatisfying.

Anyway, back to the action. I'm pacing about worrying where Guy has got to. Even the others are showing greater concern than usual. We are brought back to 'reality' by a couple of approaching hobgoblins who are clearly stalking us, presumably in the role of scouts. We decide to capture the hobgoblins and find out if they have any information about Guy. Unsurprisingly, with the Beast Bulwei in on the action, this doesn't quite pan out,



Baygar sits down to another meal for one... unsurprisingly.

particularly as decapitation is not a recognised opening gambit for interrogation. . .

The plan goes thus: I will use my supreme Hide skill to blend in with the hedge, while the rest of the party carry on, luring the hobgoblins into my ambush. I will then give the two a thorough beating before capturing them alive. Make a note of the use of the word 'alive' in this plan.

Things begin positively enough with a massive Hide roll from me meaning that I became one with the hedge. This is one of the advantages of focusing one's character to be good at a few choice things. One piece of advice though – make sure the rest of your party actually gives a damn. Unsure what I mean? Read on.

Being careful sorts, the hobgoblins advance warily, making sure there are no halflings hiding in hedges, and that sort of thing. This is far too slow for Bulwei, who decides to preempt matters by charging the pair on his warhorse which should have been an elk (Don't know what I'm talking about? I could tell you to buy previous issues of S&P, but I'm kind. Suffice to say he had the choice of buying a war elk or picking up shares in a soon-to-fail shipping business.) The next thing I know he has hurdled my particular hedge, followed by Raygar who clearly doesn't extend his Good Form Guide to allowing a plan to come together.

Hearing the familiar sounds of carnage and curses involving the Snow Vitsch I pop my head up, which is more than the two hobgoblin scouts are now capable of doing – unless of course there's an arc-welder handy who can put heads back on. I get up angrily (well, angrily for a pacifist halfling, obviously) and begin to berate Bulwei, but it's a complete waste of time. He is currently busy chanting to the skies in celebration of his latest kills while Raygar is busy poking around, presumably looking for kindling.

Casper is by now well over the edge, and I decide to have a bit of fun for a change as well as develop my character. My reasoning is thus:

Having just lost his last chance of getting information about his beloved pet, Guy the pseudodragon, Casper is feeling somewhat out of control. It's time to lead the way for a change, so with a wail of desperate grief I head off for the hobgoblin fortress, determined that any further carnage to be caused will be mine.

Half an hour later and completely knackered, I burst into a tented camp outside the walls – something which I had failed to spot due to my headlong fury. I also failed to notice a 7-foot lizard jogging alongside me looking slightly amused; Slurp had in fact decided that an unarmed midget was unlikely to cause the hobgoblin tribe much in the way of difficulties, so he sportingly decided to tag along. Rex is also padding along loyally behind me, and it crosses my mind that Slurp may be more interested in picking up a quick meal than actually bailing me out.

Without waiting to be invited, I burst through the unguarded camp, screaming like a banshee as I hurl myself at the wall and begin to climb. Recklessly I attempt to go at full speed instead of taking things easy, necessitating two rolls per round. I pass the first easily, but fumble the second and end up flat on my back at the bottom of the wall. Behind me I suddenly hear the familiar sound of Carnage-a-Go-Go, which can only mean one thing – Bulwei has decided to single-handedly trash the encampment. Then a hobgoblin lands on the ground next to me, skewered with an arrow that could only have been fired by a hugely overpowered elven cleric.

It seems that the whole party has decided to wade in to the attack. Sabah and Eresindo are a couple of hundred yards back picking off stray hobgoblins on the wall, while Casper and Slurp are, as you now know, at the wall itself. Meanwhile,

Bulwei and Raygar are in the camp setting fire to everything in sight and butchering anything they can find.

The following round I foolishly decide to race up the wall at full speed again, and six seconds later I'm flat on my back and Slurp is laughing his head off (Rich had been continually advising me to go up slowly and thus not take a –5 penalty on each Climb check, but I knew better...) while Rex is barking stupidly. Huge amounts of screaming suggest one of two things: either the Beatles have arrived in the camp or Bulwei has. Same result either way – people being trampled all over the place.

I finally decide to adopt a patient approach and begin climbing slowly, only for it to suddenly go very dark all around me – methinks that somebody up top may be casting spells my way. Hearing some more shouting from above, I suddenly get a smell of barbecued dog and, looking down, it seems that some spellcaster at the top of the wall has just deep-fried my dog. This is turning into a bad day at the office.



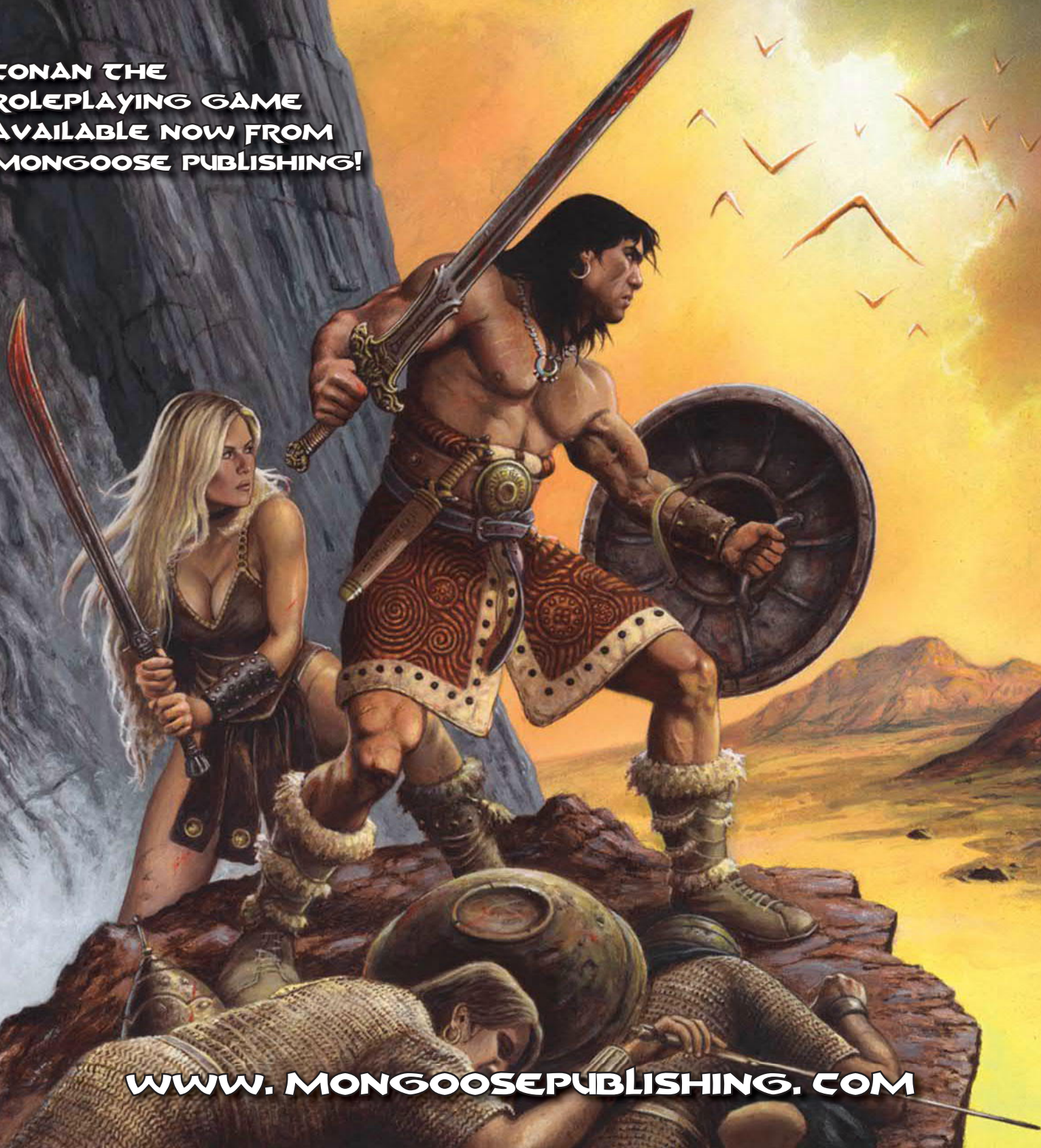
It seems that things are going from bad to worse for Casper and his friends. The question is, can six lunatics really assault a fortress full of hobgoblins and expect to come out the other side?

All these questions, along with a few you probably haven't thought of, will be answered next month.

Suits you, sir.

CONAN IS BACK WITH A VENGEANCE!

CONAN THE
ROLEPLAYING GAME
AVAILABLE NOW FROM
MONGOOSE PUBLISHING!



WWW.MONGOOSEPUBLISHING.COM

CONAN

Roleplaying in the Hyborian Age

Ian Sturrock

Of Chariots and Acheronians

With the release of *Conan the Roleplaying Game* we thought it might be rather nice to have an exclusive in *Signs & Portents*. With that in mind we have liberated the following article which will expand the game and open up some new gaming possibilities for Hyborian gamers.

Presented below are full rules for using Stygian and Acheronian chariots, both for use in battle and in sporting arenas. Howard is rather thin on detail in this respect, although it is fair to say that in various parts of Hyboria chariot racing as well as other sporting events will take place. Probably not in the western monarchies of Aquilonia and Nemedra, but one can easily picture chariot racing in Zamora, Corinthia, Koth and Shem. The prospect of camel racing in Turan also springs to mind, but that's for another article.

The final decision on where chariot racing might take place is with each individual Games Master, but it opens up the prospect of a career as a charioteer as well as numerous storylines to fold into adventures and campaigns.

As well as chariots, we also have a brand new race for Hyboria – the Acheronians. This degenerate, corrupt and thoroughly unpleasant race once

ruled much of what is now Hyboria, but that was 3,000 years ago. Now they live in anonymity, but the challenge for players is still there. Can they begin to rebuild the glories of Acheron? Can they follow in the tracks of the terrifying Xaltotun, perhaps Conan's greatest antagonist? It will take some doing.

Chariots

The Stygian chariot is extremely lightweight and as a result is significantly faster and more nimble than earlier chariots such as the lumbering Acheronian type. The northern nations regard chariots as essentially obsolete in any case, but the Stygian armies still use chariot regiments to powerful effect.

Chariot Descriptions

All chariots require warhorses to pull such a weight at speed but there is a wide variation within the chariots themselves. Listed below are two designs seen on battlefields during the Hyborian Age; each is given the following characteristics:

Horses

This is how many warhorses are required to pull the chariot. No other creatures may be used in their place.

Passengers

Chariots are basically simple, three-sided carts with space for two or more passengers. This lists how many Small or Medium-sized creatures may ride in a chariot. Large creatures take the space of two Medium-sized ones. Creatures of Huge size or greater may not ride in the chariots listed below. A chariot will always require a driver to control its movement.

Speed

This is the base speed of the chariot when pulled by the maximum number of horses. As horses are lost through combat or other means, the chariot's base speed moves to the next number on this line, thus gradually slowing down.

Hardness

As detailed in *Core Rulebook I*, this is the hardness of each chariot.

Hit Points

Every chariot has a number of hit points. When these are reduced to 0, the chariot is destroyed.

Turn Rate

The lighter a chariot is, the faster its driver can get it to turn at speed. The first number here is the turn a chariot

can make, in degrees, when moving at normal speed. The second number lists how much it can turn when making a double move. No chariot can turn at running speed.

Cost

This is the base price a chariot costs to purchase; any chariot may be upgraded however (see below).

Weight

This is the base weight of a chariot, without passengers, cargo and horses.

Cargo

All chariots may carry cargo instead of, or in addition to, any passengers. This amount is listed in this section.

It is assumed that the passengers and their gear weigh no more than 200 pounds each – any excess above this amount will reduce the amount of other cargo that can be carried.

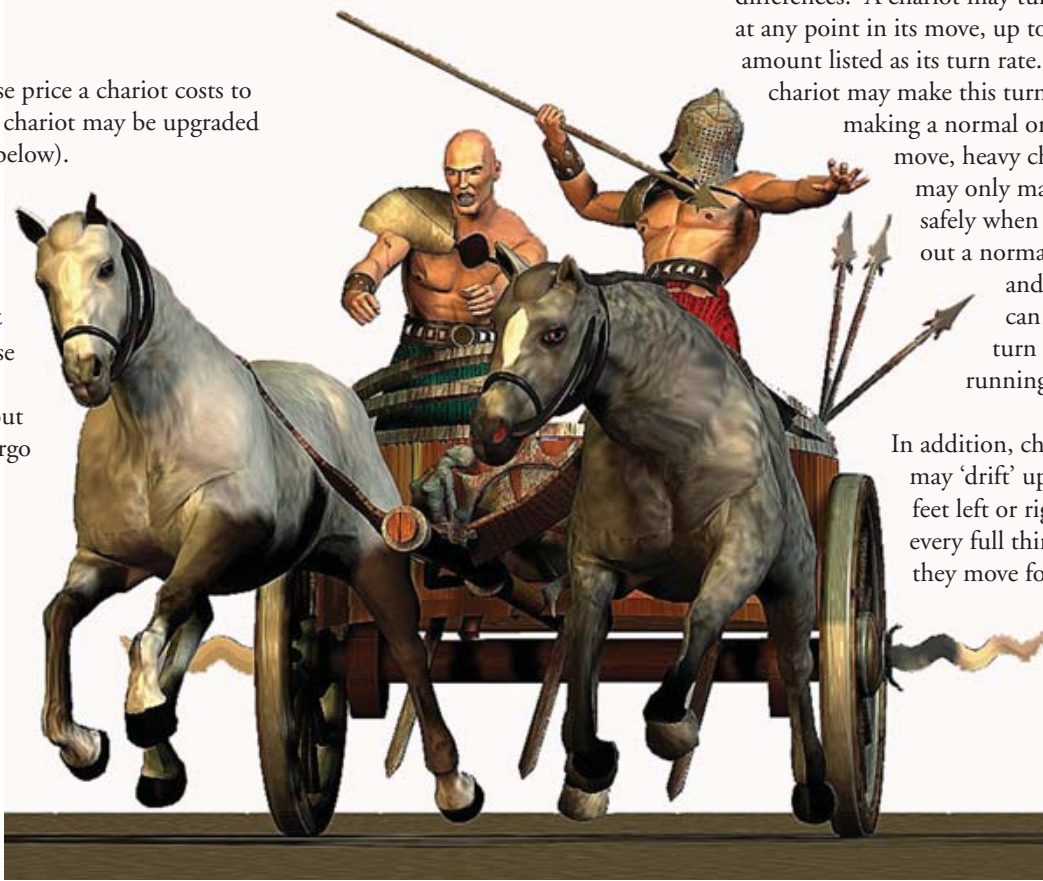
Overrun

This is the base damage caused by the chariot when performing an overrun attack.

Stygian War Chariot

Horses 2
 Passengers 2
 Speed 60 ft. /50 ft.
 Hardness 5
 Hit Points 10
 Turn Rate 90°/45°
 Cost 1,800 sp
 Weight 250 lb.
 Cargo 150 lb.
 Overrun 2d8

This is the standard war chariot of Stygia, little changed since the ancestors of today's Stygian warrior caste modified the design from the Acheronians thousands of years ago.



Movement

Chariots move in initiative order in the same way as any mounted combatant. There are, however, some important differences. A chariot may turn once at any point in its move, up to the amount listed as its turn rate. A light chariot may make this turn while making a normal or double move, heavy chariots may only make it safely when carrying out a normal move and neither can safely turn while running.

In addition, chariots may 'drift' up to ten feet left or right for every full thirty feet they move forwards.

Acheronian War Chariot

Horses 4
 Passengers 4
 Speed 40 ft./40 ft./30 ft./20 ft.
 Hardness 5
 Hit Points 20
 Turn Rate 45°/-
 Cost 3,200 sp*
 Weight 500 lb.
 Cargo 300 lb.
 Overrun 4d6

Acheronian war chariots are rarely available to buy, since the remaining Acheronians no longer build them. Their game statistics are provided for comparison to the Stygian chariot and to represent any more old-fashioned chariots, such as might be found in ancient tombs or ridden by mysteriously resurrected Old Acheronians and giant-kings.

This is performed as a free action and in no way impedes any other movement the chariot may perform.

A chariot driver may choose to whip his horses harder as a full round action. If he succeeds at a Handle Animal check at DC 10, he may increase his base speed by ten feet for that round only.

Tight Turns

The driver may also attempt to get his chariot to make a much tighter turn than is entirely safe. A driver may choose to make two turns in a round instead of just one, though these must be made at the beginning and end of the move – they may not be made halfway through as a normal turn may. This is a full round action and requires the driver to make a Handle Animal check at DC 12 if he is moving at base speed and DC 15 at double speed. A

single turn may be made at running speed, again with a successful Handle Animal check, this time at DC 25.

If these checks are failed, the chariot will automatically overturn at the start of the next turn, as covered below in Collisions and Overturning.

Combat

All passengers on board a chariot may make their normal attacks as if they were mounted (see *Core Rulebook I*, Chapter 8). The chariot driver, however, must always dedicate at least one hand to controlling the horses and so may only wield single-handed weaponry. Any passenger may make an attack at any point in their move, such is the speed of the chariot. This in no way affects the number of actions they may perform each round.

All chariots, no matter what their size, are assumed to take up a space five feet wide and ten feet long, with the horses directly ahead. Either passengers, horses or the chariot itself may be targeted by an attack if within reach or range, though passengers will receive the benefit of cover for attacks to the front or sides of their chariot, as detailed in *The Player's Handbook*. This is from a low wooden barrier running round the sides and front of the chariot.

Passengers receive no benefit for attacks originating from the rear of their chariot.

If any horse is slain whilst pulling a chariot, it must be cut free within one round, as described under Collisions and Overturning, or the chariot will automatically overturn.

Sideswipes

Although the main use of the chariot is to provide nobles with a platform for archery and a means of getting around the battlefield, they can also be used to directly injure enemies by driving the chariot sideways into an enemy chariot.

Any chariot driver moving his vehicle alongside another chariot may choose

to sideswipe it as a full round action. The drivers of both chariots must make an opposing Handle Animal check. The winner will deal damage to the loser's chariot, as listed below:

Chariot Sideswipe

Damage	Critical	Type
2d6	20/x2	Bludgeoning

Against Warriors on Foot

The passengers of a chariot may attack any warrior on foot as if they were mounted. Those on foot may fight back as if the warriors in the chariot were mounted. However, the driver of a chariot may overrun his enemies, driving his horses and chariot right over them.

Overrun attacks are detailed in *The Player's Handbook*. If successful, such an attack will cause an additional amount of damage to the target equal to the Overrun score of the chariot, as covered above.

Collisions and Overturning

One of the most impressive sights on the battlefield or racetrack is that of a chariot moving at full speed then, for whatever reason, overturning. Wood, passengers and horses all tumble and break apart as a cloud of dust and blood veils the entire mess. Few ever survive such accidents and it is often only the skill of the charioteer that can avoid such disaster.

Handle Animal checks are used by the charioteer to control his chariot whenever he attempts an extreme action or when a collision looms up ahead. The DCs of such checks are listed below;



Action DC

Cutting free a dead horse before chariot overturns:	10
Swapping drivers whilst chariot is in motion:	10
Hitting Medium-sized creature or object:	15
Hitting Large-sized creature or object:	20
Hitting an immovable object such as a stone building:	30

There is a +5 bonus to this check if the chariot is moving at base speed or slower and a -5 penalty if it is moving at running speed.

If the Handle Animal check is successful, the chariot neatly avoids the obstacle or swerves at the last moment. Games Masters are encouraged to use the above examples as a base should their players ever attempt an action not listed here. If the driver passes his check, he succeeds in the action he was attempting or manages to avoid tragedy, as appropriate. If he fails the check by 5 points or less, the chariot must move in a completely straight line for the next round. No turns or drifts may be attempted. If the chariot cannot move straight ahead for whatever reason (an immovable object being directly in front of it for example), then the chariot will automatically overturn. If he fails by more than 5 points, the chariot will overturn.

Overturning

If a chariot overturns, the chariot itself, along with all passengers and horses, take an amount of damage equal to the Overrun score of the chariot. Passengers may make a Reflex check at DC 20 to halve this damage. An overturned chariot, if it survives intact, takes 1d6 minutes to put right and re-hitch any living horses. As battles frequently last several hours, with brief rests between engagements, this is quite commonly done on the battlefield. The combined Strength required is equal to the original hit points of the chariot.

Chariot Upgrades

All chariots may be upgraded with fittings and devices designed to increase their lethality in some way for battle. The weight of these upgrades is deducted from the cargo capacity of the chariot in question. Many charioteers and warriors spend a great deal of time personalising their chariots, wanting a distinctive-looking vehicle so as to ensure they are highly visible on the battlefield.

Archery Rack

Many chariots have the cheap addition of a simple wooden spear rack mounted inside, allowing crews ready access to enough ranged weapons to last an entire battle.

An archery rack holds up to two bows of any kind, and comes with three oversize quivers each holding up to 40 arrows. 10 lb. 20 sp.

Metal Banding

Large iron bands hammered around the frame at the sides of the chariot, greatly increasing its resilience to damage. Whereas a normal chariot may be susceptible to strikes from axes and heavier weapons, it will take a determined and accurate hit to damage one reinforced with metal banding.

Metal Banding adds a bonus of +1 to a chariot's hardness score. 120 lb. 200 sp.



New Feat

Chariot Combat (General)

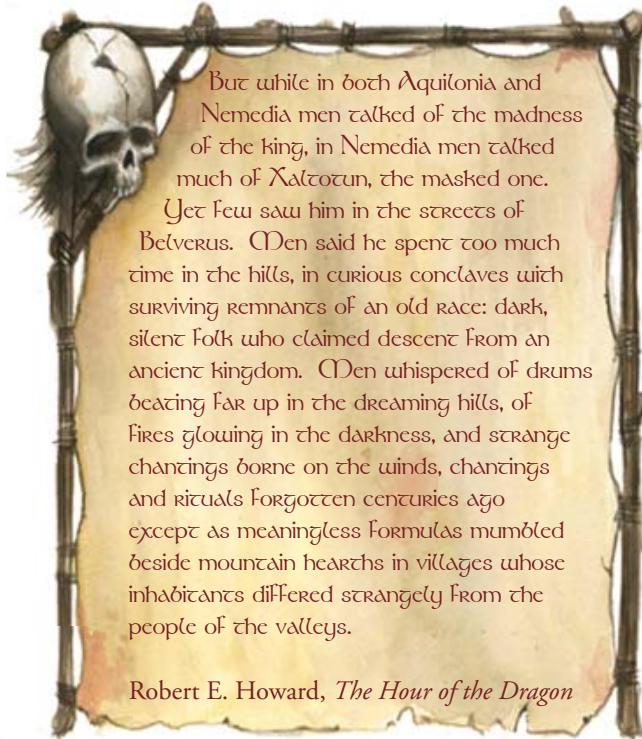
You are skilled in chariot combat, maximising the benefits from the limited cover afforded you by its walls.

Prerequisite: Handle Animal skill, Base Attack Bonus +1.

Benefit: When you are in a chariot, you gain double the usual cover bonus from its low walls.

Special: If you have the Chariot Combat feat, you may select any feats for which the Mounted Combat feat is a prerequisite just as though you also had Mounted Combat. These feats may then be used when you are in a chariot, just as though you were mounted. However, you may not use them when mounted unless you also have Mounted Combat.

New Race: Acheronian



Robert E. Howard, *The Hour of the Dragon*

Though the ancient empire of Acheron was overrun and destroyed by the Hyborian barbarians three millennia ago, many of Acheronians survived the

onslaught and were assimilated into the then-new Hyborian kingdoms, particularly in Nemedias and Aquilonia. Here their descendants survive in scattered hill villages, barely noticed by the descendants of the barbarian destroyers of Acheron, preserving dark rituals and strange customs that have otherwise been forgotten. In these tiny hamlets the Acheronians bide their time, firmly believing that their empire of evil will one day return, overthrowing the petty kingdoms of the Hyborians to usher in a new reign of sorcery.

Acheronians are tall, white-skinned and dark-haired. The men tend to wear full beards and are cadaverously thin, while the women are lithe yet voluptuous. Some scholars believe the Acheronians to be closely related to the race of giant-kings that are said to have been the founders of Stygia, long before those now known as Stygians conquered that land.

Culture: The culture of Acheron is now so lost in the mists of time that many Hyborians doubt that it is anything other than a myth. Similar to Stygians in many ways, the Acheronians were greater sorcerers, practising foul necromancy, thaumaturgy of the most evil kind, and grisly magic taught to them by devils. They built towers rather than pyramids and used gold coin as currency. The degenerate modern Acheronian is no more than a shadow of those ancient sorcerers.

Names: Xaltotun, Baal, Chiron, Tothmekri, Thugra Khotan and Akivasha are the only Acheronian names we know of for certain. Contemporary Acheronians might give their children Nemedian or Aquilonian names as a form of cover, or, as with the examples we have of ancient Acheronian names, their names might be similar to those of Stygia or derived from names of Phoenician gods and demons. Suggestions: (male) Aleyin, El, Hadad, Hammon, Hay-Tau, Keret, Mot, Ruti, Sutekh, Tsaphon; (female) Anat, Asherat, Baalat, Sapas.



Religion: Like the Stygians, the Acheronians of old were worshipers of Set, the Old Serpent. They believed, not without some justification, in bodily resurrection, and communed with the creatures of the Outer Dark, often taking such devils as familiars.

- +2 Charisma, -2 Strength. Acheronians have very forceful personalities, but are far less powerful of body.
- -1 racial penalty to all Diplomacy and Gather Information checks that target non-Acheronians. Though

Acheronians are powerfully charismatic, there is a sinister and rather antisocial edge to their personalities that makes other races very wary of them.

- +2 racial bonus to all Craft (alchemy), Craft (herbalism) and Knowledge (arcana) checks. Acheronians still remember the old ways, the ways that once allowed their ancestors to rule much of the known world by sheer magical might.
- -2 racial penalty to all saving throws against

Corruption. Acheronians are probably the most corrupt human race still in existence, if they can even be said to be truly human. It would not even occur to a typical Acheronian to resist being corrupted, or even that it was possible to become more corrupt!

- +1 racial bonus to all magic attack rolls when using curses. Acheronians are experts in the path of wizardry in general, but are particularly effective and vindictive when blasting their enemies with curses.

Background Skills:

Craft (alchemy),
Craft (herbalism),
Knowledge (arcana).

Favoured Class:

Scholar.

Prohibited Classes:

Barbarian, Noble,
Nomad, Pirate.

Automatic Languages:

Acheronian, plus the language of whichever Hyborian kingdom they live in.

Bonus Languages: Demonic, Old Stygian, Nemedian, Aquilonian, Brythunian, Ophirean, Corinthian, Hyperborean.





H O R R O R

Terror. Death. Madness.
Chainsaws.

Don't Play This Alone.

More Most Wanted



The
JUDGE DREDD
Roleplaying Game

Fergee

197-953.2

Justice Department
Sector 190

Internal Memo - Eyes Only
Subject - Fergee

Some of you may think that this disgusting pile of dung is some kind of folk hero. Let me tell you that this is not how I think of him. Crime is crime, and the Fergites are living proof of that.

If you meet any fat, unwashed citizen carrying a piece of wood, I want him doing cube time by the end of your tour. And remember, be forceful out there.

Deputy Sector Chief B. Cooksey

Real Name: Unknown
Class/Level: Citizen 8
Hit Points: 82
Initiative: +1 (+1 Dex)
Speed: 30 ft.
Defence Value: 13 (+3 Reflex)
Damage Reduction: 2 (thick skin)
Attacks: Club +13/+8 melee, sling +7/+2 ranged
Damage: Club 1d8+6/0 melee, sling 1d3/0 ranged
Special Qualities: Prior life - goon
Special Abilities: Cloud of Flies
Saves: Fort +8, Ref +3, Will +2
Abilities: Str 22, Dex 12, Con 19, Int 4, Wis 10, Cha 7
Skills: Balance +6, Climb +11, Intimidate +7, Jump +12, Listen +7, Search +1, Spot +5, Streetwise +8, Swim +17 and Wilderness Lore (Undercity) +4
Feats: Great Fortitude, Improved Recovery, Sure Grip, Toughness, Weapon Focus (club)
Possessions: Club, sling

History File:

Cloud of Flies: Perhaps due to his fondness for regularly bathing in the septic waters of the Big Smelly, or possibly because of his revolting habits and complete lack of personal hygiene, Fergee was constantly surrounded by a swarm of flies. These tiny creatures were a constant source of fascination for Fergee, who would spend hours creating elaborate but totally inappropriate traps in order to catch the tiny irritants - although most of his anti-fly schemes ended with him smashing himself in the head with his huge baseball bat. Paradoxically, Fergee was very proud of his flies and took great offence if anyone else tried to remove or eliminate the pests. The flies had their advantages - any character near to Fergee would become covered with the tiny insects, which crawled

into eyes and noses and generally acted as an irritating distraction. All characters (including allies) within 10 feet of Fergee suffer a -5 penalty to all Concentration skill checks and a -1 penalty to all attack rolls.

History File: Fergee was a hulking, near brainless thug who rose from the dregs of society to become one of Mega-City One's most celebrated heroes. No one has ever discovered Fergee's origin, but by his own account he was a minor criminal wanted by the judges after committing a string of unspecified 'bad things'. Somehow, Fergee found his way into the New York Undercity, making his home in an old auto repair shop on Madison Avenue. The simple-minded giant became fascinated by the dark waters of the Big Smelly and took to patrolling the banks of the old Hudson River,

singing his jolly 'Fergee song' and cheerfully beating up anybody he met and throwing them into the water. The dredger tribes and local troggie households quickly learned to make themselves scarce whenever his massive form was spied. Fergee proclaimed himself 'King of the Big Smelly', even building himself a cardboard crown and a throne from an old lavatory.

Fergee finally met his match during the reign of the insane Chief Judge Cal. Escaping into the Undercity, Judge Dredd and the leaders of the resistance movement encountered Fergee on his home territory. As ever, Fergee attacked the intruders but was shocked to find himself defeated and hurled into the Big Smelly – the first time he had ever been beaten in a fair fight. He joined Dredd's squad, where his enormous strength and local knowledge proved invaluable. Dredd even went so far as to appoint Fergee an honorary judge – much to the brute's amusement.

Fergee was instrumental in the final defeat of Cal. Cal had hatched an insane scheme to nerve gas the entire City in order to preserve his 'perfect utopia' forever, and backed by his hypnotically controlled judges the City seemed doomed. Dredd and his small unit managed to put an end to the mad scheme. In a final showdown atop the Statue of Judgement, Cal blasted Fergee at point blank range. Mortally wounded but still not knocked down, Fergee used the last vestige of his great strength to force Cal away from the button that would

activate the nerve gas, although both tumbled from the statue to their doom in the process. Fergee became a true hero to the citizens, a symbol to everyone that even the lowest of the low could become one of the most famous people in the City and even gain the respect of the judges.

The Cult of Fergee



In the aftermath of the defeat of Cal, Chief Judge Griffin ensured that Fergee would be remembered by ordering the erection of a huge statue of the brute in Aftermath Square, outside the Grand Hall of Justice. Other Sectors soon followed suit and before long the sight of the giant grinning figure sitting atop his throne became a familiar site all across the Mega-City. Strangely, these statues were almost always shrouded in a cloud of flies, just as the real Fergee

had been in life. Fergee began to be seen as a powerful hero figure, and a group of citizens petitioned the Justice Department for permission to form a new religion based on the teachings of 'the Ferg'. Rather unwisely, permission was granted and the Cult of Fergee – also known as the Fergites – was born.

Unfortunately, Fergee proved to be an inappropriate choice as an icon for a system of belief, but his simplistic life style – which chiefly consisted of beating people up for no particular reason – appealed to the more brutal elements of society and the cult was soon dominated by a militant group intent on 'getting heavy' (in other words, hitting someone repeatedly with a baseball bat) with unbelievers. Clad in the 'robes of Fergee' – reproductions of the brute's baseball cap and badge festooned jerkin – the Fergites made impressive and intimidating figures.

Naturally, the Fergites were not noted for their intelligence, as demonstrated by their choice of venue for their first 'getting heavy with unbelievers' session – in front of the statue of Fergee in Aftermath Square, outside the Hall of Justice and in full view of hundreds of judges. The judges soon put a stop to the ritual and the cult was swiftly banned, less than a year after it had been formed. Today, the Fergites are just one of many illegal cults whose members are forced to meet and worship in secret.



INTERVIEW WITH A DIRECTOR. . .

ALEXANDER FENNELL ^{is forced to talk} TALKS TO IAN BARSTOW

After my last interview with manic Mongoose workhorse, August Hahn, I thought I'd pick someone closer to home for my next interview. The fact that the interviewee pointed out that my expenses for this job were nonexistent made no difference at all...



In the absence of a picture of Alex, we can now reveal the real power behind the throne at Mongoose - Monty himself, seen in characteristic work mode, yet still able to wave for the camera.

IB: First off, tell everybody what you do for Mongoose Publishing.

AF: Bits of everything really. To generalise though, most of my time is spent making sure all the little things that need to get done, get done. This could mean anything from commissioning artwork to talking with our customers. I am also somewhat the 'public' face of Mongoose Publishing, in that I am the guy who deals with most of the outside agencies.

IB: What did you do before you started Mongoose?

AF: I was a Captain in the British Army - Royal Signals - which meant I got to go all over the world for almost 6 years, running around and playing with extremely expensive satellite and radio equipment. Also, trying not to get shot, though that was only a couple of times. Actually, immediately before Mongoose was formed I

had a well-paid but incredibly boring job, but stayed there so briefly I consider the Army as the real answer to your question.

IB: Is that when you started roleplaying?

AF: No, though it was when I started to get back into it. I started roleplaying when I was 9 or 10 and a pupil from the school above us came to help out the teachers as an assistant. He was a gamer, and he introduced a bunch of us to his favourite game.

IB: What was your first game?

AF: Tunnels & Trolls. I still have my copy of the game packed away somewhere.

IB: Given a choice, would you rather be a Games Master or a player?

AF: Overall I would rather be a player, though I am happy

to GM if asked. I managed to kill all the players the last time I games mastered and I'm not sure they want me back running games at the moment.

IB: I do seem to recall the unusual fate of having my extremely well thought out pygmy chef killed by being crushed by the falling body of another party member.

AF: No comment.

IB: Hmm...moving on then, how did this interest develop into actually getting into the roleplaying business?

AF: It didn't really. I sort of fell into the business end of things almost by mistake. I suspect that fundamentally the challenges facing a roleplaying company are the same as those faced by most other businesses. The biggest difference, of course, is that we get to work in an industry that started out as a hobby for us.

IB: Did you know a lot about business before starting one of your own?

AF: Yes and no. I have a degree in Economics - Economics and Politics, to be precise - but had never run a business before getting into this. A lot of it is common sense. Oh, and hard work of course.

IB: So you started Mongoose Publishing with Matthew Sprange. What is it about Matthew that makes him a good business partner?

AF: I'm still trying to figure that one out. He is very good at Warhammer 40,000, which is a good start.

IB: It might be a good time to mention, for those that don't know, that you are rather highly rated at Warhammer 40,000 yourself.

AF: [laughing] I do OK...

IB: Aren't you officially the best Warhammer 40,000 player in the world?

AF: Well, I was Best General in the 40K Grand Final of 2001 and I'm currently the Warhammer Players' Society Champion of Champions.

IB: Do you find much time to play these days.

AF: Only in tournaments - maybe two-dozen times a year. Mongoose keeps me pretty busy.

IB: What sort of hours do you put in?

AF: I tend to go to sleep at about midnight and I'm up again at six.

IB: So would you describe yourself as a workaholic?

AF: No, because it doesn't feel like work. If I didn't do this I'd be bored. My idea of Hell is to be retired and have nothing to do but watch daytime television.

IB: What part of your job do you enjoy most?

AF: One day is always different to the next. Plus, I get to sit in a throne when I work. (This is actually a real throne, but that's another story.)

IB: What product gets you most excited?

AF: This changes on a semi-regular basis. That's the beauty of helping to run a company like Mongoose - we get to release all sorts of cool stuff. Currently I am looking forward to the arrival of OGL CyberNet in the warehouse. Last week I saw a copy of The Minbari Federation Factbook (I'm a big Babylon 5 fan), and prior to that it was Macho Women With Guns.

IB: If you could do anything in the gaming industry, what would it be?

AF: Successfully convince the guys in the office that an hour's worth of physical exercise three times a week is good for them and then get them to take part.

IB: Yes, that sounds like a splendid idea...perhaps we can move on? Does the whole OGL [Open Game License] business feel like the future of roleplaying systems or do you see change coming?

AF: The OGL is an excellent idea, and I think it will play an important part in roleplaying systems for many years to come. Whether something else will come along in a few years and become even more popular, who can say?

IB: What does the future hold in store for Mongoose Publishing?

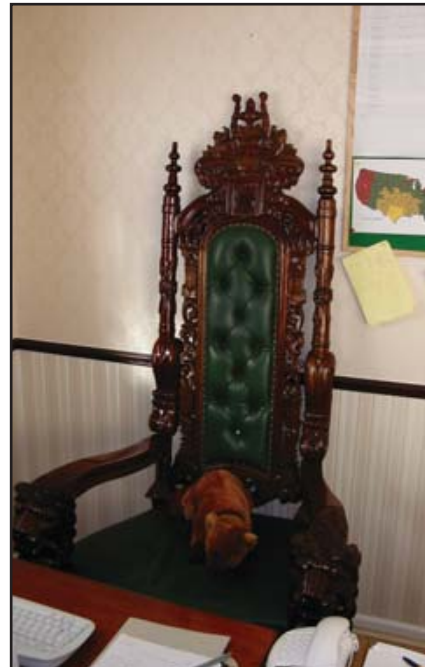
AF: You'll see us branch out next year into different avenues. Roleplaying will still be the largest and most important part of the company, but it won't be the only string to our bow, so to speak.

IB: Where do you see yourself in the future?

AF: I'm sure for some time yet I'll still be here, helping to take Mongoose Publishing even further into the gaming industry. As long as I'm having as much fun then as I am now, I'll be happy.

IB: Well, Alex, thanks for taking time out to talk a bit about Mongoose and yourself.

AF: My pleasure - now get back to work!



The Mongoose Throne of Power. Don't ask.

Serving the House

Two exciting new prestige classes
for Centauri characters in Babylon 5

Lizard

Facilitator

Centauri politics are a chaotic maze of shifting alliances, honour, betrayal and duty. Navigating this maze is a task learned by all young Centauri of anything resembling noble birth. There are, however, many individuals of lower station who nonetheless have the wit, skill and lack of ethics to be powerful players in the game – even if they cannot ascend to the highest ranks of power. These individuals offer their services to their social superiors, making sure things go smoothly. While they have many names, some unprintable, they tend to think of themselves as facilitators.

Some are purely mercenary, selling their services to any bidder, without regard to house loyalties; others are slightly more ethical, working solely to advance the interests of a single house and its allies. All tend to work in clandestine fashion. A facilitator insinuates himself into the retinue of a man of power in an unobtrusive fashion, appearing as a simple servant or advisor. His near omnipresence is explained by this role. He rarely takes direct orders from his superior, but observes the situation and acts accordingly; this provides the noble he serves with a high degree of ‘plausible deniability’ that can even withstand telepathic probes.

Facilitators usually begin their careers as lurkers, diplomats or agents, though a few are telepaths and a rare few are soldiers or officers. The latter can be found manipulating the upper hierarchies of the Centauri military, placing the ‘right’ people into positions of authority and making



sure the ‘wrong’ people are billeted to remote colonies where they can do little harm. Few ever consciously choose the path of facilitator until they are well upon it; they find they have a gift or knack for saying the right thing to the right person at the right time, arranging events to lead to a predestined conclusion, and making sure a particular lord picks the chalice of wine which contains the pellet of poison.

Once ensconced in this lifestyle, however, they find it addictive. Denied, by birth, access to legitimate power, they revel in being able to play the powerful like puppets, manipulating from below if they cannot command from above. Most facilitators meet their end by daring too greatly, by misjudging the delicacy of a particular balance of power and bringing the whole thing crashing down on their heads. A few avoid the pitfalls of hubris (making them rare Centauri, indeed!) and

manage to secure for themselves some measure of comfort as they edge into retirement. They are, however, the exception.

Requirements

To become a facilitator, a character must meet all of the following requirements:

Race: Centauri.

Skills: Medical 4 ranks, Diplomacy 4 ranks, Gather Information 8 ranks, Sense Motive 8 ranks.

Special: Must *not* have the Noble Birth feat.

Class Skills: Bluff (Cha), Computer Use (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Disguise (Cha), Forgery (Int), Gather Information (Cha), Hide (Dex), Intimidate (Cha), Listen (Wis), Read Lips (Int), Sense Motive (Wis), Technical (Chemistry: Poisons) (Int).

Skill Points per level: 6+Int Modifier.

Facilitator



Level	BAB	Fort	Ref	Will	Special
1	+0	+0	+0	+1	Unobtrusiveness, Manipulate Events +2
2	+1	+0	+0	+2	False Thoughts, Contact
3	+2	+1	+1	+2	Resist Poison
4	+3	+1	+1	+2	Contact
5	+3	+1	+1	+3	Manipulate Events +4

Unobtrusiveness: The facilitator is skilled at blending into his employer's retinue. He always seems to belong where he is, whether it is wandering down the hall of a palace or attending a formal dinner. He may add his class level to all Hide and Move Silently checks when he is with his employer or in the same general area. This only applies if his *employer* is supposed to be there. For example, if a facilitator working for House Mollari is wandering down the corridors of the Royal Palace while Londo is attending a party there, this bonus applies; anyone who sees him will dimly recall he is 'with Londo' and forget about it. If, however, he is wandering the dungeons beneath the palace late at night, after Londo has long since passed out upstairs, this ability does not come in to play – he is clearly out of place.

Manipulate Events: The facilitator's main skill is in making sure people are where he wants them to be and are doing what he wants them to do. To this end, given a fixed goal within a span of days equal to the character's Wisdom bonus, the facilitator gains a +2 on all Diplomacy, Forgery, Gather Information, Intimidate and Sense Motive checks directly aimed at achieving that goal. This bonus increases to +4 at fifth level.

False Thoughts: The facilitator gains the ability to avoid both telepathic intrusion and normal perceptiveness, controlling his mind and his body language with innate precision. He may add his class level to all Will saves against telepathy, as well as to

the DC of any Sense Motive checks made against him. This stacks with Resist Scan.

Contact: The facilitator gains the Contact feat.

Resist Poison: When words are not enough, sometimes, a more direct path must be taken. In order to help assuage a victim's paranoia, the facilitator will often be forced to share poisoned food or drink. This ability grants a +4 to any save against ingested poisons.



Lord Dorma looked out the window of the hunting lodge deep in the Matra woods and sneered. This place was well away from the chaos of the court, but also from anything else. It was going to be a hideously boring time here, but even this place was better than spending a few weeks in the hands of Cartagia's pain technicians. All Dorma had to do was wait for the Emperor's ever-flitting mood to flit elsewhere, and he could return to the capital in relative safety.

Dorma huffed once more in disgust, then walked upstairs to the bedroom.

A beautiful woman was waiting there for him.

He blinked a few times, then smiled. 'Did Montrari send you? Or Kiva?' Good friends, always looking out for him.

She stood...actually, she almost seemed to flow to a standing position. 'Your friend Kiva, yes. I've been waiting here for three days.' She began to move towards him.

The haze of anticipation fogging Dorma's mind parted for a moment. That mess with Cartagia happened only yesterday, and he would never have reason to come to this place normally. How could she have been waiting here before even he knew he was?

Something more primal than lust fired in Dorma's mind. There were whispers, legends, rumours, in truth little more than myths. He turned to run, to bolt for the landing and his private shuttle, but she was in front of him now, a silver blade in each hand. Turn...and there she was. He rushed to the door, but she was there already, and now the knives were streaked with crimson.

Dorma fell backward, and she was behind him, catching him, laying his twitching body down. She looked into his eyes, making sure her face was the image he took with him into death.

Kallido Mancari

It is a well-known fact that Centauri have a very high incidence of precognition; nearly all Centauri have a small touch of it, occasionally gaining revelations in dreams. A common vision is of the likely time and manner of their death, leading to customs both amusing and grisly. It is also relatively common knowledge that this gift is much stronger among female Centauri and that the most gifted are known as seers, whose advice and wisdom is often sought by those who embark on risky courses of action. It is, however, almost completely *unknown* that there are a rare few with this gift who are called to a very different path.

The Kallido Mancari are a myth, and a faint myth, at that. Most Centauri have never even heard legends of them, and most of those who have dismiss the tales as ludicrous. While rare, and very secretive, they are nonetheless real. They are female Centauri with exceptional precognitive skills, coupled with great physical prowess. Within the largest and oldest houses, there is often a bloodline going back centuries which regularly produces a few suitable candidates, who are selected and trained clandestinely. The Kallido of each Great House exist to serve that house, by seeing a threat before it manifests, or seeing a point at which destiny rests balanced on a knife-point, and then taking the steps needed to tilt it.

Kallido are the perfect assassins, as they will often select their targets before the target has committed any act worthy of assassination – indeed, the function of the Kallido is to prevent a threat to their House before it is made, or, in some cases, even contemplated. Of course, since many of the Great Houses have their own, it is often the case that battles are not between a Kallido and her victim,



but between two Kallido Mancari. Precognition can be tricky and, often guided only by half-understood visions and foreshadowing, two Kallido may battle without ever knowing the full details of the why and wherefore; one had a vision of the other slaying a member of her household and began to act to forestall it; the other had a vision only of being attacked herself and moved to strike against her attacker first.

In addition to their ability to know who needs to be slain before the victim has even settled on a course of action, Kallido Mancari are also trained to use their precognition in combat – techniques Psi-Corps would gladly kill to learn. With practice, they learn to instinctively see seconds into the future, so they are always where their enemy's blade is not and are always positioned to strike at a foe. Only against an opponent with similar skills, or when badly outnumbered, do these abilities fail them.

Because significant combat skill and telepathic prowess is needed before the techniques of the Kallido can be taught, likely candidates usually

find themselves taking advantage of what few opportunities there are for Centauri women to learn combative arts. Female duelling clubs and athletic societies, holdovers from the distant past when women were expected to defend their House's lands from invaders if the men should fall in battle, provide such training, as do some of the Centauri military's auxiliary corps.

Requirements

To become a Kallido Mancari, a character must fulfil all the following requirements:

Race: Centauri.

Gender: Female.

Base Attack Bonus: +5 or higher.

Feats: Weapon proficiency, melee or pistol.

Abilities: Danger Sense.

Special: Kallido-to-be are noted early on in life by others in their family, and are generally encouraged to develop the skills they will need to assume the role when their destinies are revealed. Many tend to foresee their own future and the actions they must take to get there. This is not a path chosen, but a destiny imposed.

Additional Hit Points: 2.

Class Skills: Balance (Dex), Climb (Str), Disguise (Cha), Escape Artist (Dex), Hide (Dex), Jump (Str), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Profession (Wis), Sense Motive (Wis), Spot (Wis), Tumble (Dex).

Skill Points per level: 2+Int modifier.

Vision by Touch

P-Rating: P8
Range: Touch
Telepathy Check: DC 20
Concentration: Yes
Multiple Subjects: No

This ability allows a Kallido to gain a quick flash of a person's destiny, as it relates to her House, by means of a casual touch. Unlike Accidental Scan, it must be deliberately activated. If the telepathy check is successful, the character sees something useful or important about the near-future (within 1d4 weeks) activities of the individual she is touching, in regard to her household. This may be as simple as his attendance at a forthcoming party, or as complex as a betrayal in the Centaurum. Since this is not mind reading, *per se*, it cannot be detected as a scan. If the check fails, no vision is gained.

Kallido Mancari characters receive the Vision by Touch telepathic ability for free.

Combat Precognition: This is the core of the Kallido's ability. It is precognition of the very near future, and allows them to fight exceptionally well against a single foe, since multiple combatants increase the variance of the future considerably. When in combat against one enemy (the character is not threatened by more than one individual), she uses the first Base Attack Bonus column and gains access to the Perfect Timing and Avoidance class features. If in battle against multiple foes, she uses the second Base Attack Bonus column and may not use the aforementioned class abilities.

Perfect Timing: The character knows the exact moment to strike, increasing damage done by 1d6. This ability affects creatures not vulnerable to Sneak Attack, but it does not stack with Sneak Attack. A character may use either bonus, but not both, in the same round.

Always Aware: The character cannot be the subject of Sneak Attacks, and is never considered to be flat-footed. She can still be

flanked, however. This applies even against multiple foes.

Avoidance: The character gains a +1 bonus to DV. This increases to +2 at sixth level and to +3 at 9th level.

Two Foes: The character may use the first Base Attack Bonus column and the Perfect Timing and Avoidance class abilities when in combat against two foes.

Veil the Future: The character emits a sort of 'static' which can block precognition with regard to herself. A Kallido of her level or lower cannot use Combat Precognition or Vision by Touch against her.

Evasion: Whenever the character makes a Reflex save which would normally result in half damage, they instead take no damage. A failed save results in full damage, as usual.

Three Foes: The character may use the first Base Attack Bonus column and the Perfect Timing and Avoidance class abilities when in combat against three foes.



Kallido Mancari

ⓀⓁⓁⓁ ⓂⓂⓂⓂ ⓁⓁⓁⓁⓁⓁⓁⓁ

Level	BAB	Fort	Ref	Will	Special
1	+1/+0	+0	+1	+1	Vision by Touch, Combat Precognition
2	+2/+1	+0	+2	+2	Perfect Timing +1d6, Always Aware
3	+3/+2	+1	+2	+2	Avoidance+1
4	+4/+3	+1	+2	+2	Two Foes
5	+5/+3	+1	+3	+3	Veil The Future
6	+6/+4	+2	+3	+3	Avoidance+2
7	+7/+5	+2	+4	+4	Evasion
8	+8/+6	+2	+4	+4	Three Foes
9	+9/+6	+3	+4	+4	Avoidance+3
10	+10/+7	+3	+5	+5	Perfect Timing +2d6

ⓀⓁⓁⓁ ⓂⓂⓂⓂ ⓁⓁⓁⓁⓁⓁⓁⓁ

Gaming Symposium

·W·I·T·H· ·S·H·A·N·N·O·N· ·K·A·L·V·A·R·

Celebrating the Season

It's party time with Shannon Kalvar, as Gaming Symposium examines just what goes into a good festival, and we're not talking portaloos!

The High Priest of Kirn looked out at the folk frenetically frolicking in festival finery. Mummers danced, pipers played, and pickpockets worked the crowd like scabrous shepherds. From his vantage point high above he could see the elaborate pattern of life spread out through the city. Sex and violence, love and hate, petty joys and tragic triumphs interlaced in a tapestry as beautiful as anything from a grand lady's loom.

Looking as far as his eyes could strain he could just make out the disruption caused by the adventurers leaving the city. Their brash courage made them invaluable defenders of the right. But it also put them into conflict with the more measured pace of civilised life.

With a sigh, the high priest turned away from the celebrations. His companion for the evening, Priest Lajous, stood behind him.

'Do you think there is any chance we can repair the damage those buffoons caused?' the high priest's words carried the weariness of long celebration.

'I doubt it,' Lajous replied, joining him on the balcony. 'They have all forgotten that the Festival of Kirn is a re-enactment of the binding of the eldest gods. A re-enactment required to maintain their prison.'

The high priest settled down into a stuffed chair. He picked up a glass of wine and drained it with a single pull. 'So then we come to it. The elder gods will come...'

'Because we failed to start the festival off right? Aye. I hope your god is ready.'

'Oh, he will be.'

Festivals, markets, fairs and similar events litter the landscape of fantasy literature. They regularly crop up in published adventures. Some can even be found in CRPGs although computer game manufacturers generally display an unwillingness to get involved with the possible religious implications of such things. But what are they? What role do festivals play in the social, religious, mythical, magical, and mystical contexts of a particular game world? In order to address that question we

first have to understand the elements of a festival. We then need to address how these elements interrelate with fundamental aspects of the way that human beings organise their world. After that we can finally get down to actually bringing interesting festivals into a normal game.

Components of Festivals

The first question we need to address is: what exactly is a festival anyway?

Is it a fair? A gathering of people? A chance for groups to get together, wander around with floats, and sell sausages?

Historically, festivals contain all of these elements and a great deal more. Each festival represents a massive conflux of secular and religious forces. This conflux occurs around the structure provided by the festival, but is not the festival itself. Indeed the purpose and structure of the festival can get lost among

the spiralling chaos that it brings together. Take the historical example of the Roman Saturnalia, which started out as a one-day king sacrifice ceremony at the winter solstice and eventually became a weeklong festival involving the purchase of dolls.

The Festival Core – Outside of space and time

We asserted that these things (markets, fairs, gatherings, activities, etc.) are elements of the festival but not the festival itself. On the surface this seems preposterous. How can we divorce the concept of the actions taken at/around a thing from the thing itself? Especially when we deal with mortal actions the ancillary activity typically becomes far more flamboyant than the core. However it is the core of the festival, whatever that is, that allows these activities to aggregate and build over time.

A quick examination of real world, historical festivals displays human creativity in all its insane grandeur. People do everything from hold massive cattle markets to hang themselves from iron hooks. However it also reveals a single, common thread associated with these events. Each festival, whether it is a secular holiday or a religious event with origins lost in the mists of pre-history, contains within it the concept of ‘special time’ or of being ‘outside of time’.

Scholars use the terms ‘numinous space’ and ‘numinous time’ to refer to time and space which exist psychologically outside of the ordinary scope of events. These terms are most closely associated with rituals and ritual theory; however they have some currency in sociology, anthropology and psychology. Generally, human beings create this kind of space and time to mark particular physical and social events. Examples include the winter solstice, birth, marriage and the founding of nations.

One of the curious aspects of numinous time is that the ordinary rules of social interaction do not apply. This is a feature of festivals the world over – look at the so called ‘Festival of Fools’ from the 14th century, the contemporary New Orleans Mardi Gras, or the ‘Brahmin Festival’ in India. In all three the barriers between social classes are either removed or reversed and otherwise unthinkable behaviour endorsed. Numinous times in fantasy worlds could have an even more extensive effect, with the ordinary rules of space and time being suspended for the duration of the festival core.

In the real world the ‘numinous’ quality of a time or an act derives from the ritual activities we place in it. In a fantasy world this does not have to be the case. Even so-called ‘low magic’ worlds might have times and events that are literally numinous, filled with magical or holy power. High magic worlds could have dozens or even hundreds of these times, each tied to a specific event or experience in the worlds’ magical histories.

Things that take place during these ‘numinous’ times wield unusual weight and significance in the world. The core festival events can alter the fate of nations, change the magical level of the world or unleash dire forces on the universe.

This core of unusual activity gives mortals the excuse that they need to set aside the common cares of their lives. They gather together in the core’s shadow, plying their mundane trades, all the time aware that nearby something mysterious brushes on the edges of their normal lives.

The Core – What It Contains

If the core of festivals lies in this numinous event, how do we structure the event and what does it look like? What elements does it contain and why?

When considering the core we should consider the following four elements: what the festival is a response to, what actions contemporary agents must take, where they must take them, and how often they must repeat them. These elements create the framework around which we can build the other aspects of the festival.

In a fantasy world festivals may be held in response to a wide variety of stimuli. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- *Universal Effect* – confluxes of arcane or divine forces that occur on a specific timetable (monthly, seasonally, yearly, etc.). These events may or may not be related to other natural cycles or mythic activities.
- *Mythic Events* – a specific action taken by either gods or men may have marked the universe to such a degree that the anniversary of its execution becomes numinous. An example of this is found in the beginning fiction; the gods of good and evil worked together to bind the forces of the elder darkness. That act reverberated down the centuries into the story’s present day.
- *Historical Event* – an action taken in the mortal sphere (i.e. the creation of a nation) may be commemorated or marked in some way. In a fantasy world this core could actually involve the renewal of arcane or divine pacts made during the nation’s founding.
- *Mortal Events* – mortal events like births, wedding, funerals, ascensions to office, etc., may well have arcane or divine influence. These unscheduled

'festivals' become impromptu opportunities for people to get together, using the excuse of the numinous moment to set aside the cares of ordinary life.

These events and effects may be positive or negative (or in a fantasy setting related to fundamental good or evil). In every case what the players interact with is not the stimulus event but rather the acts that individuals or groups take related to it. These acts will generally fall into several distinct categories: commemorative, effective, invocative and protective.

Commemorative actions allow the mortal actors to remember and celebrate a specific event. A universal event of this sort usually has something to do with the turning of the seasons and the waxing/waning of generative power. Mythical/historical events that involve commemorative elements generally involve moments of great historical significance in a specific culture or world's history. Festivals triggered by mortal events rarely have commemorative activity, although they may reference events as models of expected/accepted behaviour.

Effective actions require the mortal actors to take a direct role in the numinous time as it unfolds. In the case of a mythic or historical event they may actually re-enact the event, either actually or symbolically. In the case of a universal event they may have activities required of them in order to channel or use the power. Mortal events occur because of mortal actions and therefore usually have a very active role for the mortal participants. The failure of the mortal actors to properly fulfil their roles could be of minor consequence or could have massive universal repercussions.

Invocative actions force the actors to call upon the arcane or divine powers to make a specific activity/event/festival numinous. This is the most common mode of action

for festivals sparked by mortal events. These festivals will typically involve sacrifices intended to call up the requisite powers. A marriage ceremony inculcates the invocative principle when a designated intermediary calls upon divine blessing for the union.

Protective actions require the actors to take defensive measures against a numinous space/time that could harm them or the world at large. The actors take steps to prevent this threatening power from breaking free. This may involve sacrifice, the re-enactment of specific myths, magical activities or similar things. Generally festivals with a protective element take on a sombre tone.

No matter what kind of activities the actors engage in their number does not relate to the impact that they have. A festival with only a handful of ritual actors could decide the fate of the world, while one commemorating the founding of a world-spanning empire could have no world-shattering implications if it were completely ignored.

The first two elements (event and action) deal with time and effort. The third, where the activities must take place, defines the limits of the numinous time within space. This definition may not have anything to do with how widespread the festival becomes, but it does tell us where the numinous core of the event must take place.

Generally we have several options when defining the numinous core within space. The core may be permanently affixed to a specific region or locality, as in the case of a holy site where a festival occurs on a specific interval. The core may migrate from location to location according to some cosmic calendar. Finally the core may actually not have a fixed location in space at all, occurring universally at a specific point in time. Each of these options presents us with unique storytelling opportunities, especially when

contrasted with how widespread the outer aspects of the festival become. For example, we could imagine a festival with a very localised numinous core (say a single obscure shrine) and nation or worldwide participation.

Similarly the final aspect, frequency of repetition, has a broad impact on the outer aspects of the festival. If a festival occurs every week then it will generate a steady outer layer of activities. Conversely, a festival that occurs once a generation can create a massive amount of short-term impact but its outer aspects fade into memory after the event passes.

The Outer Aspects

The above discussion gives us some idea of what may lie at the numinous core of festivals. Now we turn our attention back outwards to the outer activities everyone sees. These aspects form the 'hooks' that get characters involved with the festival. They also provide players (and Games Masters) with a clear understanding of how these festivals play out in the characters' lives.

The most obvious aspects that we can address include: awareness of the festival's purpose, breadth of participation in the core, the outer aspect's duration, and scope of the festival's fame. By assessing these aspects we can create an image of what the festival looks like for those who participate in it. Furthermore, we can build an understanding of how the festival time impacts on the lives of the actors, thereby creating more opportunities for stories.

Awareness of the festival's purpose ranks as one of the most important of the so-called 'outer aspects' for us to address. In its simplest form this aspect addresses the question: how well do people know the basic story behind the festival? However, a deeper reading leads us to the question: how well do people understand the significance of the festival? Is the numinous core of the

festival available in public view, or hidden away for only a few secret initiates? If people do not understand the festival's core, how do they explain the festival to themselves?

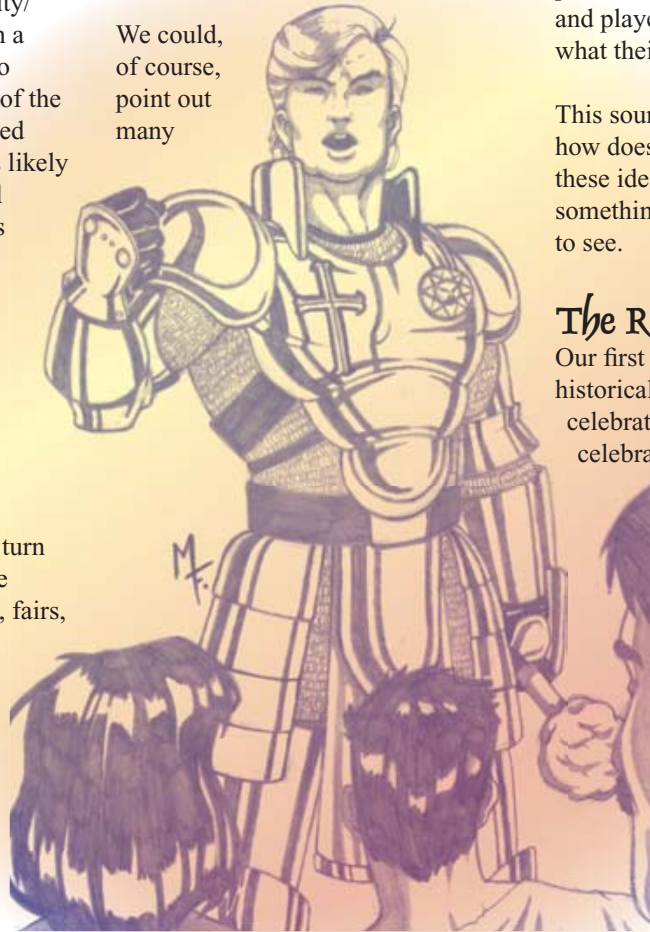
Going in hand in hand with the concept of awareness is breadth of participation in the core activities. Are the core activities restricted to the devout or chosen few? Alternately, does everyone in the community/nation/world have to engage in a specific act at a specific time to ensure the correct completion of the activity? The wider the required pool of actors the less and less likely it becomes that all of the ritual actors understand the festival's significance. On the other hand, if the world generally understands the significance of the festival it may have wide celebration even if only a few actors participate in the numinous core.

The question of breadth of participation also guides us in turn to the question of how long the outer aspects (i.e. celebrations, fairs, etc.) extend before and after the numinous core. For example, the Saturnalia started as a one-day event but eventually became a seven-day celebration. The numinous core of the event (the sacrifice of the winter king) remained a one-day activity. The ancillary secular activities extending around that celebration quickly outstripped that day in duration and importance in the lives of the various participants.

Our final outer aspect, scope of fame, addresses how well known the festival becomes. As a festival becomes famous it attracts more and more ancillary attention and activities. The fame of a particular festival core may not be related to its importance; rather it deals with the power and relative weight of the nation/region that hosts the festival. For example, it is entirely possible to have a

festival that has a world wide scope of activity (say burning a candle at a specific time) and a high level awareness (everyone knows that that action helps the souls of the departed) but which has such low fame that no one could tell you where it originated. Similarly there can be very famous festivals (say, commemorating a specific king's death) that have a very modest numinous core.

We could, of course, point out many



other aspects of festivals. For example, we could ask about the secularisation of the festival: to what extent is the festival a national versus a religious activity? Similarly we could ask questions about the fundamental alignment of the festival in terms of good and evil, or its associations with specific ethnic groups. However interesting these questions may be, they do not contribute to the overall playability of the festival event. The Games Master should fill out these questions as and when they directly affect game play.

Constructed Examples

In the above discussion we have outlined a potential method for creating a useable festival. By taking the two primary parts of the festival (the core and outer aspects) and then more closely defining them we can, in theory, get a handle on what happens during the festival. From there the Games Master can easily define potential activities for the players, and players can easily understand what their characters might be up to.

This sounds good in theory, but how does it play out? Can we use these ideas to actually accomplish something? Let us take two examples to see.

The Roman Saturnalia

Our first effort will focus on the historical Saturnalia festival. This celebration started as a one-day celebration of the golden age

of Saturn's rule which coincidentally marked the winter solstice. As the Roman Empire expanded the fame and importance of the festival spread.

As that fame spread the festival itself expanded from one day to seven and began to include more and more secular elements (markets, fairs and entertainments in particular). People lost track of the original winter king sacrifice

although the activity continued on in proxy form through the use and exchange (and destruction of) dolls. Eventually the festival became the Sigillaria (a festival of dolls and doll-makers).

By laying out the three periods we can see the power of this method:

In a fantasy world this kind of progression would indicate a serious problem, especially if the solstice sacrifice of the winter king actually provided motive force for the regeneration of the sun from the winter solstice.

Note that in the comparison we used descriptive rather than discrete measurements. We are not trying to create some kind of perfect quantitative scale but generate a descriptive matrix that we can use to enhance our games.

Table 1: Examination of a historical festival through time.

The Festival from the Story

The fictional text at the beginning of 'The Structure of' articles (*see S&P, issues 4 and 5*) as well as the fiction above all relate to a single fantasy festival, the Festival of Kirn. As our second exercise we should break this festival into its component parts.



Element	Early Saturnalia	Late Roman Saturnalia	Sigillaria
Core: Event	Turning of the solstice (universal event)	Suspension of ordinary rules of behaviour (mortal event)	Commemoration of traditional event (historical event)
Core: Action	Commemorative sacrifice of an appointed king	Commemorative exchange of traditional presents (including dolls)	Commemorative exchange and display of dolls
Core: Location	Rome (local festival)	Rome, but empire-wide activity	National (Italian)
Core: Frequency	Annual	Annual	Annual
Outer: Awareness	Fully aware	Limited awareness of the original purpose	Limited/None of the original purpose. Fully aware of the new purpose (commemoration of a cultural tradition)
Outer: Participation	Direct (activities keyed to the veneration of the sacrifice)	Limited (festivities and consumption not related to the original purpose although some aspects remain)	None (limited symbolic connection with original solstice rite)
Outer: Duration	One day (outer activities limited to festivities around the sacrifice)	Five days	Seven days
Outer: Fame	Local (city and locality)	Empire-wide	National



One man on a hilltop...that's how it always starts. Give it a couple of centuries and somebody will turn it into a festival.

Table 2: *The Festival of Kirn*

Element	Festival of Kirn
Core: Event	Commemoration of the deeds of the gods which bound the forces of the elder gods (evil, good, and neutral gods involved, mythic event)
Core: Action	Effective action requiring the duplication/re-enactment of key mythic activities (one per god, including evil acts like human sacrifice)
Core: Location	The actions can take place anywhere, but the separate priesthoods must ensure that their action happens at the appointed time
Core: Frequency	Annual
Outer: Awareness	Limited. People recognise the importance of the time and the effort gone to by the temples, but have their own ideas of what the festival might be (explanation depends on time – maybe harvest?)
Outer: Participation	Limited participation in core festival events mostly restricted to ordained actors (priests)
Outer: Duration	Extended (seven days). The activities of the gods take place in private, but the outer aspects of the festival attract considerable attention
Outer: Fame	Multinational. The temples (which cross-national boundaries) have to participate whether they wish to or not. This participation draws the attention and interest of the local communities, which in turn attracts merchants and craftsmen

Assuming that Kirn is a god of good, how could we fill out the above skeleton? What kinds of adventures does it suggest? What scenes could one imagine related to this?

Using Festivals in Games

Now that we can explain festivals and outline the game-related elements of them, what exactly do we do with them to enhance our games? How does the effort we put into these things pay back in terms of interesting roleplaying and tactical situations for our players?

Each festival represents a unique opportunity to mix action, mystical and social elements together. On the simplest level we accomplish this by throwing a large number of people with divergent goals into a single location. Merchants come to festivals to attend the fairs, ritual actors come to execute whatever actions the festival requires, thieves come to steal purses, etc.

On a deeper level, this mix of elements creates a dynamic tension within the game world. Does the

mercantilism of the fair conflict with the mystical events unfolding in the cosmos? What happens when a festival's outer elements bring it into direct conflict with its core purposes? How does the history of the various festival participants alter the intentions of the festival? Could someone interfere with a festival for political reasons (say to shift the focus of the attending fairs) and end up causing universal havoc?

Similarly, festivals that occur on long timetables (say the coronation of a king) can very quickly become complex political nightmares. The rarity of these events makes hosting them high status activities. If additional mystical significance attaches to the various festival roles then the situation becomes even murkier. What if, for example, a festival that happens once in a lifetime requires someone of a specific bloodline to perform a particular act (for a coronation, let us imagine that the scion of a particular knightly line must act as the knight-protector) but that bloodline has fallen from grace. What happens

if the person cannot be found? Or worse yet, what if someone tries to substitute for them?

In terms of structuring sessions, festivals provide the Games Master with a discrete timeline of events. He knows the sequence of the festival. As the players progress during the session the festival continues along on its appointed course. If the players disrupt the outer aspects of the festival then they may come into contact with the local law. If they somehow disrupt the festival core then the results could be catastrophic.

Finally, the concept of festivals being times during which all of the boundaries fall away presents us with any number of intriguing possibilities. For example, what if the common laws did not hold sway during a festival? Would looting occur? What would stop people from behaving wantonly in the streets, or dicing on the highest alters? Do ordinary prohibitions against drunken revelry and gambling disappear? Are they encouraged?

Taking These Ideas Forward

We have presented one possible toolkit for analysing and incorporating festivals into a game world. These methods allow us to bring a greater focus on the numinous and mystical aspects of festivals, rather than their socio-political aspects. Whether or not this helps a specific Games Master or player depends entirely on what that person needs from his game.

Many questions remain. For example, would it be possible to put together a reasonable quantitative scale for rating festivals? Such a scale would allow the Games Master to compare a large number of festivals quickly, or to randomly

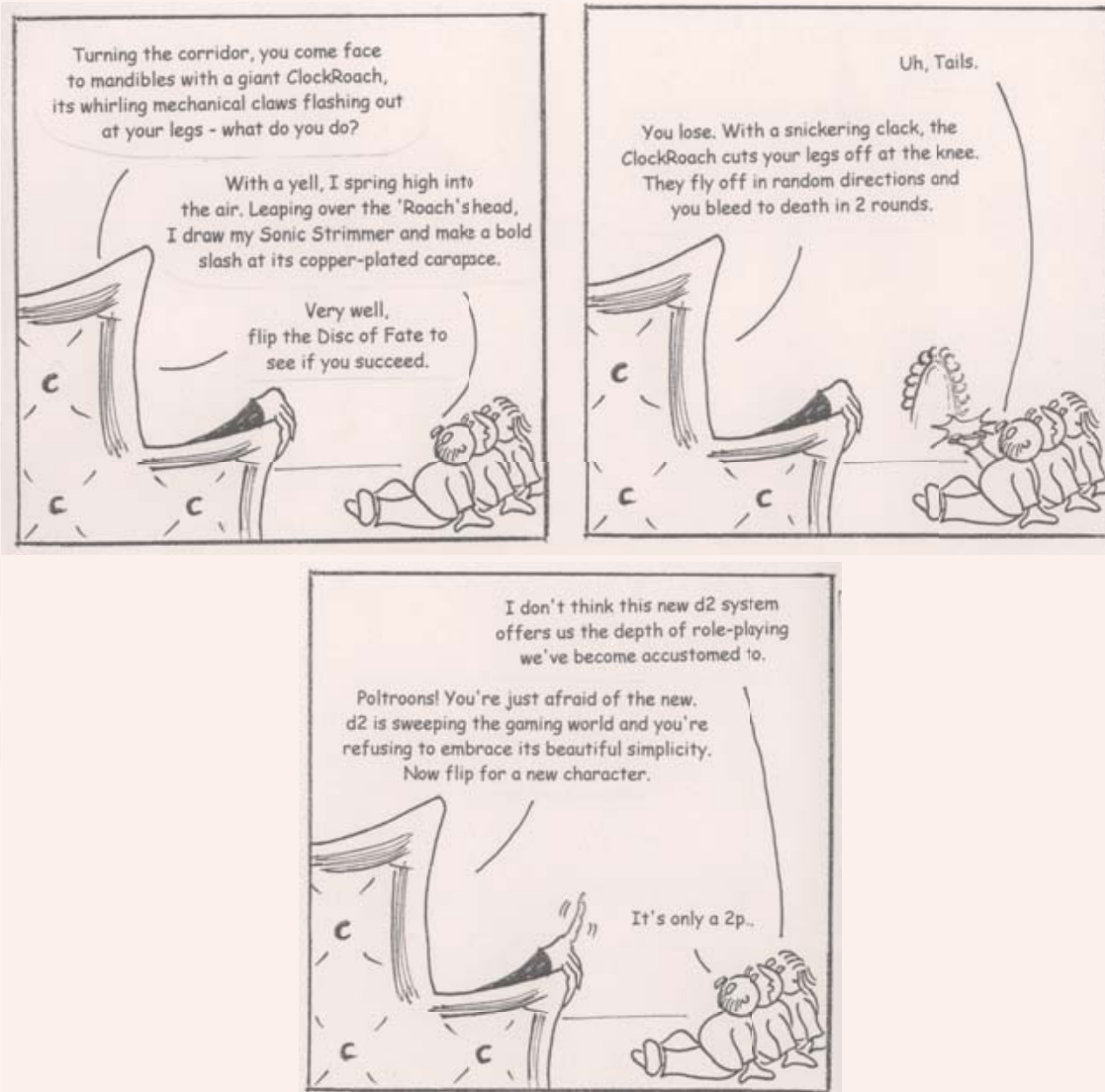
create (if we set the scale up to match an existing dice) festivals as needed. However such a scale would also constrict the Games Master to its rigid bounds.

Another important question we have not addressed revolves around the frequency of festivals in game play. Historically, festival activity took up a significant portion of the year. Most societies have hundreds of festivals, large and small, that help to break up the passage of the year. How many of these are important to game play? Some? None?

Furthermore we have deliberately blurred the line between festivals and ritual activity. In a strict sense

these two things are related but separate. Rituals typically mark some kind of transition in state from one thing to another (girl to woman, man to husband, living to dead, etc.); most, but not all festivals have some element of this.

Festivals do not have to be the ugly duckling of gaming. Nor do they all have to be tournaments or sporting events. Once we begin to bring the sacred into contrast with the mundane we generate hundreds of new and exciting adventure possibilities just waiting to be explored.



Saito

POWER CLASS: CRUSADER

John Thompson

INTRODUCTION

The crusader is a travelling knight-errant who roams from quest to quest in his constant search to root out evil in the world. Unlike other knights who owe fealty to a lord or seek to amass men-at-arms and their own lands, crusaders are guided only by their inherent search for justice and willingness to travel to the far corners of the world to wrest the yoke of oppression from free peoples everywhere. Gold and loot only serve a crusader in terms of its ability to make him a more perfect, dedicated fighting machine; any excess is given to the leaders of his sect. The crusader is a devoted foot soldier who single-mindedly sets about accomplishing the missions set out by the leaders of his sect.

Each sect grants different bonuses and abilities to its crusaders. The regional headquarters for these sects, called 'secthomes', serve as staging areas from which issue groups of crusaders bent on quests deemed worthy by that sect. Tithes from returning crusaders keep the sect's intelligence network active in its constant search for evil. Once allegiance is sworn to a sect, a crusader can never join a second sect (exception: see the Order of the Iron Rose, below), although crusaders from a number of sects may work together to jointly fulfil a quest set by their leaders.

Crusaders are akin to paladins in many ways, but are also very different as well. While each sect is an order founded on religion, crusaders listen first and foremost to their sect's leader, as opposed to the priests of their chosen god. Crusaders are

Charismatic last month, so what better than a stern-faced warrior who thinks Charisma is an overly-inventive girl's name? Enter the Crusader - part paladin, part cleric, all righteous fire!



also not hampered by restriction to a lawful good alignment. While they do not gain the ability to cast spells as a cleric or paladin would, crusaders are given innate divine powers as they advance in level, something the common fighter could only wish for. Crusaders are second only to fighters in the number of combat feats bestowed on them as they advance during their careers, making them extremely efficient killing machines.

Adventures: Crusaders are focused, task-oriented adventurers, and are far less prone than other classes to be simply wandering in search of trouble — if found outside their secthome, they are going from point A to point B in pursuit of the completion of their mission, not dawdling about the countryside, seeing what the wind might blow their way. Because of this single-mindedness, crusaders often work alone or in the company of other crusaders, or perhaps with priests or paladins of their god.

Crusaders will never willingly work in a party with an evil character. Rogues are looked upon by crusaders with disdain, but are often allowed into their party as a necessary evil. If joining with a good-aligned party will increase the crusader's chance of fulfilling his mission, he will do so. Whether he ever adventures with that group again would depend on their actions during the mission. A crusader realises that everyone does not share his beliefs regarding wealth and, as long as the greater good is being served, such as the destruction of an evil temple or the overthrow of a tyrannical leader, what his companions do with their share of anything found while accomplishing this mission is their business.

Characteristics: Crusaders pursue their goal of the downfall of evil through strength of arms. They disdain the puffery and self-importance of the knight and the local nobles, and while they view paladins as their cousins, a crusader's willingness to step beyond the law in pursuit of the completion of his

mission forever separates these two classes. For example, a paladin would never beat information out of a captured evil cleric, whereas a crusader, if he thought the cleric was withholding information vital to his mission's success, would not hesitate to do so, using the logic that the greater good is served. However, the fact that crusaders do not have to live by these same rules often means anyone captured by a crusader is quick to spill their information rather than risk the crusader's preferred method of 'extraction'.

Depending on their sect, crusaders are able to harness various divinely given innate abilities in their quests against evil. Combined with their skills with arms and armour, crusaders can make for powerful allies — or unbending, vengeful foes.

Crusaders do not use mounts except in dire need, preferring to undertake their long journeys on foot so as to be better able to gather information on the road from their fellow travellers. Crusaders will often dress to call as little attention to themselves as possible on their travels, so as to be able to glean items of information from those they share the road with, who might be a bit more closemouthed to a mounted knight.

Crusaders, no matter what level they attain, can never own personal lands or have men-at-arms or a paid retinue of any kind. Any loot garnered from the completion of a mission is brought back to the secthome. Templars *may* then grant permanent use of necessary items to that crusader; other items are kept for future use or used to raise the funds needed to keep the secthome's intelligence web in operation.

Alignment: Because of their ultimate goal of the defeat of evil, only good characters can become crusaders — but the wide variety of sects, and individual missions and inherent enemies and goals of these sects, allows for great diversity in the creation and evolution of any crusader.

Religion: All crusaders are members of para-religious, secretive groups called sects. Members of a sect swear fealty not only to the chosen good aligned god (certain neutral aligned gods may also serve as well) of that sect but to the leader of the secthome, who serves as the mortal voice of the god within that sect. These sect leaders, called Templars, direct the actions of the individual secthomes, keeping in constant communication with other secthomes, forming a communications web that can pass information quickly and reliably. Templars are always high-ranking crusaders, never clerics or paladins — although characters from these classes are often called upon to serve local secthomes in an ancillary role.

Each sect differs slightly in its mission, purpose and granted abilities. Each game world can have an unlimited number of sects, and each sect can be custom-built by the Games Master as he sees fit. Some existing sects ready for usage by prospective crusaders include (different gods can be plugged into each sect depending on the campaign's game world):

The Order of the Star: Crusaders of this order are tasked with seeking out and destroying the infrastructure (temples, guilds, spy networks, etc.) serving the pantheon of evil-aligned gods. Because these temples and cults are often well hidden, members of the Order of the Star are well versed in back-alley diplomacy and intelligence gathering, receiving an additional +1 bonus to the following skills at both 1st and 4th level: Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate, Sense Motive. The most streetwise of the sects, members of the Order of the Star are able to easily blend into the pulsing throngs of major cities. In combat, crusaders from this sect often use shields emblazoned with the order's crest, a white eight-pointed star set on a dark blue field.

The Order of the Flame: Removing any trace of evil extraplanar creatures from the Prime Material is the goal

of these crusaders. Demons, devils and their kin are the chief enemies of this group, as well as the allies of these creatures, such as drow. Members of the Order of the Flame receive Aura of Courage at 3rd level, and Knowledge (planes) is a class skill. The symbol of this order is an ice-blue longsword tinged in flame, floating on a sea of clouds.

The Order of the Chain: Slavery and oppression in all its forms are the chief targets of the members of this crusading order. Networks of slavers or regional governments who align with such scum typically do not last for long once they have been branded as such by the Order of the Chain. Members of this order receive a +1 bonus to their Disguise and Intimidate skills at 1st and 4th levels. Crusaders of the Order of the Chain do not emblazon their shields with a symbol; choosing instead to wear a simple loop of fine, gold chain around their necks.

Background: Crusaders come from all walks of life. Often they are the offspring of other crusaders, paladins or clerics. Not many characters are willing to lead the Spartan lifestyle directed by a secthome, as the pull of gold and potential riches of all kinds is usually too strong even for most good aligned characters. Crusaders own nothing but what they can carry with them on any given quest, a fact that deters only the most faithful from pursuit of this class.

Races: Crusaders can be members of any race, although the vast majority are human. However, many secthomes are actively recruiting non-human crusaders to help in their infiltration efforts.

Other Classes: As mentioned previously, crusaders will work in a party with members of other classes as long as these characters are good-aligned, and the party is working toward the goal of fulfilling that crusader's mission. Crusaders find

themselves most akin to paladins and good-aligned clerics, as these classes have also felt a calling that they have devoted their lives to.

GAME RULE INFORMATION

Abilities: The life of a crusader is an inherently dangerous one, as the crusader seeks to pit himself against the forces of evil wherever and whenever he can — be it an organised mission from his secthome or the impromptu defence of an unarmed caravan against a horde of raiders. Strength and Constitution are a necessity, and a high Dexterity is beneficial as well. Charisma is helpful in gathering information, a key part of any crusader's mission, and adds a bonus to his divinely given Smite Evil ability.

Alignment: Any good.

Hit Die: d10

CLASS SKILLS

The crusader's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Climb (Str), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Knowledge (religion) (Int), Swim (Str), Sense Motive (Int), Use Rope (Dex) and Diplomacy (Cha).

Skill Points at 1st Level: (2 + Int modifier) x 4.

Skill Points at Each Additional Level: 2 + Int modifier.

CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features of the crusader.

Weapon and Armour Proficiency: A crusader is proficient with all simple and martial weapons, light, medium and heavy armour, and shields.

Detect Evil: Beginning at first level, crusaders are able to *detect evil* once per day, as per the spell. At fifth level, and for every five levels thereafter, the crusader gains an additional *detect evil* per day, to a

THE ORDER OF THE IRON ROSE

Hundreds of years ago, minions of the demon lord Baphomet infiltrated the crusading Order of the Iron Rose. Baphomet's operatives began to openly work as members of the Order, taking over a number of secthomes, which quickly became riddled with corruption, greed and rampant lawlessness. Local authorities waged a bloody campaign against these secthomes, eventually crushing them, but the damage was done. The order, even those secthomes unaffected by Baphomet's minions, was outlawed. The remaining Roses continue their quest against Baphomet in all his guises, although the order is now, by necessity, by far the most secretive of all sects. Apart from its members, only a few Templars from other sects even know the order still exists; and they do what they can to help the order survive.

The Order of the Iron Rose is the only other sect that a crusader can join once he has already pledged himself to his original secthome, as it is viewed as the highest possible honour a crusader can strive for. Members of this order do not receive any additional special abilities, but they are allowed to keep the abilities bestowed by their original sect. Its clandestine nature means that no crusader can start off as a member of this order; only after proving oneself for years might an invitation to join the Order of the Iron Rose be offered, and this offer is often the first time a crusader even realises the Order still exists. Being outlawed, this order does not have any symbol or heraldry to speak of.

maximum of five times per day at 20th level.

Lionheart: At 3rd level, crusaders are granted a +2 bonus to all morale and Fortitude checks, allowing crusaders to persevere in the face of unspeakable horror.

A Life on the Road: From 4th level onwards, crusaders are able to cover half again as many miles on foot as the average person. Whereas an average character can cover 24 miles of overland travel in an eight-hour period without a forced march, crusaders, their bodies far more tuned to a life of travel, can cover 36 miles in the same time period. Note that this does not affect tactical combat speed or local movement, just overland movement rates.

Smite Evil: Beginning at 5th level, a crusader gains the ability to smite evil with one normal melee attack. He adds his Charisma bonus (if any) to his attack roll and deals one extra point of damage per crusader level. If a crusader accidentally smites a creature that is not evil, the smite has no effect, but is still used up for that day. At 10th level and for every five levels thereafter, the crusader gains an additional smite per day, to a maximum of four times per day at 20th level.

Grizzled Campaigner: By the time a crusader reaches 10th level, he will have seen and experienced enough of the horrors from the unending battle against evil that he has become hardened to many of the cares that affect 'normal' people. From 10th level on, crusaders can make forced overland marches for up to 16 hours a day without paying a fatigue penalty or making a Constitution check; they add an additional +1 to all Fortitude saves, and gain Divine Health, as per the paladin.

Templar: At 15th level, a crusader is bestowed with the title of Templar. The crusader then has the option of either starting and directing a new secthome or continuing the life of the

crusader until the day comes when he realises he can help the fight against evil more by running a secthome than by questing. A Templar does not need clearance from a secthome to undertake any mission; he may begin any quest that he sees fit to pursue. Moreover, a Templar is allowed to keep a small cache of magic items and adventuring gear for his own use, as determined by the Games Master.

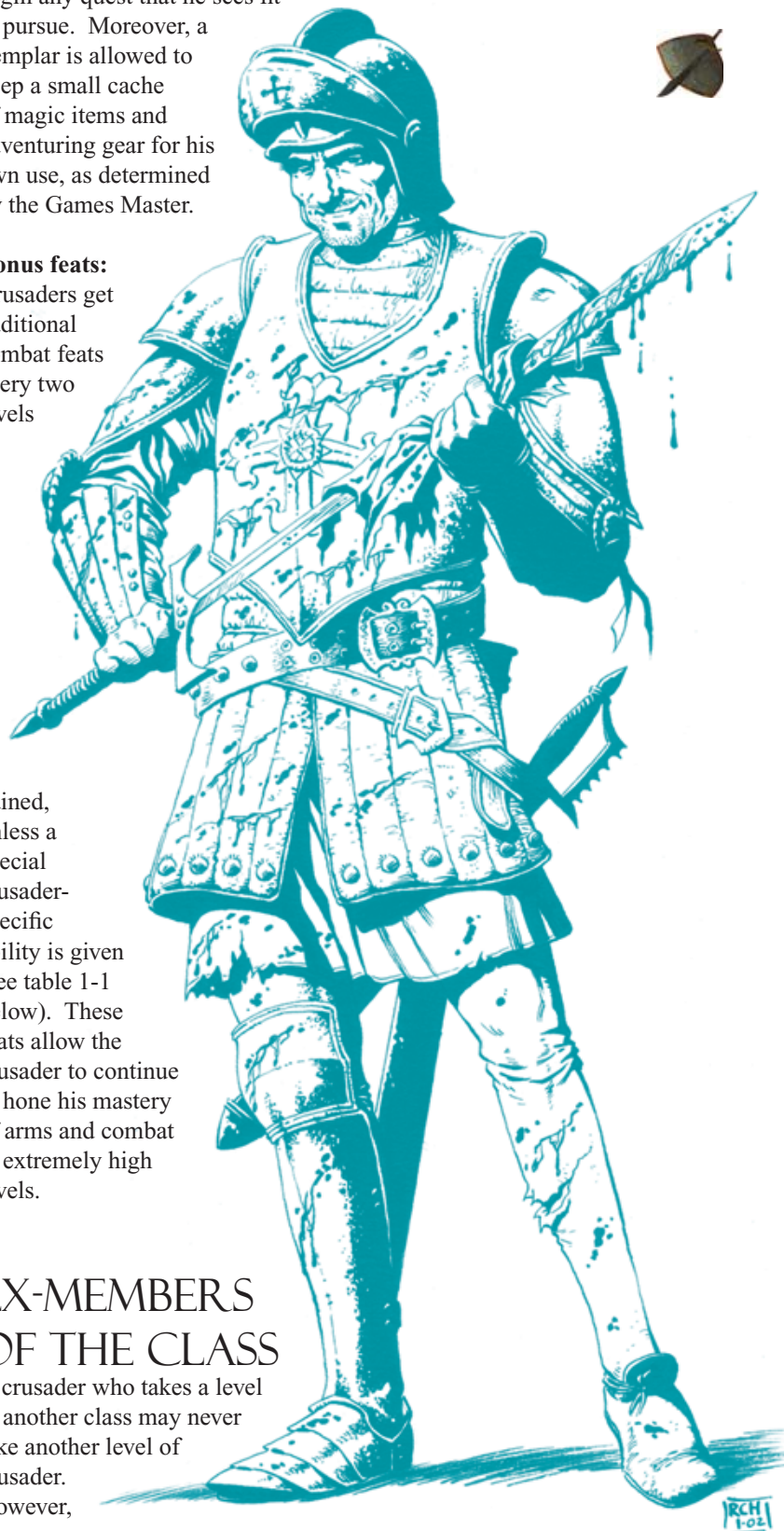
Bonus feats: Crusaders get additional combat feats every two levels

gained, unless a special crusader-specific ability is given (see table 1-1 below). These feats allow the crusader to continue to hone his mastery of arms and combat to extremely high levels.

EX-MEMBERS OF THE CLASS

A crusader who takes a level in another class may never take another level of crusader. However,

as long as this character remains good aligned, he keeps any abilities given to him during his time as a crusader. These abilities are immediately lost should he stray from the path, and may not be regained.



HUMAN CRUSADER STARTING PACKAGE

Weapons and armour: Longsword, dagger, chain mail, large wooden shield.

Skill Selection: Pick a number of skills equal to 2 + Int modifier.

Skill	Ranks	Ability
Climb	4	Str
Diplomacy	4	Cha
Intimidate	4	Cha
Jump	4	Str
Knowledge (Rel)	4	Int
Sense Motive	4	Wis
Swim	4	Str
Use Rope	4	Dex

Feat: Power Attack.

Bonus Feat: Cleave.

Gear: Clothing appropriate to mission, 50 feet of rope, bedroll, waterskin, trail rations, flint and steel, backpack.

Gold: The Templar assigning any quest may choose to issue a small stipend for buying supplies while the quest is being undertaken.

ALTERNATIVE CRUSADER STARTING PACKAGE

As human crusader except:

Race: Dwarf, elf, gnome, halfling, half-elf, or half-orc.

Skill Selection: Pick a number of skills equal to 2 + Int modifier.

Bonus Feat: None.

Table 1-1: The Crusader

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1	+1	+2	+0	+0	<i>detect evil</i> 1/day
2	+2	+3	+0	+0	Bonus feat
3	+3	+3	+1	+1	Lionheart, Aura of Courage (Order of the Flame only)
4	+4	+4	+1	+1	Life on the Road
5	+5	+4	+1	+1	Smite Evil 1/day, <i>detect evil</i> 2/day
6	+6/+1	+5	+2	+2	Bonus feat
7	+7/+2	+5	+2	+2	
8	+8/+3	+6	+2	+2	Bonus feat
9	+9/+4	+6	+3	+3	
10	+10/+5	+7	+3	+3	Grizzled Campaigner, Smite Evil 2/day, <i>detect evil</i> 3/day
11	+11/+6/+1	+7	+3	+3	
12	+12/+7/+2	+8	+4	+4	Bonus feat
13	+13/+8/+3	+8	+4	+4	
14	+14/+9/+4	+9	+4	+4	Bonus feat
15	+15/+10/+5	+9	+5	+5	Templar, Smite Evil 3/day, <i>detect evil</i> 4/day
16	+16/+11/+6/+1	+10	+5	+5	Bonus feat
17	+17/+12/+7/+2	+10	+5	+5	
18	+18/+13/+8/+3	+11	+6	+6	Bonus feat
19	+19/+14/+9/+4	+11	+6	+6	
20	+20/+15/+10/+5	+12	+6	+6	Smite Evil 4/day, <i>detect evil</i> 5/day

A Question of Culture

HOW OFTEN DOES YOUR CHARACTER BACKGROUND CONSIST OF A CASUAL WAIVE TOWARDS A RULEBOOK, ACCOMPANIED BY A FEW MUMBLED WORDS THINLY ATTEMPTING TO COVER THE FACT THAT YOU JUST WENT WITH THE GENERIC STEREOTYPE? ALL TOO OFTEN, ACCORDING TO ALEJANDRO MELCHOR.

No character exists in a vacuum and, as simple as it may be, all characters have a background and a place in the fantasy world that they inhabit. This means that, unless they were raised by a hermit in a secluded corner of the world, they belong to a culture. Even orphans and castaways are members of one, they simply occupy one of the bottom rungs. Cultures, particularly fantasy cultures, can be incredibly varied, enriching a game by simply providing characters a place to draw memories from.

The existing fantasy races already provide certain cultural bonuses, such as high elves' proficiency with bows and swords; they are not *born* proficient with those weapons, but using them is such an intrinsic part of elven culture that all of its members have used such a weapon at least once in their lifetimes. Dwarves' and gnomes' racial modifiers against certain creature types also show a cultural influence, for they are taught the tactics to fight such enemies from a very early age.

ADOPTING A CULTURE

Characters of all races and classes are influenced by the culture they grew up in. Usually, players select the culture they belong to at character creation, but any gaming group can adopt these options at any point, simply assuming that the characters always had those abilities, they simply chose not to acknowledge them until that point.

Cultural modifiers are a template that uses a character's available resources –feats and skills – to simulate cultural bias towards certain activities and training. Abilities are seldom or never modified by a culture, unless it is a rather extremist culture that kills any of its young that cannot lift a certain weight over their heads or cannot complete a quiz in a certain amount of time.

There are two ways to integrate cultural modifiers into a campaign: to sacrifice a character's starting feat to purchase the cultural template, or to grant its modifiers as free bonuses. For the second approach, all characters should receive this advantage to keep things balanced, including Non-Player Characters. Characters under the second approach who choose to be wandering loners since birth would gain a bonus feat and two bonus skill points.

CULTURAL TEMPLATES

A cultural template consists of a class that the culture favours, a bonus feat or ability that the character gains and a number of class skills that symbolise the activities that a culture emphasises over others. Some cultures also have disabilities, which are balanced by more powerful or exotic benefits.

The cultural favoured class overrides the one described for a character's race; in the case of humans and half-elves, the cultural favoured class becomes their favoured class and they

gain two bonus skill points to make up for their loss of freedom towards level advancement. These skill points must be allotted to one or more of the culture's class skills. Rich and varied cultures will provide more than one option for a favoured class; in this case, the character chooses which of the culturally-favoured classes becomes his own favoured class, even if he does not have levels in it, nor plans to gain them. This choice is made only once and is irreversible. If the cultural template lists 'any' as its favoured class, the character defaults to his racial favoured class (humans and half-elves do not gain the bonus skill points, as they already have 'any' as a favoured class).

The character gains a bonus feat or ability because he is part of a culture that facilitates the learning of such a feat. Because of this cultural bias, a character can gain the feat even if he does not meet its prerequisites, although he may find it difficult to choose more advanced feats that have the bonus feat as a prerequisite, but also the bonus feat's other prerequisites that the character does not meet. Rich and varied cultures will have options as to the kind of feats or abilities they offer their members, but a character may choose only one.

Characters have the listed skills as class skills for all the classes they have levels for. If all of a character's classes have the listed skills as class skills, the character instead gains a +1 cultural bonus to checks for those skills. If the character ever gains a level in a class that does not have the

listed skills as class skills, he loses the bonus and the cultural template reverts to offering those skills as class skills for all the character's classes. Note that these cultural bonuses do not permit a character to make checks for skills that cannot be used untrained, if he has no ranks in those skills.

A culture's disability is something that it has neglected to study and alters the way its members learn and train. The disability applies to all classes, even when some of them already possess that disability as part of their class features.

Combining Templates

Some of the templates described below are not mutually exclusive. A sylvan culture may also be a nomadic culture, for example. Characters belonging to such a culture have all the options in each template as options; they can choose the favoured class, bonus feat or ability from either template, and mix and match the templates' class skills as long as they do not exceed the maximum number of skills in either cultural template; for example, the sylvan culture has Track as a bonus feat and Survival and Knowledge (nature) as class skills, while the warrior culture has one Weapon Focus feat and its class skills are Intimidate, Ride and Handle Animal. A member of a sylvan warrior culture can choose between Track and Weapon Focus as its bonus feat, and choose any combination of Handle Animal, Intimidate, Knowledge (nature), Ride or Survival, with three skills being the maximum (the sylvan template lists two class skills, while the warrior template has three).

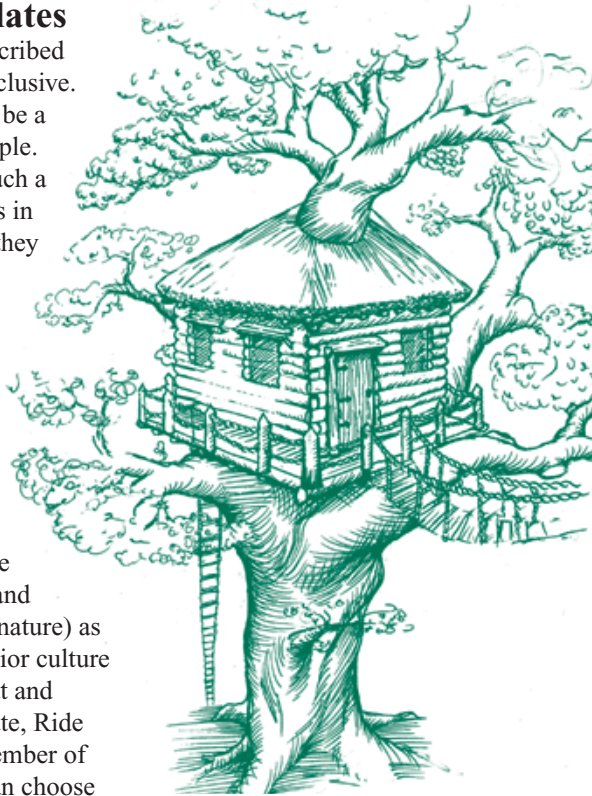
Agrarian Culture

Pastoral scenes of a quiet countryside dominate agrarian cultures. They have developed a strong agriculture and can fend for themselves during

harsh seasons. However, they have yet to develop a sophisticated society and cities are rare. The members of an agrarian society are not ignorant, in fact, they can be quite advanced in the arts and sciences, but they choose not to build large towns and cities, limiting themselves to small communities and saving themselves the trouble of complicated societal structures like a large government body and a snotty ruling class. Agrarian cultures usually belong to halflings, humans and gnomes.

Favoured Classes: Any except barbarian.

Bonus Feat/Ability: +2 cultural bonus to all Craft and Profession



checks. Members of an agrarian culture tend to be patient and unassuming, and used to hard work.

Class Skills: Handle Animal and Heal.

Airborne Culture

Members of an airborne culture lead the majority of their lives in the air, whether they have a racial ability to fly, or have developed the magic or technology to eke out a living high up in the sky. Such cultures are more common in high

fantasy campaigns, where magic or technology are sufficiently widespread for the construction of flying vehicles and dwellings, without incurring horrendous gold and XP costs to craft magic or technological wonders. Airborne cultures may construct dwellings in high places, such as mountain peaks and will often provide for their sustenance in exotic ways, such as distilling rain water from the clouds or cultivating on floating islands.

Favoured Classes: Any.

Bonus Feat/Ability: Members of an airborne culture can squeeze more speed and manoeuvrability from flying mounts, magic or abilities. They increase the speed of their method of flight by 30 feet and raise its manoeuvrability by one step.

Disability: The maximum Dexterity modifier for armour worn by members of an airborne culture is decreased by 1. They feel uncomfortable when they are not able to move freely.

Class Skills: Balance and Spot.

Dark Age Culture

A dark age period usually follows the collapse of a great empire that was a force of unification.

Dark age cultures characterise themselves for their alienation and a growing sense of xenophobia and fear. Chaos runs rampant and the few forces of order that rise from the ashes of the old empire tend to be rather authoritarian and heavy-handed, in order to stem the forces of darkness that encroach upon the lands. A dark age culture is a bit paranoid about things outside its reckoning, such as members of other races, unknown spellcasting abilities and other cultures. Dogmatic beliefs and superstitions are on the rise as a minority hoards the knowledge that survived the empire's downfall. Religion is not necessarily the driving force of a dark age society; an occult arcane order may have risen to power and now dominates the society, or a powerful secular guild system that chokes free trade and training.

Favoured Classes: Cleric, fighter or wizard.

Bonus Feat/Ability: Alertness; members of a dark age society are always on the watch for danger to their wellbeing.

Disability: The point cost for cross class Knowledge skills becomes 3 instead of 2.

Class Skills: Search, Spot and Listen.

Decadent Culture

A decadent culture is at the end of its days. Its members are so used to the luxuries of an advanced society that they have grown stagnant, complacent and ultimately bored. Given to great extremes of degradation, members of a decadent culture have very lax moral and ethical standards, if they have any. Knowledge is slowly forgotten, social institutions are crumbling and corruption is rampant. Such societies tend to be evil, but even the best intentions run aground through boredom and incompetence. The decadent culture is nonetheless the heir of a great and venerable tradition, even if its current values are less than worthy and prone to hedonism.

Favoured Classes: Any except barbarian.

Bonus Feat/Ability: The jaded sensibilities of a member of a decadent society grant him a measure of protection against some mental effects. He gains a +2 bonus against fear, because cynicism can be as good a weapon as valour.

Disability: A decadent society grows insensitive to the needs of others. The character suffers a -2 cultural penalty to Sense Motive checks.

Class Skills: Bluff, Sleight of Hand and any one Knowledge skill.

High Magic Culture

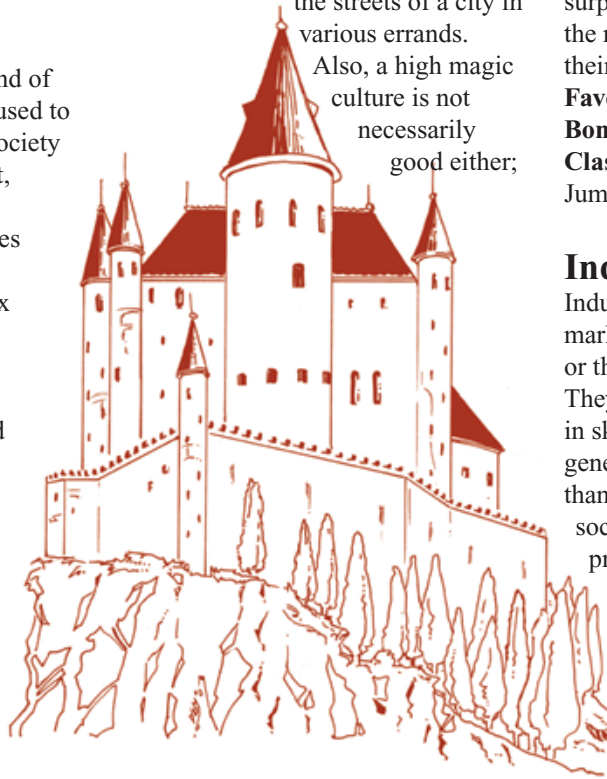
High magic cultures have an intrinsic trust in all things mystical and supernatural. It is not rare to find magically powered city services or knights riding fantastical mounts like griffons and pegasi. The rulers of a high magic society tend to be

either spellcasters or supernatural creatures in their own right, having access to magic that other cultures find impossibly hard to achieve.

This increased use of magic is not exclusive to arcane magic, of course, but extends to divine magic as well, with celestials (or fiends) walking

the streets of a city in various errands.

Also, a high magic culture is not necessarily good either;



magic is a tool that can be used in any way, be either to support law and order or chaos and repression. Evil high magic societies terrorise its members with the prospect of ritual sacrifice or diabolic enforcement of laws.

Favoured Classes: Bard, cleric, sorcerer or wizard.

Bonus Feat/Ability: Magical Affinity, Spell Focus or one of the following feats: Iron Will, Great Fortitude or Lightning Reflexes. Some members of a high magic culture learn to avoid special attacks as a matter of course.

Class Skills: Knowledge (arcana), Spellcraft and Use Magic Device.

High-Mountain Culture

When people settle in high mountain valleys or even on mountain faces, they develop a certain set of skills that help them survive in their extreme environments. Mountain peaks are

invariably very cold, and food tends to be scarce, but high-mountain cultures have somehow adapted by developing new agricultural techniques, concentrating on herding mountain animals, or simply through the use of magic. High-mountain cultures can vary from barbaric to surprisingly civilised, depending on the methods they have for sustaining their lives near the world's ceiling.

Favoured Classes: Any.

Bonus Feat/Ability: Endurance.

Class Skills: Balance, Climb and Jump.

Industrial Culture

Industrial societies have achieved a marked advancement in technology or the use of magic to drive industry. They have developed a sharper divide in skill specialisation, with fewer generalists amongst their members than are found in less advanced societies. Industrial cultures value progress and investigation, and may have forgotten their ties with the land and other spiritual pursuits. The level of technology or magic depends wholly on the campaign setting, but the culture's core principle remains constant:

progress regardless. The industrial template may never be combined with the sylvan template.

Favoured Classes: Rogue or wizard.

Bonus Feat/Ability: +2 cultural bonus to all Craft checks.

Disability: Characters from an industrial culture lose the Wild Empathy ability if they have it, and Survival becomes a cross-class skill regardless of class.

Class Skills: Craft and Disable Device.

Nomadic Culture

Always on the move, nomads have no ties to a particular patch of land, but rather prefer to consider a vast territory to be their home. Because of their lifestyle, nomads seldom develop advanced cultural phenomena like agricultural techniques, advanced technology or complex government and religious institutions. They live

by instinct and by heeding the will of the land and its denizens. Most members of a nomadic society double as warriors, organised in small numbers so as to not overtax the land's resources and their need for security does not lessen in any way because of this. The classic nomadic society is composed of master riders, but this need not be the case; a nomadic group can do its travelling on foot well enough, or even on fantastical devices such as flying ships or giant wagons; what defines them is the fact that they are always on the move.

Favoured Classes: Barbarian, druid, ranger or sorcerer.

Bonus Feat/Ability: Endurance or Track.

Class Skills: Survival and any two of the following Knowledge skills: dungeoneering, geography, local, nature, or the planes (some nomads travel *quite* far...).

Renaissance Culture

A renaissance culture is abandoning a period of obscurantism or entering an age of cultural revolution. Renaissance cultures are dynamic and a bit unstable as their members explore new ways of doing old things and reinventing themselves. The arts and humanities take centre stage and new ground is constantly being broken in many areas, from simple craftsmanship to exploration and arcane research. Unlike its Earthling counterpart, a fantasy renaissance culture need not be at odds with its religious institutions, particularly if the fantasy standard of polytheism is maintained. Some deities may even be helping their followers push the envelope. Renaissance cultures are more often of gnomish or human origin, as other races are too stereotypically set in their ways.

Favoured Classes: Bard, rogue, or wizard.

Bonus Feat/Ability: Skill Focus (any).

Class Skills: Select three Knowledge skills; from now on, those skills are always considered class skills, or gain a +1 cultural bonus if the character's class already has them as class skills.



Sylvan Culture

Sylvan cultures emphasise a harmonious existence with nature. While this kind of culture is more typical of elves, nothing stops other races from following this lifestyle. Members of a sylvan culture do not heavily rely on herding and planting crops for their sustenance, focusing on hunting and gathering their food from the rich resources of a sylvan environment. The better the hunters and the richer the resources, the more time the culture will have to concentrate on artistic and intellectual pursuits, but this is relatively rare.

Favoured Classes: Barbarian, druid or ranger.

Bonus Feat/Ability: Track.

Class Skills: Knowledge (nature), Survival and any one of the following: Hide or Move Silently.

Temple Builder Culture

Of a deeply religious bent, a temple-building society dedicates a vast amount of resources towards building awe-inspiring monuments to whatever force they worship, be they pyramids, stone circles, strangely geometrical cities, canals or other great works of architecture and engineering. The stereotypical temple builders are dominated by a strong theocracy, although this is not a must; a people with something to prove can build great monuments that harness arcane

forces, or perhaps a secular society with a penchant for architectural grandeur.

Favoured Classes: Cleric, fighter or wizard.

Bonus Feat/Ability: Iron Will; temple builders must be very constant to finish a work that takes a century or two.

Class Skills: Diplomacy and any two of the following Knowledge skills: arcana, religion or architecture and engineering.

Trader Culture

A trader culture learned about the benefits of the role of broker early on in its development, and all its progress became geared towards getting goods from one place to another. Not quite nomads but not quite settlers, the members of a trader culture are possessed by a focused wanderlust that takes them from one trading centre to the next, haggling and profiteering along their way. They do build cities, which become important markets in a region, and become better explorers than nomads because of their drive to discover and map new trading routes.

Favoured Classes: Any.

Bonus Feat/Ability: A member of a trader culture chooses one of the following talents:

- A +4 cultural bonus on Survival checks to determine

direction and true North, even if he does not have 5 ranks in Survival. This bonus does not apply to other uses of the Survival skill.

- A +4 cultural bonus on Sense Motive checks against opposed Bluff checks. This bonus does not apply to other uses of the Sense Motive skill.

Disability: Members of other cultures see traders as natural born liars and opportunists and gain a +2 to all Sense Motive checks opposed to a character's Bluff checks. Other characters do not gain this bonus if the character hides his culture of origin.

Class Skills: Appraise, Bluff and Sense Motive.

Underground Culture

Many races and creatures make their homes beneath the surface of the world, living in perpetual darkness broken only by artificial sources of light, if they have need for light at all. Dark elves and dwarves are the most common underground dwellers, but any race may have been forced to make its home underground, such as human refugees from a great catastrophe on the surface or elves who listen to the voice of the rocks instead of the voice of the trees. Underground cultures often have very exotic customs, adapted to their unique lifestyle of separation from the sun and the stars, with some of its cultural aspects seeming utterly alien to surface dwellers.

Favoured Classes: Any.

Bonus Feat/Ability: Blindsight; underground dwellers learn to operate without sight, relying on the rest of their senses. Should any of their other senses be impaired, such as by deafening or overloading their sense of smell, they lose this ability until they recover from such condition.

Disability: Members of an underground culture are very light sensitive; they are dazzled in bright sunlight or within the radius of a *daylight* spell.

Class Skills: Listen, Move Silently and Knowledge (dungeoneering).

Warrior Culture

As the name implies, a warrior culture has war as one of its main activities. By religious or secular conviction, the whole culture leans towards war and all manner of warriors have a greater status than non-combatants. The rulers of a warrior culture are almost always veteran combatants and only those with serious disabilities do not join their troops in the frontlines. A warrior culture need not be violent; it may view war as an art and philosophy, or focus its efforts towards defence if territories are besieged by enemies. Primitive warrior cultures are crude and bloodthirsty, while more sophisticated versions may develop a number of martial arts and mystical warfare tactics.

Favoured Classes: Barbarian, fighter or monk.

Bonus Feat/Ability: Armour Proficiency (light, medium or heavy), Exotic Weapon Proficiency (any one), or Weapon Focus (any one).

Class Skills: Handle Animal, Intimidate, and Craft (weaponsmithing or armoursmithing).

Waterborne Culture

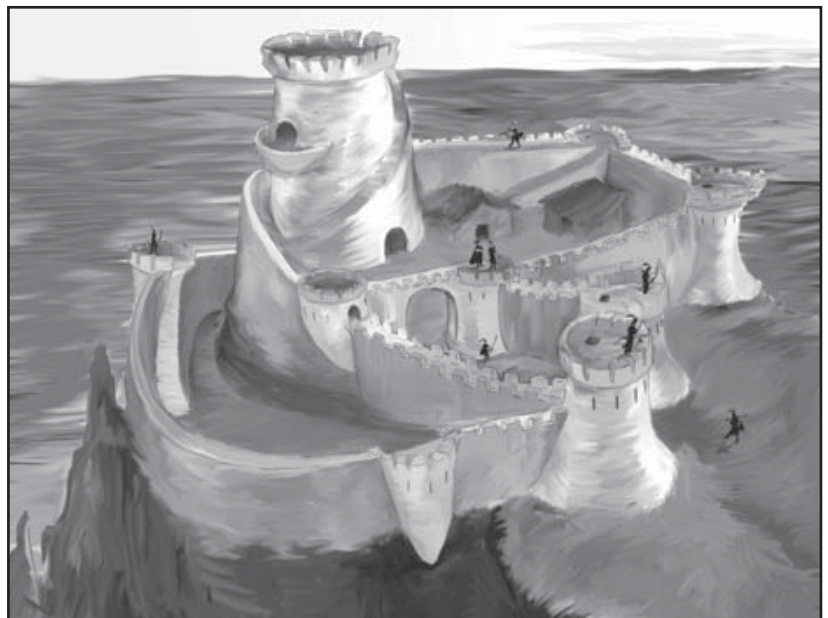
Cultures that live off the resources found in a body of water, be it a river, lake or ocean, develop unique practices that landlocked cultures often fail to understand. Faced with one of the greatest natural forces in any world, waterborne cultures have a deep respect for the ways of nature and for all mysterious things. A waterborne culture can live on the shores of a body of water, be a nomadic sailing culture or, if its racial abilities permit, an underwater culture; what they have in common is their affinity to water and its creatures.

Favoured Classes: Any.

Bonus Feat/Ability: A character from a waterborne culture chooses one of the following talents:

- A swim speed equal to his base speed.
- The character may hold his breath for twice as long as other members of his race.
- +2 cultural bonus to Constitution checks and Fortitude saves to avoid drowning damage, pressure damage or cold water damage.

Class Skills: Survival, Swim and any one of the following: Profession (sailor) or Spot.



Macho Women With Guns

Page 43 Girl

'Hi, my name is Chloe. When I go out I like to take maximum firepower with me. A girl never knows when she is going to need hi-explosives or a missile launcher. After all, it's Dang dangerous out there! When I finish hunting the devil and his spawn, I want to go to Wales to help the underprivileged.'



MWWG

Q&A

Next
page!

Q&A

Macho Women
With Guns

This month we focus on issues arising from Macho Women With Guns. No, it's not fashion advice. Surely you can work out the best accessories to wear with a leather thong and pump action shotgun. Bob Roberts takes you by the hand and leads you into Answerland.

Q Backstabbing Bitch feat - it requires two 5 rank skills as a prerequisite, but it's listed as a bonus feat for the Criminal occupation. Since a first level character could only have 4 ranks in a skill, should the prerequisites be changed or should it be removed as a bonus feat?

A It should not be changed, as it is a bonus feat it does not matter what the prerequisites are.

Q Blow Your Way... - it also requires a 5 rank skill (and a cross-class one for most at that!) but is listed for the Celebrity occupation. Lower prerequisites or remove from the list of Celebrity bonus feats?

A See the above answer

Q Craft (Cosmetics) skill; Nookie skill- just to check, they are class skills only for those with either the Beautician or BWB occupation or Media Icon advanced class, right? Can they both be used untrained? (The character sheet implies Nookie is Trained Only.)

A Craft (Cosmetics) may be used by anyone; Nookie may not be used untrained. We are not saying you cannot do it without this skill, it just takes some real talent to perform properly.

Q Bad Luck heinous drawback - can every successful roll be re-rolled (and re-rolled again, and again as appropriate) or is there a limit on the number of times this drawback can take effect in a session?

A The limit is whatever level of Bad Luck you take. If you take 3 they can force the check to be re-rolled

three times. There is no limit to the number of times per session. It only happens if the other players and Games Master remember as they have to make you re-roll.

Q Equipment - do CHA bonuses from clothing stack? Do they offset armour CHA penalties?

A Yes, but be sensible, wearing a bikini under a ball gown will not help any. But stockings & suspenders will offset the penalty of wearing a light duty vest. Well, some of it at least. Both examples, however, are fashionably appropriate and any Macho Woman worth her salt would obviously consider them as options.

Q The Business Bitch advanced class - it has Backstabbing Bitch, Confident and Iron Will as prerequisite feats but these also appear in the list of bonus feats for the class. Should these feats be removed as prerequisites or be substituted in the bonus feats list?

A You need to be a bitch to become the business bitch. Why bother taking them if you already have them? Just ignore them in the bonus feats, you get loads of others.

Q Where is the missing text for the Scribe Scroll spell?

A Here it is:

Missing Text for Scribe Scroll

Mana Cost - Scribing a scroll costs five Mana points in addition to the normal cost for the spell. Additionally, it costs 10, 25 or 50 dollars depending on the level of the spell being written into the scroll; this is because spell scrolls require rare and expensive ingredients (or the

Games Master just wants to steal back all the cash he gave you).

Casting Time - Scribing a scroll takes ten minutes in addition to the time taken to cast the spell being put into the scroll.

Prerequisites - In order to learn Scribe scroll you must have the Magical feat and at least six ranks in the Spellcraft skill. You must know both Scribe Scroll and the spell you wish to put into the scroll to create a scroll.

Q Where is the missing text for the Zap 1 spell?

A Here it is:

Missing text for Zap 1

Casting Time - Casting Zap I takes one action.

Prerequisites - In order to learn Zap I you must have the Magical feat.

Effect - The bolt of energy must be directed to the target with a ranged attack check. If it strikes it does a 1d6 of damage. It can hit anything within the caster's line of sight.

Q Where is the missing text for the Zap 2 spell?

A Here it is:

Missing Text for Zap2

Zap II creates a stream of energy or matter of some kind and blasts the target with it. This can be a stream of fire, a spray of ice, a bolt of electricity, an engulfing swarm of bugs or similar. The net effect is the same regardless.

Mana Cost - Casting Zap II costs 10 Mana.

Q Are Mana points used to charge an item regained as normal, even if the charges are not used?

A Yes.

Q Can you overcharge an item (i.e. put in more charges than it had originally) up to the 100 Mana limit?

A I would say no to this. Unless you recreate the device I would say the Mana level was fixed.

Q Under the Batwinged Bimbo occupation bonus Feats, Evil Powers is listed. This feat does not appear in the book.

A This feat was renamed to Bat out of Hell feat (p32).

Q In the advanced class Librarian Beauty, the character is offered Bonus Feats from a list. The list however, is not of feats but of skills.

A It was intended that each bonus feat should be the Skill Emphasis feat in one of the skills listed.

Q The Witch is referred to in it's own description as the 'Magical Girl', a reference that is repeated elsewhere in the book. What happened?

A The Magical Girl was changed to the Witch in the latter stages of production.

Q Magic Feats don't seem to be on anyone's bonus feat list, including the Witch! If the only time they can be taken is with the feats allotted through character level advancement, then wouldn't that rather limit the abilities of magic-wielding characters to grow more powerful?

A Yes, it is true to say that this hampers the development of magical characters, but this is one of the few features designed to, in some way, balance the game.

Q While the game clearly places a great emphasis on characters' Charisma scores, I cannot find much in the way of mechanics involving the Charisma score, other than what would be found in any d20 game. Is this correct? If so, why do I care if I lose Charisma for wearing armour?

A The Charisma penalty inflicted by wearing armour is actually quite a serious penalty. True, if your games involve little more than blasting everything in sight then they mean very little. Let us not forget, however, that these penalties affect all skills that use Charisma modifiers, such as Intimidate, Bluff and Diplomacy.

Jonny Nexus

I Think My Games Master Hates Me

My Sunday group has been playing our Call of Cthulhu campaign for a couple of months now, and it has become apparent that John, the Games Master, is pretty strict. I first became concerned when he forced my character Ralph¹ to make a driving skill check just to drive home from his Buckinghamshire Estate to his London home. Apparently, the task was made 'non-trivial' because: It was dark; the road was unlit and unsurfaced; I was driving a 1920s sports car with a super-charged six litre engine but only bicycle wheels and brakes; I was doing ninety miles an hour; and I'd been drinking heavily all afternoon³.

To really rub salt into the wounds, when I successfully made the roll he said I couldn't tick the experience box⁴ because, in his opinion, the task had not been essential to the adventure. (I felt that me not crashing and dying *was* essential to the adventure, actually, but perhaps dancing around him after I'd made the roll gesticulating in his face and shouting, 'Suck on that!' might not have been the wisest move.)

Then he started being difficult about our choice of travel arrangements. After our initial excursion to an asylum on a remote Scottish island (**MAJOR SPOILER** - for God's sake don't go near the place!) we had moved onto the Horror on the Orient Express campaign, and John had consequently developed something of a train fixation. The campaign starts in London, and then involves the player characters following the route of the Orient Express, from Paris, to Milan, Venice and Belgrade, eventually ending up in Istanbul. We spent about three weeks in London, researching, breaking into places, drinking and generally procrastinating, but our eventual decision that, perhaps, moving onto Paris might be a good move triggered John into producing a whole torrent of information about Boat Train times from London Waterloo to Paris.

Clearly though, this would be a stupid travel option to take. Why take the train when my character was, firstly, a pilot, and, secondly, rich and could therefore hire a private plane and get the whole party there in half of the time? Well, as you can no doubt imagine, John was somewhat unimpressed by this plan, but eventually grudgingly conceded and so, that afternoon, we sallied forth in our hired plane for Paris via Calais, crossing the channel coast at Ostend and then following the railway to Brussels.

It is just possible that I might have shagged up my navigation roll.

As an aside, I had recently read in a travel guide that Brussels is a horribly boring city, with absolutely nothing to do or see, and our campaign proved this to be the case. In every other place we have been to on the Orient Express campaign (London, Paris, Milan and Venice) John has had lists of hotels we could stay in, restaurants we could eat in, museums and churches that we could visit, together with a whole host of cultural and historical information. But when we (faced with the prospect of a night in Brussels before setting off for Paris the next morning) asked him what there was to do in the city, he just shrugged.

We ended up spending the night in an unnamed bar somewhere⁵.

In the sessions since, John's harsh behaviour has continued. He let me make a Listen roll during a house break-in and then – when I made the roll – told me that I could hear myself making noise and no, I couldn't tick the experience box. He had an evil Non-Player Character cut a little finger off each one of us⁶, when a blundered and foolhardy attack (by us on him, in case you were wondering) resulted in us being overpowered by his henchmen and delivered unconscious to his secret lair.

We have also been beaten up by black-shirts (how was I supposed to know

that fascists don't like being stared at, and that apparently, there is no point complaining to the law – because it transpires that they are the law).

We have been ripped off – badly – by currency dealers, who cynically took advantage of the fact that being rich, aristocratic and stupid, I didn't know what the actual exchange rate was and felt that it would be rude to ask.

We have been insulted by priests, crashed hire cars (having to cover up the damage with mud), received no

help when we couldn't understand our own notes⁷, and had to endure awkward social encounters with antiquities dealers and their terribly war-wounded brothers. (Apparently, it is 'bad form' to assume that a chap's an imbecile on account of his being a mute).

We've got into screaming rows with Germans when we (well, I) were only attempting to reminisce harmlessly about the war and what we'd done in it. (I'm sorry, but if they're going to be bad losers then they shouldn't

have started the damn war in the first place. Don't they know that it doesn't matter if you win or lose but how you play the game?)

And to top it all, we can't understand a damn word anyone's saying⁸.

But I don't care, and I'm not going to let John win. I intend to continue to meet each challenge he throws at us¹⁰ with courage, determination, a stiff upper lip, and shouts of: 'We are British citizens! We demand you contact the British Ambassador!'

¹The Honourable Squadron Leader Ralph Charles George Halthorpe-Halthorpe MP BA DFC² (pronounced 'Rafe Haltrop-Halthorpe').

²The Distinguished Flying Cross, given to pilots who have displayed acts of courage and devotion to duty, and who have shot down at least eight aircraft. The 1920s Call of Cthulhu British supplement has an excellent character creation rule that allows you to play a character who served in the First World War, which gains you extra skill points at the expense of losing a few sanity points. I say 'excellent character creation rule' because as soon as you start play – and realise how useful it is to at least start sane – you realise that it's not such a great rule after all.

³Before you all get all righteous and moral about my character's drink-driving you should perhaps ask yourself if you have ever had a character do something bad, like, say... killing people? My character is a 1920s aristocratic twit with morals (or lack of them) to fit.

⁴In Call of Cthulhu, if you successfully use a skill during a session you get to tick it. At the end of the session you can roll for each ticked skill to see if it improves.

⁵Rather luckily, the campaign started with our patron giving us a thousand pounds sterling as 'expenses', and, even luckier, it wasn't General T's character – a teetotal Scottish Presbyterian – who got appointed party treasurer. So far we've blown about a third of the cash on booze and whores and we've only made it as far as Venice.

⁶Not just us PCs, but my (NPC) servant Jones too, which I felt was particularly harsh. It's difficult enough keeping the staff in line without them getting digits removed in the course of duty. (Although I did tell him that I'd put some extra shillings in his Christmas bonus).

⁷As I confessed in a previous issue, I'm a session amnesiac, so I start each Cthulhu session by looking at my 'investigation notes'. Unfortunately, they're often not much help. One session, the last thing I'd written was something like 'Villa de la Palais'. Nothing else, just the name. None of us (the players) could remember what the hell it was supposed to be or where the hell I had got it from. John let us spend about twenty fruitless minutes brainstorming possibilities (since it was presumably some kind of lead, should we go there and stake the place out?) before taking pity and reminding us that we had ended the last session when our characters finished work for the day and headed off for a drink, and that our last action had been to ask our translator/guide if he could recommend any places with good booze and morally flexible women.

⁸My character does speak other languages, actually. Just not any of the ones that they speak along the route of the Orient Express. But if you want anyone to read any of the classic literature of ancient Rome or Greece I'm your man! I was able to successfully argue that – given my character's service in France during the war – I should be able to speak what I term 'bar French'. But while this is excellent for ordering wine, food and prostitutes, our Cthulhu scenarios thus far have not had much of a requirement for this (although our characters have had an excellent time). Luckily⁹, my (NPC) servant Jones does speak French, but unluckily it turns out that people stop speaking French by around Switzerland, and start speaking Italian instead.

⁹I expect John (the GM) would probably claim that this was due less to luck, and more to the fact that he created the character, and was able to fill in some of the more appalling party skill gaps that we'd left. But then he always says stuff like that.

¹⁰Provided it's before 5pm, because at that point our characters knock off for the day, and go drinking.

CREATURE FEATURE!

By Johnathan M. Richards

*'Once they were men ...
now they are land crabs.' -
Attack of the Crab Monsters*

*Beetles, spiders, moths. . . a
creature I can't even spell. Feast
your eyes on these little devils
- before they feast on you!*

PALANQUIN BEETLE

Large Vermin
Hit Dice: 9d8+27 (67 hp)
Initiative: +0
Speed: 30 ft.
AC: 19 (-1 size, +10 natural)
Base Attacks/Grapple: +5/+16
Attack: Bite +12 (2d6+10)
Full Attack: Bite: Bite +12 (2d6+10)
Space/Reach: 10 ft. / 5 ft.
Special Attacks: Trample 2d8+10
Special Qualities: Vermin
Saves: Fort +9, Ref +3, Will +2
Abilities: Str 25, Dex 10, Con 17, Int
—, Wis 8, Cha 9
Skills: ---
Feats: ---
Climate/Terrain: Temperate and warm
land
Organisation: Solitary
Challenge Rating: 5
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always neutral
Advancement Range: 10-12 HD
(Large), 13-27 HD (Huge)
Level Adjustment: ---

Palanquin beetles reach lengths of 15 feet or more. They are easily identifiable by the six long spines projecting upward from the edges of their carapaces, each spine often reaching 6-8 feet in length. While these spines probably serve a defensive purpose (preventing large flying creatures from swooping down upon the beetle without running the risk of being impaled), they are often put to a different use by the humanoid races that

'domesticate' these enormous insects: the spines serve as 'poles' to which a canvas covering is tied, providing shade for the creatures riding upon the beetle's back. The spines also make a handy place to display the severed heads of vanquished foes.

Palanquin beetles have brightly coloured carapaces, usually of contrasting colours: red and green; purple and blue; yellow and pink. The rest of their bodies are a uniform black, including the six upward-thrusting spines. Their eyes are tiny in comparison to their enormous bodies and their antennae are similarly small, providing the beetle with very little details of the world around it beyond 10 feet or so.

Combat

While most insects are considered non-intelligent, the palanquin beetle is exceptionally so. It has a single offensive capability: biting an enemy with its powerful mandibles. As soon as it detects potential prey it

heads straight for it with mouthparts open wide. The creature has no sense of strategy, no finesse, just a simple find prey/chase prey/eat prey formula which it uses at all times. Palanquin beetles have been known to attack creatures many times their own size.

The monster's offensive capabilities are often enhanced by the creatures that ride upon its back, usually orcs, goblins, or occasionally gnolls. These humanoids use the palanquin beetle as a combination transport vehicle and weapons platform, riding the beetle into battle against enemies and hurling spears, shooting arrows, or lobbing rocks from the relative safety of the giant insect's back.

Palanquin beetles have a tendency to focus upon a single target at a time, chasing after him exclusively even if other potential victims are in the same area. This is more of a result of the insect's limited intelligence and awareness rather than any devotion of purpose or single-mindedness upon its part.



Palanquin beetles do not use their spines as weapons, as they stick straight up into the air and are not manoeuvrable.

Those races that 'domesticate' palanquin beetles do so by a simple method: rushing at the creature

from all sides and jumping up onto its back while it eats those foolish enough to have approached it from the front. Once on the beetle's back the humanoids are ignored by the monster; as it cannot reach or even see them, they cease to exist to the beetle. 'Steering' a palanquin beetle is a simple matter as well: tie a piece of meat (usually part of a slain foe) to the end of a pole and dangle it in front of the beetle's head in the direction you wish it to go. Lift the pole up out of its range of vision and the beetle stops, amazed at its prey's sudden vanishing act.

A palanquin beetle makes an excellent war mount, although in many ways it is more like a seagoing vessel: getting on and steering is easy enough but you certainly do not want to fall 'overboard' for fear of being eaten. Several orc tribes have taken this analogy even further, attaching a heavy 'anchor' to one of the beetle's legs via a length of sturdy chain. When the weight is upon the beetle's back it can move normally; when dropped, the beetle is unable to pull the weight solely by the strength of its leg and so cannot move from the area.

Trample (Ex): A palanquin beetle can trample Medium or smaller sized creatures for 2d8+10 points of damage. Opponents who do not make attacks of opportunity against the beetle can attempt a Reflex save (DC 21) to take half damage. The Save DC is Strength based.

Vermin: Palanquin beetles are immune to mind-influencing effects. They also have darkvision (10-foot range).

SAND SCARAB

Large Vermin

Hit Dice: 5d8+10 (32 hp)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 20 ft., burrow 10 ft.

AC: 17 (-1 size, +8 natural)

Base Attack/Grapple: +2/+10

Attack: Bite +6 melee (1d8+6 (males) or 1d4+6 (females))

Full Attack: Bite +6 melee (1d8+6 (males) or 1d4+6 (females))

Space/Reach: 10 ft. / 5 ft.

Special Attacks: Improved grab

Special Qualities: Vermin, tremorsense

Saves: Fort +6, Ref +1, Will +1

Abilities: Str 19, Dex 10, Con 15, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 9

Skills: Hide +4*

Feats: —

Climate/Terrain: Desert

Organisation: Solitary

Challenge Rating: 3

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always neutral

Advancement Range: 6-10 HD (Large), 11-15 HD (Huge)

Level Adjustment: ---

The sand scarab gets its name from its environment, not from its coloration: the creature is a shiny, uniform black, the better to capture precious droplets of condensed dew as it forms at the break of day. Sand scarabs have thin, whip-like antennae, slender legs and a sleek build, to facilitate burrowing under the sands of the deserts in which they make their homes. Sand scarabs have lost the ability of flight.

Sand scarabs keep no permanent lairs, digging under the sand when they need shelter and constantly roaming the desert for food. They are truly omnivorous, living on desert plants (especially cacti), animals and even carrion. They have a slow metabolism and an efficient digestive system allowing them to make the most out of everything they eat. As a result, a sand scarab can go for over a week between meals if needed. They prey upon just about anything moving on or under the desert sands, even poisonous creatures; while not immune to poisons, a sand scarab knows enough to snip off a rattlesnake's head or a scorpion's stinger with its mandibles before eating the rest of the animal.

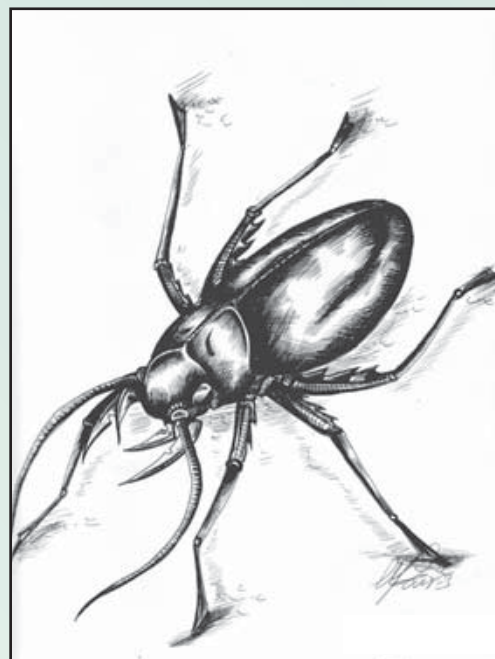
Combat

Sand scarabs attack with their powerful mandibles, with males causing more damage than females. (As in many beetle species, sexual dimorphism is apparent in sand scarabs, with the males having larger and more prominent pincers.) They spend much of their time burrowing under the sand, just below the surface. With their sensitive antennae, they can sense movements on the surface above them and burrow up to attack their prey from below. Once on the desert, a sand scarab generally remains above the surface while attacking its prey, digging its way back underground only if fleeing battle with a more powerful foe.

Sand scarabs habitually roam the desert sands when hungry during the daytime, then bury themselves under a layer of insulating sand during the cold desert night. If not particularly hungry, they remain poised just below the layer of sand, patiently waiting for prey to pass by overhead.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, the sand scarab must hit an opponent of Medium or smaller size with its bite attack. Grabbed victims are subject to automatic bite damage each round.

Tremorsense (Ex): A sand scarab can automatically sense the location of



anything within 60 feet in contact with the ground, even while it is buried below the surface of the sand.

Vermin: Sand scarabs are immune to mind-influencing effects. They also have darkvision (60-foot range).

***Skills:** Sand scarabs receive a +16 circumstance bonus to their Hide checks when buried under the sand.

SHRIEK SPIDER

Small Vermin

Hit Dice: 1d8 (4 hp)

Initiative: +3 (Dex)

Speed: 40 ft., climb 20 ft., fly 20 ft. (poor)

AC: 14 (+1 size, +3 Dex)

Base Attack/Grapple: +1/-5

Attack: Bite -1 melee (1d4-2 plus poison)

Full Attack: Bite -1 melee (1d4-2 plus poison)

Space/Reach: 5 ft. / 5 ft.

Special Attacks: Poison, shriek

Special Qualities: Vermin

Saves: Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +1

Abilities: Str 7, Dex 17, Con 11, Int —, Wis 12, Cha 6

Skills: Climb +8, Jump +4, Spot +9

Feats: ---

Climate/Terrain: Any non-arctic or non-subarctic land

Organisation: Solitary or colony (2-5)

Challenge Rating: 1

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always neutral

Advancement Range: —

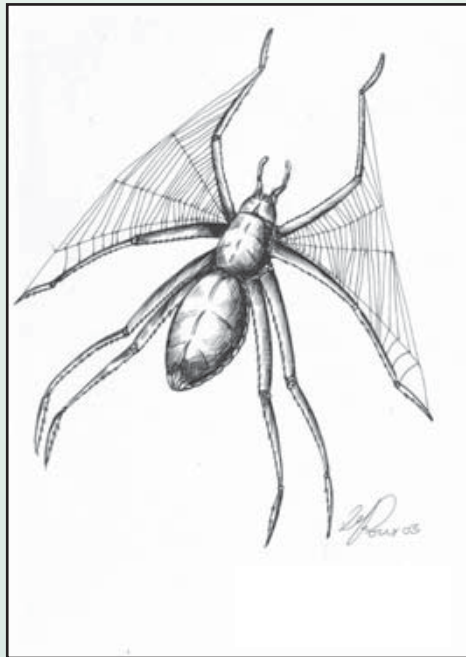
Level Adjustment: ---

Shriek spiders are small, narrow-bodied arachnids with long, thin legs. Their sleek bodies are a pale grey, enabling them to blend in with stone when seen from above or to a lesser extent with the sky when seen from below.

Shriek spiders are loners, each seeking its own prey. They do not co-operate in the hunt; however, in an area hosting several of the creatures, an unfortunate victim could find herself being attacked by more than one shriek spider.

Combat

Shriek spiders have adopted an unusual form of attack. Making their homes in trees or along cliff sides, when a shriek spider detects potential prey it begins spinning a line of webbing from its abdomen. The strand is gossamer-thin, catching the wind and dancing in the air like an unseen ribbon. The spider continues paying out the line until the web-strand is long enough to support the spider's own weight, at which time the creature releases its hold and drifts in the air, pulled aloft by its own strand of webbing.



While such behaviour is not unknown in normal spiders (the process is called 'ballooning,' and is the way many types of new-born spider spread throughout the world), the shriek spider is one of the only spiders known to travel in such a fashion in its adult form. Furthermore, the shriek spider is not at the mercy of the breeze; using two home-made 'fins' – twin weaves of webbing between the two front legs on either side of its body – it can 'steer' to some extent, gliding in on targets.

Shriek (Ex): To assist it in landing on prey, when it gets near its target the spider lets forth a wild shriek, seemingly too loud to have come from

such a small creature. The shock of hearing the shriek forces victims to make a Will save (DC 12) or be stunned for one round; this gives the spider a non-moving target. If a shriek spider cannot steer itself to land directly on a victim, it aims for a point above the victim, cutting its web-line at the last moment and dropping down upon him.

Poison (Ex): Bite, Fortitude save (DC 11); initial and secondary damage 1d3 temporary Strength. The bites of a shriek spider become inflamed at once, causing a reddish-purple welt around the bitten area.

Vermin: Shriek spiders are immune to mind-influencing effects. They also have darkvision (60-foot range).

Skills: Shriek spiders receive a +10 racial bonus to Climb checks, a +6 racial bonus to Jump checks and a +8 racial bonus to Spot checks.

STILT BEETLE

Large Vermin

Hit Dice: 6d8+12 (39 hp)

Initiative: +2 (Dex)

Speed: 30 ft. or 60 ft. (with legs extended), climb 20 ft. or 40 ft. (with legs extended)

AC: 18 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +7 natural)

Base Attack/Grapple: +3/+11

Attack: Bite +7 melee (1d8+6)

Full Attack: Bite +7 melee (1d8+6)

Space/Reach: 10 ft./5 ft. or 15 ft. (with legs extended)

Special Attacks: Improved grab, swat

Special Qualities: Vermin, sprint, dodge missiles

Saves: Fort +7, Ref +4, Will +3

Abilities: Str 19, Dex 14, Con 15, Int —, Wis 13, Cha 11

Skills: ---

Feats: ---

Climate/Terrain: Temperate and warm land

Organisation: Solitary or cluster (2-5)

Challenge Rating: 4

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always neutral

Advancement Range: 7-12 HD

(Large), 13-18 HD (Huge)

Level Adjustment: ---

The stilt beetle's six well-armoured legs have two more joints than most beetles; normally, three segments of each leg are 'folded up' on top of each other, although this is not readily apparent at first glance. In the blink of an eye the stilt beetle can 'unfold' its appendages to their full length until the creature towers over its opponents at a height of up to 15 feet. With



its stilt legs fully extended the beetle covers ground at an accelerated rate, either chasing down prey or fleeing from more powerful foes.

A stilt beetle's carapace is black with red patterns along the exterior rim. The creature's elytra (wing-cases) have fused into a solid shell, preventing the stilt beetle from flying, but its rapid ground speed more than makes up for this loss.

Stilt beetles have excellent vision, an uncommon trait among insects. Their antennae are extremely sensitive as well, allowing the beetles to pinpoint the movement rates of other creatures around them. This ability aids in targeting attacks against their enemies.

Stilt beetles make excellent riding mounts, although a *charm monster* or similar spell is necessary to gain their servitude.

Combat

When actively hunting, most stilt beetles extend their legs to their full height so they get the best view of their surroundings and any potential prey. When the beetle spots a possible victim, it rushes toward him at top speed, dipping its elevated body at the last moment to bring its sharp mandibles into range to attack.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, a stilt beetle must succeed at a bite attack, after which the stilt beetle attempts to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an Attack of Opportunity (grapple bonus +12). Once grabbed, a victim takes automatic bite damage each round and is pulled to a height of 15 feet, where the beetle has the advantage. (Most ground-based prey is at a disadvantage when dangling from a stilt beetle's mandibles: even if they escape they plummet 15 feet to the ground, taking an additional 1d6 points of falling damage.)

Swat (Ex): A stilt beetle can swat flying creatures out of the sky with one of its fully extended front legs. This requires a normal attack roll; if successful, the flying creature takes 1d6 points of bludgeoning damage and must make a Reflex save (DC 18) or fall to the ground, disoriented. Note the stilt beetle can only reach creatures flying at an altitude of 30 feet or less and normal falling damage applies to the 'swatted' victim. It takes but a moment for the beetle to extend or retract its legs, so it can be crawling along like a 'normal' giant beetle one round and swatting a wizard levitating 25 feet up in the air the next.

Dodge Missiles (Ex): With its legs extended, a stilt beetle is allowed a Reflex saving throw to avoid being hit with missile weapons.

Sprint (Ex): Once an hour, a stilt beetle with its legs extended can take a charge action to move at five times its normal speed (300 ft.).

Vermin: Stilt beetles are immune to mind-influencing effects. They also have darkvision (120-foot range).

TEXTILE MOTH

Small Vermin

Hit Dice: 1d8 (4 hp)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 20 ft., fly 40 ft. (average)

AC: 13 (+1 size, +2 natural)

Base Attack/Grapple: +1/-5

Attacks: Bite -1 melee (1d4-2) or

antenna +1 touch (dissolve cloth)

Full Attack: Bite -1 melee (1d4-2) or

antenna +1 touch (dissolve cloth)

Space/Reach: 5 ft. / 5 ft.

Special Attacks: Dissolve textiles

Special Qualities: Vermin

Saves: Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +1

Abilities: Str 7, Dex 11, Con 10, Int

—, Wis 12, Cha 9

Skills: ---

Feats: ---

Climate/Terrain: Any nonarctic or

nonsubarctic land and underground

Organisation: Solitary or swarm (2-5)

Challenge Rating: ½

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always neutral

Advancement Range: —

Level Adjustment: ---

In many ways, the textile moth is to woven fabrics what the rust monster is to metallic objects; neither creature is highly regarded by adventurers. A textile moth's white, feathery antennae can dissolve cloth objects into puffs of dust, which the textile moth then devours. Many dust particles cling to the undersides of the moth's wings, to be consumed at the creature's leisure.

A textile moth's body is two feet long and covered in a soft, downy fur, with stripes and patterns in white, tan and brown. Its wings are similarly shaded, with twin stripes of black along the outermost edges. The creature's wingspan is about four feet.

It is perhaps inevitable that, given the creature's diet, textile moths are occasionally referred to as 'cloth moths.'

Combat

If necessary, a textile moth can bite at opponents with its sharp mouthparts, but for the most part it saves its attacks for articles of cloth. Textile moths do not differentiate between cloth that is worn and that which is unattended, or between magical and non-magical cloth. A canvas tent is as tasty to them as a *cloak of charisma* and a dropped bedroll might keep the moths busy enough to ignore the tasty garments worn by adventurers long enough for the adventurers to respond, either by striking the moths at a distance or



fleeing out of sight. Fortunately, textile moths are not durable creatures and are easily slain but often not before causing great inconvenience and possible embarrassment to their targets.

Dissolve Textiles (Su): A successful touch attack with a textile moth's feathery antenna causes textiles to dissolve into a cloud of dust particles. Magic cloth items must succeed at a Reflex save (DC 20) or be dissolved. Only one layer of worn clothing is affected by each antenna touch, so a wizard might lose his cloak one round and his robe the next.

Vermin: Textile moths are immune to mind-influencing effects. They also have darkvision (60-foot range).

XANTHONYCHOS

Large Vermin

Hit Dice: 4d8+8 (26 hp)

Initiative: +5 (Dex)

Speed: 30 ft., climb 20 ft.

AC: 17 (-1 size, +5 Dex, +3 natural)

Base Attack/Grapple: +2/+8

Attacks: Tail-pincer +4 melee (1d6+2),

bite +4 melee (1d6+2 plus poison)

Full Attack: Tail-pincer +4 melee (1d6+2) and bite -1 melee (1d6+2 plus poison)

Space/Reach: 10 ft. / 10 ft. (tail-pincer) or 5ft. (bite)

Special Attacks: Improved grab, squeeze, shocking grasp

Special Qualities: Vermin, Resistance to Electricity 15

Saves: Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +1

Abilities: Str 14, Dex 21, Con 15, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 4

Skills: ---

Feats: ---

Climate/Terrain: Any land and underground

Organisation: Solitary

Challenge Rating: 3

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always neutral

Advancement Range: 5-8 HD (Large), 9-12 HD (Huge)

Level Adjustment: ---

The xanthonychos (ZAN-tho-NYKE-ose, literally 'yellow claw')

is a twelve-legged arthropod with a predominantly scorpion-like build, although it lacks the oversized claws on its forelegs and does not have a stinger at the tip of its tail. Rather, its tail ends in a pair of wide pincers capable of darting forth and snatching prey. The creature's exoskeleton is predominantly black, with the exception of the jagged stripe of yellow running down its back and tail and the tail-pincers themselves, which are yellow as well. Xanthonychi are often referred to as 'pincer-tails' or 'lightningbacks.'

Combat

A xanthonychos darts out at prey, using its tail-pincer to grasp prey and shock it to death in wave after wave of electrical emanations.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, a xanthonychos must succeed at a tail-pincer attack, after which it attempts to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an Attack of Opportunity (grapple bonus +9). A grabbed victim is subjected to the xanthonychos' squeeze and shocking grasp attacks.

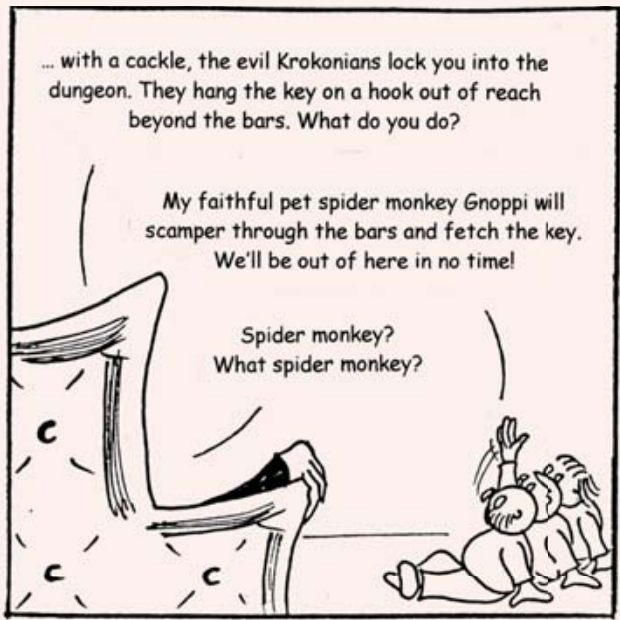
Squeeze (Ex): A xanthonychos that gets a hold automatically deals 1d6+2 points of crushing damage each round with its tail-pincer.

Shocking Grasp (Sp): Once every three rounds, a xanthonychos can send a shocking bolt of electricity through its tail-pincer. This deals an automatic 1d8+1 points of damage to a victim grabbed by the tail-pincer; the xanthonychos can alternately make a touch attack with its tail-pincer to affect an opponent not already held.

Resistance to Electricity (Ex): A xanthonychos ignores the first 15 points of electrical damage each round.

Vermin: Xanthonychi are immune to mind-influencing effects. They also have darkvision (60-foot range).

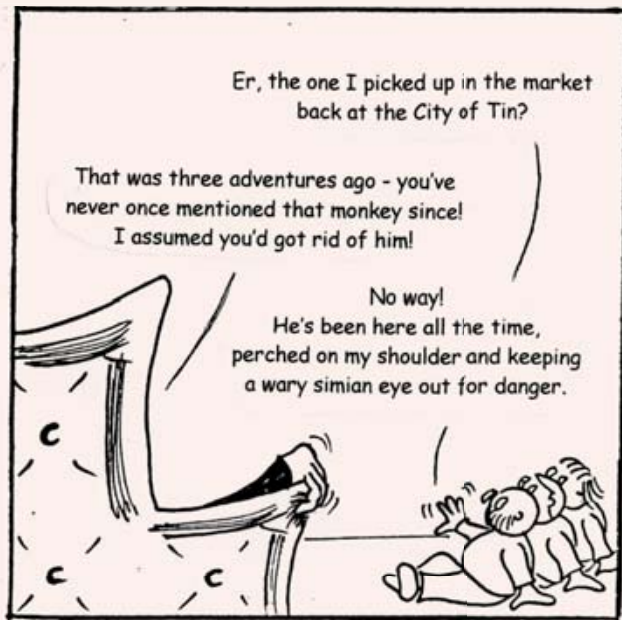




... with a cackle, the evil Krokonians lock you into the dungeon. They hang the key on a hook out of reach beyond the bars. What do you do?

My faithful pet spider monkey Gnoppi will scamper through the bars and fetch the key. We'll be out of here in no time!

Spider monkey? What spider monkey?



Er, the one I picked up in the market back at the City of Tin?

That was three adventures ago - you've never once mentioned that monkey since! I assumed you'd got rid of him!

No way! He's been here all the time, perched on my shoulder and keeping a wary simian eye out for danger.

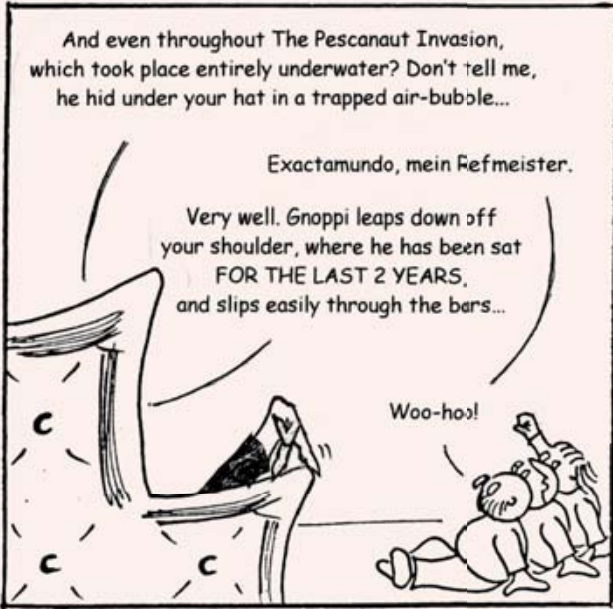


What, during the Deathmarch Across The Glass Desert, where you had to eat your leather armour to stave off starvation?

Yup. He sustained himself by licking the sweat from my neck.

And in the Song Of The Salamanders, when you were fireballed right down to your skin twice?

Yup. He leapt out of the way at the last second.

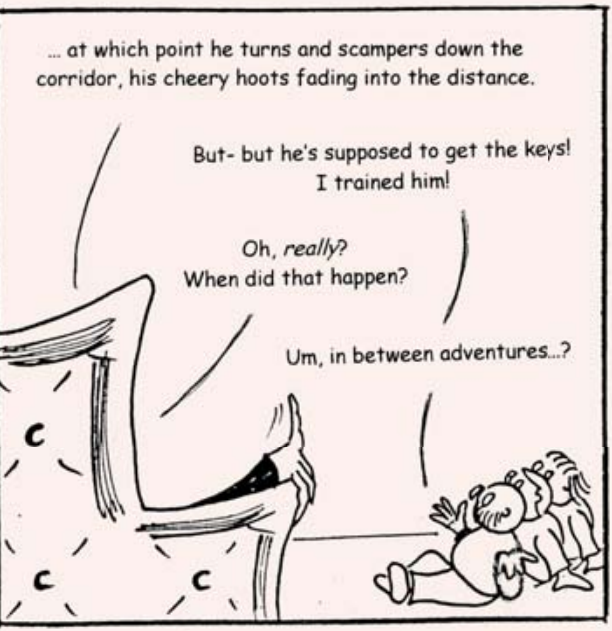


And even throughout The Pescanaut Invasion, which took place entirely underwater? Don't tell me, he hid under your hat in a trapped air-bubble...

Exactamundo, mein Refmeister.

Very well. Gnoppi leaps down off your shoulder, where he has been sat FOR THE LAST 2 YEARS, and slips easily through the bars...

Woo-hoo!

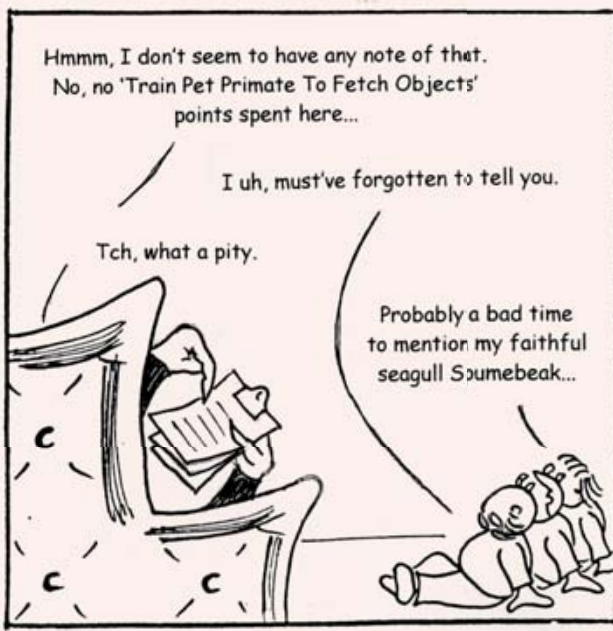


... at which point he turns and scampers down the corridor, his cheery hoots fading into the distance.

But- but he's supposed to get the keys! I trained him!

Oh, really? When did that happen?

Um, in between adventures...?



Hmmm, I don't seem to have any note of that. No, no 'Train Pet Primate To Fetch Objects' points spent here...

I uh, must've forgotten to tell you.

Tch, what a pity.

Probably a bad time to mention my faithful seagull Sumebeak...

NO SUDDEN MOVES!

Dealing with villains, be they wearing chainmail or rad-suits can, on occasion, be rather more complex than simply exposing them to instantaneous and lethal force. In this intriguing article August Hahn takes a studied look at hostage negotiations and their consequences, offering tips in handling both the roles and the rules.

By August Hahn

Bensen and his team flanked out down the hall, keeping to the doorways for cover and moving in short, controlled sprints between them. They made good time to the corridor in front of the Alien Sector, especially considering the crowded conditions of the area. There had been a time, Bensen mused sadly, when the sight of Security suited up and carrying PPG rifles would have cleared these hallways, but all the trouble lately was making the station's populace jaded to them now.

They reached the turn in the corridor and Bensen took a quick peek around the corner. There, in front of the airlock leading into the alternate atmospheres ward, was the escaped Drazi pilot they were looking for. He had come aboard requesting sanctuary and repairs, but when his fighter turned out to be one of the ships that had been attacking supply transports off Beta Durani, he had knocked out a guard and escaped into Brown Sector.

Now they had him pinned here. Backup was on the way and Bensen had a clear line of fire on the Drazi's back. Protocol demanded he call out a warning, so he let the hissing gases of his charging rifle do that for him. The sound alerted the fugitive and he whirled around to face Security.

Then everything changed. In his left arm, the Drazi held an Abbai child and, in his right, he had the fallen guard's pistol with its muzzle up against the boy's throat. 'Drop your gun, human, or this finhead gets no older!'

Connor and Lizabet looked at Bensen for directions, their own weapons charging up. He knew backup was still several minutes behind them and the Chief was still comatose in Medlab. Waving for them to lower their guns, he did the same. 'We have to buy some time, people. Let's not provoke him. No sudden moves...'

It is liable to happen whenever heroes confront villains; sooner or later, the black-hearted opposition is going to take a hostage. In an instant, things change. While the authorities of the land might look the other way while the good guys pound the stuffing out of known criminals and terrorists, things change when an 'innocent' gets involved. Suddenly, the weight of consequences comes bearing down on the heroes. A dead mass-murderer is one thing, but a mother of four who happened to be

in the wrong parking garage at the wrong time is quite another.

The hostage situation is a tricky thing to handle in the real world. In a roleplaying environment, things are no easier. A slugfest between heroes and villains is easy to play through, but a hostage situation has a host of complications that suddenly and irrevocably alters the rules of engagement. Instead of worrying about attack and defence, the heroes must now be concerned

with an innocent's welfare and the repercussions of that innocent getting hurt.

In a roleplaying game, there are both mechanics and reactions. Since both are important to the action of the game as a whole, this article breaks down its treatment of hostage situations into two categories; 'roles' and 'rules'. Read together, they provide solid suggestions for how to deal with each facet of the complex world of hostage negotiations.

Stay Alert

Outside the station, something was going on. The superstructure shook all around them, as if B5 was taking hits from something. ‘That’s just great,’ Bensen thought. ‘As if this wasn’t already complicated.’ He watched the reactions of the Drazi, who was becoming more agitated with each tremor. Bensen watched the fugitive’s eyes, waiting for the slightest indication that the alien was about to move from captor to killer.

The moment a hostage situation begins, everything becomes important. Open windows may provide access for snipers. Loud noises may mask the approach of others or startle the kidnapper. The actions of everyone visible can have a major impact on whether the hostage comes out of the scenario vertical or horizontal. No detail, no matter how small, can be ignored, and the heroes bear the burden of ensuring that everything is taken into account.

Of course, the most important thing to watch is the abductor and his body language. A narrowing of the eyes, a sudden smile or frown, or a slight trembling of the weapon are all signs that things are about to get unfortunate. Likewise, visible relaxation, straying of the weapon away from a vital part of the hostage’s body, or calmer conversation from the kidnapper all likely mean that negotiations are going well. Unfortunately, the latter becomes the former distressingly fast.

The best way to keep that from happening is to remain observant as the situation unfolds. Watch which words work and which do not. See how close you can get before the abductor becomes nervous. Be aware of what things in the environment may cause events to become a bloodbath. Remember that the situation is not limited to just your side and the

villain. Any number of things could interfere, from police actions to other bystanders.

Spot and Listen are obviously useful skills, but the most vital skill in a hostage situation is Sense Motive. Everyone in this kind of scenario should be constantly using the skill to keep track of what people around them are feeling, doing, or are about to do. As both Diplomacy and Bluff can counter and be countered by Sense Motive, expect a lot of byplay between them.

Even if a given hero is not very skilled in these areas, he or she can remain alert for other dangers. A martial artist might not be able to speak soothingly to a kidnapper, but he can keep a vigilant watch on everyone else in the room and be ready to stop them if their actions start to threaten the hostage. Readied actions and delayed initiatives are excellent tools in this regard.

Caution At All Times

Beside him, he saw Connor turn his gun sideways and cue up a shot. The kid was one of the best hands he had ever seen with a PPG, but with the station obviously under attack and the flooring less than stable, there were too many risks. He shook his head and Connor reluctantly lowered his gun. There was a right way and a wrong way to play this. Until they could get a clear shot, or back up could get here, attacking the Drazi was definitely the wrong way.

As the title of this article suggests, the most important thing to keep in mind is that any sudden move around a hostage is a good way to kill that hostage. An abductor is by nature very nervous and anything might set him off. It only takes one involuntary twitch to send a bullet, a crossbow bolt, or a blast of energy through an innocent’s body. It does not ultimately matter if anyone meant to start a fight at that point; the hostage is just as dead either way.

To prevent this, the heroes must be sure to stay very visible and remain as calm and motionless as possible. When motion is necessary, keeping all limbs visible and as non-threatening as possible is vital. When an abductor feels endangered, he is far more likely to panic. Since panic is potentially fatal to a hostage, it is in the best interest of the heroes to be as careful as possible.

A key element that must be enforced is that weapons have to go away. Whether this means throwing them to the ground, sheathing them, or even sliding them over to the abductor himself, weapons are only non-threatening if the heroes are no longer wielding them. While a hero does not have to foolishly leave himself undefended, there is little or no hope of resolving a hostage situation while he remains armed.

Dropping a weapon is a free action, as is releasing an active spell or power. A hero can disarm himself easily in response to an abductor taking a hostage, which is of course something the abductor is hoping for. While it is dangerous to do so, a hero may be left with no choice but to play along and let his weapons fall to the ground.

This does not mean a hero has to be defenseless. Some weapons, like gauntlets or spells that have a long duration and no visible effects between uses, can be safely kept without appearing threatening. The feat Quick Draw is also very

useful for getting a weapon back in hand without wasting what little time might exist between the start of hostilities and the death of the hostage.

The Villain is in Charge

Lizabet closed up with Bensen, took a look out into the hall, and ducked back around the corner. 'That's less than 15 metres, sir. Why won't you let Connor take his sho? He can drop that greenskin; I'm sure of it.' Her tone was terse, but it was understandable given the circumstances.

Bensen took a deep breath and shifted his grip on his own gun. 'Maybe, but unless you feel like explaining to that child's mother why we put a hole through her son if he misses, we can't take that chance.' Even the brash young cadet could see the resignation and concern in his eyes as he added, 'Until we get a better option, that Drazi is in charge.'



Remember, be cool...but when all else fails, there will always be firepower

Naturally the abductor cannot be allowed to have everything his way, but to keep the hostage alive, the heroes may have to swallow their pride and allow things to appear to be under his control. Letting the villain believe that he is calling the shots is important to ensuring that he does not take one.

This does not mean standing by impassively and allowing the abductor to do as he pleases. While it is necessary to keep things calm, there must always be an air of responsiveness. The hostage will be in danger if the abductor thinks the heroes are not wary enough to pose any threat to him. In this case, the villain may kill the hostage out of spite and try to make good his escape. A fine line between calm and caution must be walked at all times.

If the abductor makes a demand, the heroes must at least seem like they are working to meet it. Outrageous

demands should be treated as such, but under no circumstances should the kidnapper be challenged. A statement like, 'You won't shoot that girl and we both know it' is a very good way to end up with a smoking gun, a dead child and a jail term for endangerment.

From the alarm sirens going off between decks, Bensen knew instantly why his backup had not arrived. The station was shutting all of its pressure hatches, which meant that somewhere, Babylon 5 had taken a hit serious enough to breach the hull. That meant backup was cut off somewhere between Blue Sector and here. Damn!

Without them, he would have to handle this alone. Bensen held out his empty hand into the hallway, holstered his PPG, and stepped out where the Drazi could see him. 'We don't want anyone killed today. Let the child go and we'll take you in without anybody having to get shot. Okay?' It was not the greatest negotiation speech he had ever heard, but this was not his usual job.

The Drazi sneered through scaled lips. 'I think not, human. This Abbai boy is my ticket back to my ship. You want him, you have to not shoot me before I get there.' As the fugitive spoke, he started backing away from Bensen's team towards a side corridor. If he made it to that door, he would be home free.

Just then, the pressure shielding dropped down over every doorway in the hall. The damage was close enough that this sector was locking down. The sudden descent of plate steel behind him startled the Drazi, who whirled to see what was happening. There was an opening, but only for a moment. It was now or never!

This phase of hostage negotiations is mostly roleplay-driven, though some game mechanics will come into play. Diplomacy skill checks will prove important to keep things from getting too tense as negotiations drag on. Most hostage situations last for hours, so the

often unused Endurance feat and Fortitude saves to stave off sleep may become a factor.

Whenever actions occur that might prove inflammatory, a Games Master might choose to allow the person taking the action to make an opposed Reflex save against the abductor or concerned party's Spot skill to see if the move is noticed while it takes place. It is usually safe to say that a completed action that ends in a drawn weapon or an attack is noticed automatically.

The Moment of Truth

No matter how cautiously things are played, a hostage situation can usually only end one of two ways; the abductor surrenders or the abductor is taken down. Unfortunately, the latter is more common and all too often, the hostage is injured or killed during the combat that ensues. It is not commonplace for heroes to have to worry about people being caught in their crossfire, much less having one used as a living shield.

The power heroes and villains can throw around is quite devastating. They can usually endure far more than the average member of their race before being seriously injured. Attacks that would only discomfit or wound them can literally tear a normal person apart, making caution in combat around them absolutely essential in keeping body counts down and innocent lives safe.

Every action taken during a hostage situation should be with the express purpose of getting the hostage out of harm's way first. All other concerns must be secondary, including the apprehension of the abductor in question. A villain can be tracked and caught again, but a slain hostage is likely to stay dead. Even when the power exists to bring the dead back to life, the



trauma of murder will stay with the hostage for a long time to come. This should be avoided by anyone wishing to aspire to the title of 'hero'.

If things come down to combat, acting first is crucial. Acting unobserved is just as important. Invisibility, whether it comes from a spell, a psychic effect, or a stealth suit, is a useful tool for striking before an opponent can take a readied action, as a readied action cannot be taken if the stated trigger cannot be sensed. Regardless of how the heroes take their actions, their goal should be to take the villain down as quickly as possible. If the villain ever gets to take an action, the hostage is likely dead.

Combat actions should be declared as subdual; a hostage also provides cover for the villain and, as such,

may catch a killing blow meant for the villain. Since subdual damage cannot kill regardless of the amount, it is a perfect tactic for taking down enemies when innocents may get in the way. Disarming or sundering a villain's weapon is also quite viable.

Good tactics for dealing with an abductor once things finally come to blows are paralysis, petrification, and non-lethal effects like web. Immobilizing the villain may be far more effective than trying to kill him, especially as lethal effects are often less likely to work as a single attack. Heroes can also 'attack' the hostage with effects like sepia snake sigil, telekinesis, or stunning and blinding grenades. The abductor cannot threaten the hostage if he cannot affect the hostage.



Everything happened at once. The Drazi's left side was wide open as the Abbai swung around. Bensen lunged across the corridor and tackled the Drazi as hard as he could. The gamble paid off as the boy and the stolen gun went flying away from the stunned fugitive. As he came up for a punch just to make sure, the Drazi kicked out viciously and drove him back to the ground over the child.

His vision cleared to see the Drazi rising over him, his own PPG in the alien's hand. He could dodge, but he would expose the boy if he did that. Bracing for the impact of the weapon's charge, he covered the young Abbai as best he could, praying that the shot would not go through him and kill the child. There was a bursting sound and then nothing. No pain. How had the shot missed?

Bensen looked up to see the Drazi slumping against the wall, a PPG burn neatly cauterized through his chest. Lizabet and Connor were making their way towards him, both of them covering the Drazi with their guns in case he was still alive. As Lizabet helped him and the terrified child up off the deck floor, Connor grinned widely. 'See sir? I told you I could take him.'

Unusual Suspects

The
JUDGE DREDD
Roleplaying Game

by Matthew Pritchard

A perp adventure for
characters of 1st to 3rd level

Starting off a perp campaign in the Judge Dredd Roleplaying Game can be fraught with difficulties. Without the edifice of the Justice Department backing your plays, Mega-City One can be a deadly place to make a name for yourself. What you need is a helpful scenario to get you on your way...

Background

Diamond Joe Jagger, a powerful mob boss, has organised what is sure to be the hottest event of the year in the local underworld's calendar, The Megwest Festival of Illegal Sports and Violent Pastimes. Unbeknownst to Diamond Joe, however, he has a traitor in the midst of his gang. His lieutenant, Mumbles, is planning to sell Joe out to the judges, so as to take over his criminal organisation himself. During the course of the scenario the players become embroiled in events that will lead to them unmasking the traitor and earning the gratitude of Diamond Joe himself.

Prog 1 - 'You Doity Rat...'

Scene 1 - Motormouth Moe's All Nite Eaterie

The scenario opens in the greasy, smelly confines of Motormouth



Everybody should aspire to the better things in life...

Moe's All Nite Eaterie. Why the player characters are there is unimportant – Moe's is a known hangout for all and sundry on the fringes of the Sector 190 underworld. Perhaps the player characters are awaiting a contact that never shows or are simply enjoying (in the loosest possible definition of the word!) some of the delights on Moe's menu. Whatever the reason, the player characters know of Moe and a few of them are on speaking terms with him. At some point Moe calls one of the player characters over to him.

'Hey, don't know if you've heard,' he begins in a conspiratorial whisper, 'but word on the street is Diamond Joe don't want nobody doing nuttin' during the next few days. He don't want any extra heat until the festival

is over. If I was you I'd listen up...nobody messes around wid Diamond Joe Jagger!'

All the players will know of Diamond Joe Jagger's reputation. He is one of the biggest mobsters in the whole Megwest sector. However, they have heard nothing about any festival. If asked Moe gives a smile. 'Well that don't surprise me none. It's invite only. But The Megwest Festival of Illegal Sports and Violent Pastimes is gonna' be a BIG one! There's heaps of people gonna' be goin'. There's robot wrestling, bite fighting, rats, and a shuggy competition with a cool 75 grand purse...why, there's everything, man! An' yours truly here has got the licence to sell hotties there! I'm gonna' make a mint!'

Players can ask Moe for more information on either Diamond Joe or the Festival if they wish. Games Masters should improvise responses using the information presented elsewhere in the scenario. Having done this, Moe continues:

'Hey, don't know if you guys are interested in earning a few easy creds...' he begins in a nonchalant tone, 'but I need me some rats. I'm training up a real tiger for the Festival but he gets through about 20 of the little critters a day.'

If asked exactly how many creds are on offer for the rat job Moe tells them he will pay 30 creds for every live rat they bring him. With a little bartering he can be bullied up to 40 creds apiece or, alternatively he will offer 20 creds per rat, plus an invite each to the illegal festival.

Should the players accept his offer Moe gives them a specially designed cage each and a can of spray. 'First you flush 'em out with the spray,' he explains, 'It stinks like Moley, but the rats can't stand it either. Then, try an' herd 'em toward the cages. Once they get close they'll just run right in. Got a sonic device, attracts rodents up to 5 metres away. Your best bet for rats is down by the old Fat Angel Freeziwhip Factory, out by the rad pits.'

Moe will happily explain the quickest way to get to the rad pits, which is to head down into the lower levels of the block and locate a broken service door, which gives direct access to the wasteland that surrounds the block. 'Be careful below level 35, though,' he warns the players. 'That's where Pitt Bull territory begins.'

At this point have each player make a DC 12 Intelligence check, with a +4 modifier for anyone having the juve or punk prior life. Success means the character knows a little about the Pitt Bulls. Run by a vicious puggly named 'Houn'dawg' Harrison, the Pitt Bulls are a fairly large group

with some 40-50 members. The Pitt Bulls are distinguished by the strange masks they wear whenever they are together, depicting a snarling dog's face. The Pitt Bulls specialise in tappings and other forms of brainless thuggery, although it is rumoured that recently they have been doing jobs for a local mobster.

Before the players set off, Moe gives them some final instructions. 'When you come back, I'll be upstairs...got a lil' game of Go Johnny Go Go Go planned for tonight,' he murmurs, giving the players a knowing wink. 'Just leave the rats with my nephew, Chuckie. He's looking after the place for me tonight.' So saying he nods toward a doltish looking youth sat sucking a frozen munce-popsicle. Chuckie grins inanely at the mention of his name.

Scene 2 - Crosstown Traffic

The players head out into the night. There is really no other viable route down to the radpits apart from the one Moe has suggested. As they journey further into the lower levels of the block, the number of people around decreases rapidly. Soon, by level 30, the players are pretty much alone, their footsteps echoing eerily along the deserted service tunnels.

At this point have each player make a DC 16 Spot check as they approach the exit to a zoom tube. If successful, they notice the glint of metal coming from behind one of the pillars. They will have one round to react before a blood-curdling howl suddenly echoes through the corridor and about 15 figures appear, their faces hidden behind snarling dog-masks. Players trying to run will find that another 10 Pitt Bulls have emerged behind them.

'Well, well, well', chuckles one of the figures, 'little out of your way tonight, ain't ya fellas. How's about you take out a little o' the folding stuff to ensure safe passage. Never know what might happen down here.' Despite their reputation for ferocity, the Pitt Bulls are really rather cowardly, especially when their leader is not around (which he is not right now). Having seen the players are armed, the pugglies will be content with a fee for safe passage. Make it clear to the players, however, that they are vastly outnumbered and don't stand a chance in a fight.

They will be content with 50 creds apiece from the players, although they will begin by asking for 150. Having paid up, the Pitt Bulls swagger off into the night, sniggering at the players and insulting them. Try to get the players really riled, as they will have their chance to avenge themselves later in the scenario.

Scene 3 - Radpit Wrangles

Following the service tunnels down through the lower levels of the block, the players will eventually find the exit described to them by Moe. Before them stretches miles of desolate wasteland filled with the jagged ruins of buildings and steaming rad-pits. Should the players employ binoculars to scan the terrain a DC 14 Spot check locates the silhouette of a large mass of plastic that could well once have been an angel, some 500 metres in front of them.

If the players have managed to somehow bring a vehicle with them the radpits count as Rough Ground for the purpose of calculating Safe Speeds, (see page 83 of the *Judge Dredd Rulebook*) and all Ride and Drive checks suffer a -4 penalty to reflect the extreme nature of the terrain.

As the players begin to traipse toward the ruins of the Fat Angel Freeziwhip Factory impress upon them the eerie silence all around them. From far up above them the chaos of the Mega City night – sirens, screams, pounding music, gunshots – can all be heard, but in the radpits only the occasional scurrying of animals and the hiss of the rad pools break the quiet.

Traipsing over to the ruins of the factory takes about 30 minutes, as the players are forced to pick their way through the tortuous terrain, stumbling over boulders and tripping on wire. After a while, have them make a DC 16 Spot check. If successful, they notice a beam of light suddenly appear amidst the ruins of a building, then blink out of view. The distant hum of an engine becomes audible, seemingly drawing nearer. Players have three rounds to hide before a judge on a Lawmaster slowly cruises around the corner, about 25 metres away from their position. The judge will not notice the players, provided they have tried to conceal themselves, but Games Masters should have the players roll their Hide checks anyway, then roll a number of dice together and look worried. Simple tricks like this will help get your players nice and worried.

The judge having passed them by, the players are now free to continue onwards toward the Fat Angel Freeziwhip Factory. The Factory is now little more than a pile of rubble, its former entrance surrounded by a large pool of greenish water. The pool gives off an acrid stench and steams in the cold night air. The building was once topped with a

plastic cherub, the emblem of the company, although years out in the radioactive wilderness have reduced the cherub's face to a ghoulish mass of melted plastic, its mouth twisted into a grotesque leer. Hundreds of rats can be seen scurrying around amidst the debris, although they quickly disappear if anyone approaches them.

Players will not have any difficulty in finding suitable places to lay the cages but one of the players will have to brave the dangerous pile of scree and rubble in order to use the spray given to them by Moe. As they pick their way across the sloping pile impress upon them the precarious nature of the terrain. As soon as the spray is used all hell breaks loose, as a horde of rats scampers forth. Such are their numbers that any player on the rubble pile must succeed in a DC 12 Reflex save or lose their footing, tumbling down toward the sinister pool of water. Any player suffering this fate must make an instant DC 14 Strength check to stop his fall. A failure results in them tumbling into the water. Luckily the water is not highly radioactive, although the players failing a DC 12 Fortitude save will suffer the effects of radiation poisoning, as detailed on page 196 of the *Judge Dredd Rulebook*.

Meanwhile, the players near the cages will just have time to spot the dark mass swarming toward them. Any player staying next to the cages will soon find himself knee deep in rodents and be subjected to 1d3 Bite attacks. For each bite, the player in question must succeed in a DC 14 Reflex save to throw the rat off before it sinks its fangs in. On a failed save, the players must make a DC 12 Fortitude save or become ill for 1d2 days, vomiting and suffering a -4 penalty to all skill checks and attacks. This penalty is not cumulative.

As the rodent mayhem subsides, the players will have trapped 2d20+20 rats.

Scene 4 - The Citi-Def Cache

Once the players have collected a suitable amount of rats, have them make a DC 14 Listen check. If successful, the sudden noise of heavy breathing in the darkness causes them to spin around as a number of ravenous muties stumble out of the darkness and leap to the attack! Should all the players fail the Listen check, they will be taken by surprise. There is one mutant for every player present.

Hungry Mutants

Citizen 2; HD 2d6+5 (14hp); Init +4 (+4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30ft.; DV ; Attack +2 melee, or +2 ranged; Fort +1, Ref +0, Will +0, Str 12, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 6.
Prior Life: Wall Hopper
Skills and Feats: Climb +6, Hide +5, Jump +6, Listen +7, Move Silently +5, Spot +7, Swim +6, Wilderness Lore +7; Alertness, Improved Initiative, Skill Focus (wilderness lore), Toughness
Possessions: Improvised Clubs, (1d8+1/0)

Once the players have disposed of the muties, have them make a DC 12 Spot check. If successful they notice that one of the muties wears a shell jacket with the words 'Barney Rubble Block Citi-Def'. Another of the Muties bears a ruined Laser Rifle, which he was using as a club. A Successful DC 18 Technical check gathers spare parts worth 500 creds. Try to interest the players in where on earth the muties obtained these items.

Should the players have access to some form of thermal imaging device, following the muties' footsteps back will be a piece of cake. As this is unlikely, however, the players will probably have to employ more traditional methods. Have them make a series of three DC 14 Spot checks to follow the trail back to the mutants' base. Try having the distant sound of a judge's siren slowly start

drawing nearer as they are doing this to add a little atmosphere.

Having done this, the players will find the footsteps lead to what looks like a collapsed wall. Careful inspection reveals that the top of a set of stairs is concealed just behind it, and the players can squeeze through gaps in the twisted ruins of the wall to access it.

The stairs are extremely slippery, being covered in a sort of luminescent moss. Players are fine whilst advancing at a snail's pace, but any sudden movement could cause them to slip. Halfway down the stairs a large rat suddenly drops from the ceiling and lands on top of one of the players, scaring him half to death. All the players must now make a DC 16 Reflex save to avoid slipping and tumbling down to the bottom of the stairs for 1d3 points of damage. Also, those at the back of the group will collide with those in front, forcing them to make another DC 14 Reflex save or slip over. This can set off a very amusing chain reaction effect if the players are unlucky!

Players can now begin to search the basement chamber. Unfortunately, between the dust, damp and the tender attentions of the mutants much of the equipment is ruined. There are still a few items that are salvageable though. A DC 18 Search check is necessary to locate each item.

1. A small case containing 7 Medipacks. A DC 14 Spot check reveals that at the bottom of the case there are a group of 6 hypo-sprays. A DC 18 Technical check, using appropriate equipment, identifies them as a powerful hallucinogenic painkiller designed to help the user resist interrogation. The hypo-sprays make the user practically immune to pain but provoke a -8 penalty to all skill checks involving Dexterity.
2. A broken weapons' rack and the smashed remains of Laser Pistols. The rack has been torn from the wall and broken to pieces with stones. However, given time and effort, the still functioning pieces of Laser Pistols can be pieced together. These can either be sold for around 6,000 creds, or used to create 2 functioning Laser Pistols (DC 18 Technical check to do this).
3. Hidden amongst a pile of filthy sacking and animal bones there are two useable shell jackets (DR 8).

useful to them, but each time make them work for it – the equipment should either require extensive repairs or have pieces missing. Like the man said, in the Big Meg nothing comes for free!

Once the players have finished searching the chamber, read the following to them out loud.

As you begin to wind up your search of the subterranean chamber, an eerie silence descends, a silence broken only by the constant dripping of water. Suddenly you stop dead in your tracks. From somewhere close to the rear of the chamber the murmur of conversation can be heard.

Cunning players will also start to consider the possibilities of establishing a hideout in the basement chamber. This is entirely permissible, but Games Masters will have to deal with the specifics of this on their own.

Should the players wish to locate the source of the voices, have them make a DC 14 Listen check. If successful, they trace the sound to a large section of ventilation pipe protruding from the roof of the chamber. Clearly, whoever is speaking is somewhere up above the players, their voices carried by the pipe, although the actual distance is unknown.

On reaching the bottom of the stairs, read the following out loud to the players.

Having reached the bottom of the stairs your flashlights reveal what once seems to have been a large chamber. However, the ceiling on the far side has collapsed and is choked with debris. A twisted mass of ventilation pipes and cables hang down from the holes. The rear end of the chamber is comparatively clean, although large damp patches on the wall show where water has got in. The floor of the chamber is scattered with smashed boxes and pieces of equipment, each one having the words 'Sector 190 - Barney Rubble Block Citi-Clef' stencilled on its side.

Any player succeeding in a DC 18 Intelligence check will realise they have stumbled across a forgotten equipment cache from the Apocalypse War. These were created when the Sovs invaded and were intended to provide stocks of essential equipment to aid guerrillas fighting rearguard actions.

Games Masters should feel free to scatter a few other minor items around in the basement. Try to give the players equipment that will be

Players finding something to stand on can get their ears closer to the pipe and attempt to hear what is being said. On a successful DC 12 Listen check they hear the following:

'...and take it to the judges. It's a video slug I filmed on the last job we did. Should be enough to convince them I'm for real...and remember, once they've pinched you-know-who, I get to be boss! Every third or fourth word is punctuated by a strange snuffling stutter that makes the voice highly distinctive. The voices die away, although a strong smell of aftershave, (Tommy Swillpigger, if the players must know), is wafted down to them on the breeze.

The voice the players have heard is that of Diamond Joe's lieutenant Mumbles giving instructions to one of his contacts. However, the contact and the vid-slug will never get to the judges...

Scene 5 - Homeward Bound

As the players re-enter the lower levels of their block, have them make a DC 12 Listen check. If successful, they hear the sound of someone running towards them, although still some distance away. Give the players a few seconds to decide what they want to do, then read the following to them out loud.

Amidst the shadows a figure suddenly appears, running for his very life. Behind him a group of knife and chain-wielding Pitt Bulls give chase. The figure stumbles on debris, slows momentarily and is instantly brought down by the gang members, his cries of pain drowned out by their howls of victory.

As the players decide on their course of action, have them make a DC 14 Spot check to notice the flickering lights of a pair of Lawmasters speeding toward the area. The only sensible course of action is for the players to hide themselves in the shadows. A couple of rounds later the judges arrive with shouts of 'Freeze right where you are, Fido!' The Pitt Bulls try to run, leaving their victim on the ground. All hell breaks loose as the judges begin to expertly round the gang members up, using a combination of Lawgiver rounds, daysticks and drive-by boots. Seconds later it is all over. The judges make a cursory search, determine that the victim is dead, then escort the still-surviving Pitt Bulls away. The players overhear

them radioing for a clean-up squad and meat wagon to attend.

At this point have the players make a DC 14 Spot check. If successful they notice that a number of articles still remain scattered around on the floor. Three Pitt Bull masks can be found as well as 1d20+50 creds dropped in the mayhem. As the players approach the area where the victim's corpse lays they notice the heavy stench of Tommy Swillpigger lingers in the air. Should they search the corpse they find nothing to help them identify the man, but in one of his pockets there lies a blood-spattered vid-slug.

The Vid-Slug

This is, of course, the vid-slug they heard referred to whilst in the basement. Watching it reveals a grainy image, obviously filmed from some secret location such as a bag or hidden under a coat. The vid-slug depicts a group of very disreputable-looking villains breaking into and robbing a large warehouse, the location of which is impossible to discern. As the players watch, however, a particularly thuggish member of the group leers into the camera, grinning toothlessly. A successful DC 12 Intelligence check identifies him as a member of Diamond Joe Jagger's gang of thugs. Although the players will be mystified as to the exact significance of the vid-slug, they should be able to work out that Diamond Joe has a traitor in his organisation.

The players can now make their way back to Motormouth Moe's. As they approach the building, have them make a DC 12 Listen check. If successful, they hear the unmistakable sound of a shuggy table as a three-way split Booglariser is sunk. The ground floor of the diner appears to be empty but if the players peer in through the window they will see Chuckie, Moe's moronic nephew, playing shuggy by himself in the deserted eatery – and the kid is GOOD! As the players watch,

impress upon them that they have never seen anyone as skilled on the shuggy table as Chuckie – he is quite simply a natural born prodigy.

Players can speak to Chuckie if they wish, although they will soon come to regret it, as he is a borderline cretin. The only things of any importance to him are chocolate and...well, just chocolate really. He will gladly agree to take part in the shuggy competition, although the players will get the feeling he would have just as readily agreed to throw Muncce paste in Joe Dredd's face.

As the players begin to unload the cages full of rats, the door leading to the room upstairs suddenly crashes open and Moe stumbles out. He is clearly very drunk and begins to thank the players profusely for bringing the rats, pulling out a wad of notes and counting out the money he owes them. Before handing the cash over, however, Moe will insist on showing them Titan, his champion rat. He will not take *no* for an answer, becoming surly if they refuse. Eventually Moe leads the players down into the basement. Pausing for effect at the bottom of the stairs he announces theatrically 'And now, prepare to set eyes upon the new champion rat of Megwest...Titan!' With that he throws the door open.

Inside, a scene of utter devastation greets the players' eyes. The chewed remains of hotties are everywhere, the boxes having been ripped open and their contents strewn across the floor. In the centre of the room lies a very large, very swollen rat, its snout still smeared with hottie sauce.

Moe will become distraught when he first sets eyes on the rat, but slowly the business implications of his ruined hottie supply will sink in. He drags the rat off to its cage then, giving the players a wink, he whispers 'Well, it looks like I'm in the market for some hotties, if you catch my drift...keeps your eyes open, eh?'

Scene 6 - Go Johnny Go Go Go!

It is quite possible one or more of the players will wish to participate in Moe's gambling session. Moe will be only too happy to allow them to sit in, inviting them upstairs into a dark, smoke-filled room. Besides Moe there are 4 other players. Three of these are friends of Moe's, faces the players will probably recognise from the bar. The fourth, however, is a card sharp Moe has unwittingly fallen foul of, named Ritz Jacobs. Ritz is in the process of cleaning all the other players out. As Ritz is from the South of Mega-City One any gamblers amongst the players will not recognise him.

As the players take their seats, Ritz observes them carefully, then offers them a drink of Munska. All the others are drinking it, including Ritz himself. The drink, however, contains a mild sedative – nothing so drastic as to be noticeable, but enough give a -1 penalty to all skills should the players fail a DC 18 Fortitude save. (Ritz is unaffected as he dosed himself with stimulants before he came.)

The game they are playing is the hellishly complex 'Go Johnny Go Go Go Go', a game familiar to any players with a card game-based Skill Focus feat (such as poker, for example). Each round should be played as follows. The ante is 50 creds. Each of the players then rolls 1d20, adds their Intelligence modifier as well as any relevant skills they might have. Whoever scores the lowest total is then removed from the game, the pot is raised by 1d4x25 creds and the game continues. Repeat this procedure until one of the gamblers wins (Moe's three friends have a +4 modifier, whilst Ritz Jacobs has +8). Ritz Jacobs is also cheating. Each time he finds himself with only one opponent he uses sleight of hand to raise his modifier to +16. Should any player be watching him carefully

have them make an opposed Spot check against Ritz's Pick Pocket skill.

Once Ritz's cheating is revealed, he jumps to his feet, whips out a knife and attacks his accuser.

Ritz Jacobs

Citizen 2; HD 2d6+7 (16hp); Init +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30ft.; DV 14 (+4 Reflex);

Attack +2 melee, or +2 ranged; Fort +2, Ref +1, Will -1, Str 12, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 8.

Prior Life: Punk

Skills and Feats: Climb +6, Craze: Cards +8, Drive +6, Hide +6, Jump +6, Listen +6, Pick Pocket +7, Search +3, Spot +5, Streetwise +4; Alertness, Improved Initiative, Toughness

Possessions: Knife (1d6+1/2)

Prog 2 - 'Three Days is a Long Time in Shuggy'

Scene 1 - Entering the Kid

By asking around the players can discover the shuggy competition is being organised by Murray 'The Mint' Molson. Murray is a huge whale of a man, much given to the finer things in life (when he can afford them). Although nowhere near as powerful as someone like Diamond Joe Jagger, Murray is certainly not to be messed around with lightly. He specialises in the sale of stolen goods, organising illegal sporting events and book making.

Getting in to see Murray is fairly easy, as he owns a big shuggy hall a little distance from the block where

the players live. Inside, local toughs and goons lounge around, playing shuggy and drinking in the flickering neon glow given off by the dozens of shuggy tables. As the players enter, have them make a DC 16 Spot check. If successful, they notice that many of the men in the place sport jackets with the words 'Pitt Bulls' written across the back.

After being kept waiting for quite some while, the players will be shown in. Murray sits behind a desk, smoking a cigar and sweating steadily. Two big, nasty-looking goons lean against one of the walls, picking their teeth with knife blades. As Murray speaks, his multitude of chins wobbles back and forth. 'Welcome, welcome my friends,' he begins in a tone of mock-bonhomie, 'how can I help?'

The entrance fee for all players in the shuggy competition is 3,000 creds, but the total purse is a whopping 75,000 creds! After taking their money Murray informs the players that they should bring their contestant over so that his odds can be set.

Should the players be stupid enough to allow Chuckie to play at his full ability during this trial match, Murray the Mint's face pales as he sees how good the kid is and odds are set at 15/1 on (I.e. for every 15 creds the players bet, they get 1 back, plus their original stake). Hopefully though, the players should be a little more devious and seek to 'noble' the kid for this one match in order to get better odds.

Trying to explain this concept to Chuckie though is a lost cause. He just sits, glassy-eyed as the players outline the plan and then says at the end 'So...you want me to play shuggy, huh?' Make it clear to the players that the cretinous Chuckie does not understand.

Encourage the players to be creative in seeking a way around this problem. One simple solution is to give Chuckie a dose of one of the hypo-sprays found in the Citi-Def cache.

This will affect his game just enough to get good odds without arising undue suspicion. Games Masters should assess the worth of player strategies and then set the odds at somewhere between 6 and 10 to 1, depending on how ingenious they are (the hypo spray will get them odds of 8 to 1). However, Murray is no fool, and if he suspects the players are trying to pull a fast one on him they will incur his displeasure.

As the players leave after the match, have them make a DC 14 Spot check. If successful they notice Ramon Ratfinkle, Murray's second-in-command observing Chuckie carefully with a frown on his face.

The next three days of the scenario will be occupied by events during the run up to the competition. These are intended to be completely non-linear – the players are free to do whatever they want, tinkering with the equipment they found in Prog 1, seeking out hotties to sell to Moe, trying to accumulate creds to bet on the kid, etc. However, certain set-piece events will also take place, although these can be included whenever the Games Master sees fit.

Scene 2 - Practise makes Perfect!

Once the idea of competing in a shuggy competition has finally sunk into Chuckie's amazingly dense cranium, he will insist on practising. Obviously, this will pose something of a problem for the players, as doing it in public will reveal the kid's ability before time. There are really only two options open to them. The first is to buy a shuggy table themselves and set it up in a secret place (a second-hand table can be obtained for about 10,000 creds); the other is to let Moe in on their secret.

Provided the players have already entered the kid in the competition under their names, there will be little that Moe can do. He will stand open-mouthed and watch as the kid shows his stuff, then his eyes light up and he asks 'How much you say the odds were?' Moe will be happy to form a gambling syndicate with the players, chipping in up to 20,000 creds.

Scene 3 - Ramon Ratfinkle Pays a Visit

(Note – this scene should only be used *after* the players have placed their bet.)

At some point while Chuckie is practising, have one of the players present make a DC 16 Listen check. If successful, they hear a slight scuffling sound from outside. A DC 12 Spot check reveals a shadowy silhouette peering in at them from a suitable vantage point. Rushing outside the players are just in time to see Ramon Ratfinkle, Murray 'The Mint's' lieutenant, speeding away in a hovercar.

Murray and Diamond Joe have rigged the shuggy competition for their player, Wilson 'Shuggy' Bear, to win, therefore not having to pay out the prize money. Now that the secret is out about Chuckie's ability, Murray will attempt to have the kid killed, using the Pitt Bulls to carry out his dirty work for him. Some ideas for assassination-type encounters are given below, although Games



Masters should try to introduce their own whenever they can, probably at the rate of one or two a day. Much of the time, the players' attempts to keep Chuckie safe will be hindered by his complete lack of intelligence and propensity to throw childish tantrums (demanding to go out for a Freeziwhip when the players know killers are lying wait, etc.). A profile for a standard Pitt Bull is given below.

Average Pitt Bull

Citizen 2; HD 2d6+7 (16hp); Init +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30ft.; DV 14 (+4 Reflex); Attack + 2 melee, or +2 ranged; Fort +2, Ref +1, Will -1, Str 12, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 9, Wis 8, Cha 8.
Prior Life: Punk
Skills and Feats: Climb +6, Drive +6, Hide +6, Jump +6, Listen +6, Search +3, Spot +5, Streetwise +4; Alertness, Improved Initiative, Toughness
Possessions: Commonly Knives (1d6+1/2) and Clubs (1d8+1/0)

Scene 4 - The Window

This scene should be played during one of Chuckie's practise sessions. One of the players finds Chuckie standing close to a window. 'What a dumb ass!' Chuckie suddenly exclaims. 'That guy out there is trying to shoot at the window! What's the point in that?' Players trying to drag Chuckie to the ground will have to succeed in a DC 14 Reflex save. Seconds later the window explodes into a million pieces. Should the players have failed the saving throw Chuckie suffers a light graze to the shoulder, which will reduce his Shuggy ability by -2. The Pitt Bull will continue to snipe into the building with a spit gun from his position on a pedway overlooking the building.

Scene 5 - Roadster Blues

This scene should be used whenever the players are transporting Chuckie from one place to another. As the players walk out into the street a blue roadster suddenly appears from nowhere and hurtles toward them. Players trying to drag Chuckie to safety will have to succeed in a DC 14 Reflex save. Failed results mean Chuckie still manages to get out of the way, but falls, twisting his wrist and incurring a -2 penalty to his Shuggy ability.

Prog 3 - 'Hot for Hotties!'

As detailed in *Prog 1*, Motormouth Moe is on the lookout for more hotties! This part of the adventure not only allows the players to earn some much-needed creds, but also is intended to give them the chance to organise a criminal operation. As such, Games Masters should encourage them to use their ingenuity, speaking with any contacts they might have, breaking into City computer files, etc, in an effort to locate a suitable shipment of hotties for them to knock off. A probable course of events is presented below, although Games Masters should try not to force the players into taking it. Robberies such as these are always more satisfying if the players feel they have done everything themselves, although by simply changing certain details such as names and places Games Masters can still include some or all of the details given here.

When undertaking this section of the adventure, bear in mind that Moe needs a *lot* of hotties. Therefore, simply robbing the nearest hottie stand will not provide enough merchandise, and holding up a series

of hottie stands/eateries is likely to draw attention from the judges, to say nothing of Diamond Joe Jagger.

Scene 1 - Victor Hogflesh's Hottie Factory and Chemical Waste Processing Plant

Given the citizens' insatiable lust for hotties most sectors have a hottie factory. Victor Hogflesh's (pronounced 'Ho-Flay') place is located out by the Cursed Earth wall. Players can either know of its existence (a DC 16 Intelligence check) or find out about it whilst gathering information.

Should the players decide to stake the place out, they will quickly discover it is not a viable option. The factory is an enormous place, with security measures to match (electric fences, patrols of robo-dogs, robot guards, etc.). Production is 24 hours a day. However, whilst discovering this fact the players will notice something of use to them. At a suitable moment they spot a familiar dishevelled figure wandering through the factory gates. 'Lucky' Ed Beagle is famous as one of Sector 190's worst gamblers and is on first name terms with at least one of the players. No matter what the sporting event, Lucky Ed will lose credits on it and he is banned from most of the sector's gambling dens as his presence is regarded as a jinx.

However, Lucky Ed is currently working as a human canary in the factory - as long as he can breathe in the factory, there have been no dangerous gas-leaks. Players can contact him and obtain information as to the upcoming hottie shipments. How they extract this information is up to the players. The offer of a ticket to the Festival of Illegal Sports will certainly sway Lucky Ed, as will the threat of telling his employers of his gambling habit.

Scene 2 - The Hottie U Heist

However the players have discovered the details, the University of Hottie Cuisine, (or Hottie U as it is more commonly known), is probably their best bet. The eager young students provide voluntary help, unloading large consignments of hotties each night (which the players will discover if they stake the place out) with practically no security measures.

The night in question is a cold one and as the players crouch in the dark they count a total of eight students, aided by two robots. The vehicle with the hotties inside is never left unattended, so the players will have to do a little strong-arm work first.

As they leap from the dark most of the students will freeze in terror. One of them though gives an anguished cry of 'Not the hotties...It's my final exam tomorrow!' Withdrawing a spit pistol he lets loose with a terrific spray of bullets, mowing down 4 of his companions in the process.

Crazed Student

Citizen 2; HD 2d6 (9); Init -1; Spd 30 ft.; DV 9 (-1 Reflex); Attack +0 melee, or +1 ranged; Fort +2, Ref -1, Will -2; Str 9, Dex 8, Con 11, Int 7, Wis 7, Cha 6

Prior Life: None

Skills and Feats: Climb +4, Drive +4, Jump +1, Listen +5, Move Silently +4, Search +1, Spot +6, Streetwise +4; Alertness, Great Fortitude

Possessions: Spit Pistol (2d6/6)

Once the players have dealt with him and his companions they will be free to unload the crates of hotties. The crates are both large and heavy, so getting them out of one vehicle and into another requires 2 people and four rounds. There are a total of 12 crates. Unbeknownst to the players, however, the spray of bullets has had unforeseen circumstances. On round 6 one of the robots, its mechanical

brain damaged by a bullet, suddenly goes haywire, producing a large cleaver from its chest cavity and setting about all and sundry, beeping crazily and droning 'Chop, chop, chop!' Games Masters should use the standard GP droid profile on page 104 of the *Judge Dredd Rulebook*, modifying its attack to 'Hottie Cleaver +4 (1d8/6)'

Motormouth Moe will pay 300 creds for each crate of hotties.

Really cunning players can use this robbery to get the Pitt Bulls off their backs as well. Should they think to leave the Pitt Bull masks behind at the scene of the robbery, the gang members will be forced to go to ground, as both the judges and Diamond Joe Jagger's thugs will be looking for them. Taking this course of action stops all assassination attempts up until the actual festival itself.

Prog 3 - Diamond Joe Jagger's Festival of Violent Sports and Illegal Pastimes

The Festival has been arranged in the lower levels of a derelict block, far out in the rad-pits and away from the prying eyes of the judges. Security is tight, as befits a man of Diamond Joe Jagger's reputation, with armed goons manning checkpoints all along the way in. Games Masters should decide on the details of these at

their own discretion but the players will not be allowed to take in any really serious weaponry, such as laser rifles, for example. However, with a modicum of cunning the players should be able to smuggle in smaller weapons. Nasty Games Masters might stage a close shave with the judges as the players make their way to the festival or have a final assassination attempt made on Chuckie.

The Festival has attracted a colourful cross-section of the criminal underworld, with mob goons rubbing shoulders with gamblers, shuggy pros, fences, organ leggers, etc. The Festival consists of a number of different events. They are Bite Fighting, Rat Fighting, (Moe's rat, Titan, is disembowelled within seconds of starting his first bout!), Robot Wrestling and an Eating contest.

The shuggy competition is scheduled to begin at midnight. There are 16 entrants and the competition is organised on a knock-out basis, so the eventual champion will have to win 4 consecutive matches. Players will soon realise that the hot favourite is the reigning Megwest champion, Wilson 'Shuggy' Bear.

Playing Shuggy

The actual shuggy matches can be handled as the Games Master sees fit, perhaps using the rules given in *The Rookie's Guide to Crazes*. If not, simple rules for conducting shuggy matches are given below.

Each shot has a separate DC and points value. The more points a shot is worth, the trickier it is to do.

- DC 18 – 5pts.
- DC 22 – 10pts.
- DC 25 – 16 pts.
- DC 28 – 22 pts.
- DC 30 – 30 pts.
- DC 32 – 40 pts.



Before rolling, the players must decide which type of shot they will attempt. If they make the Skill check, they score that amount of points and if they fail they score 1d4 points. A natural 20 gives double the points of the attempted shot. The first player to score 200 wins the match. In this way each of Chuckie's matches can be played out, with the players rolling for him and the Games Master rolling for his opponent. Chuckie has a base Shuggy skill of +16, minus any penalties he might have incurred from wounds, etc.

His first opponent, Stevie 'The Nose' Walton, has a Shuggy skill of +6. His second, 'Slick' Willy Wickes, has a Shuggy skill of +7. His third, 'Cueball' Mack Gibbs, has a Shuggy skill of +8. His final opponent, Wilson 'Shuggy' Bear, has a Shuggy skill of +10.

Events During the Competition.

Although Murray's attempts at killing Chuckie have all failed, he has not given up all hope. During the shuggy competition his minions will

continue to try to destroy Chuckie's chances of winning. Sometime after the first match, whilst the assembled spectators crowd around Chuckie to congratulate him, have the players make a DC 14 Spot check to notice a man pushing his way purposefully toward Chuckie, a syringe just visible in his hand. Players will have to succeed in a DC 14 Strength check to intercept the goon. They have two rounds in which to do this, before the syringe is pushed home, giving Chuckie a -4 modifier to all subsequent matches. Should a fight result, Games Masters should use the stats given for a standard Pitt Bull elsewhere in the scenario.

During the third match, one of Murray's henchmen will be concealed in a secret alcove overlooking the shuggy table, using a force field generator to fix the match. The first the players will notice of this is when one of Chuckie's shots goes completely haywire (he is in fact making all shots with a -10 modifier). Players looking around them should make a DC 16 Spot check to notice the figure lurking in the shadows. Getting to the cheat will take 1d6+10 rounds, and each player's shot takes 2 rounds, so Chuckie could find himself

in trouble by the time the match-fixer is taken out. The force field generator will be broken in the melee.

Match-Fixer

Citizen 2; HD 2d6+7 (16hp); Init +4 (+4 Improved Initiative; Spd 30ft.; DV 12; Attack +3 melee, or +1 ranged; Fort +2, Ref +2, Will -1, Str 15, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 7, Wis 9, Cha 7
Prior Life: Goon
Skills and Feats: Balance +2, Climb +7, Concentration +7, Drive +5, Hide +5, Intimidate +3, Jump +7, Pilot +5, Streetwise +4; Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Toughness
Possessions: Las-Knife 1d6+2/10

Once the competition is over the spectators will file out of the chamber, either shaking their heads despondently or triumphantly waving betting tickets. As the room clears the players suddenly find themselves surrounded by nearly a dozen very tough-looking goons. DC 12 Intelligence checks reveal a number of them as belonging to Diamond Joe Jagger's gang. A sudden deathly hush falls over the remaining members of the crowd. 'You're coming with us, punks!' one of them snarls. Players should realise they have very little choice in the matter.

Players are taken to a heavily guarded private chamber. Inside the air is filled with the sweet scents of coffee, sugar, high-class umpty and a whole range of other illegal substances. Beautiful women lounge around on synthy-satin cushions. In the centre of all this opulence sits Diamond Joe himself, his exquisitely crafted diamond bionic eye regarding the players coldly. To one side Murray 'The Mint' and Ramon Ratfinkle kneel trembling on the floor, surrounded by thugs.

Exactly what Diamond Joe says to the players will depend on whether Chuckie has won the competition or not, but it will centre around accusations such as 'So, these are the creeps who cheated me out of my money, eh?' Murray will nod his

head violently. Diamond Joe then gives a cruel smile. 'Well, they're gonna have to pay...they all look pretty healthy. What say we charge 'em in internal organs?'

At this a curtain is pulled back to reveal a mobile operating theatre, commonly used by organ leggers. A gleaming robo-doc stands beside the table, surgical knives at the ready.

The players have one chance. As the assembled crowd laughs and settles down to watch the show, one of the goons comes forward and says 'Which one you want us to cut first, boss?' in a highly familiar, snuffing stutter the players will recognise from *Prog 1*.

Players can now reveal Mumbles' treachery. As the players begin shouting, Mumbles pales and begins to tremble, although he will protest his innocence. Play this scene out in full, with the players desperately trying to convince Diamond Joe whilst Mumbles does his best to drag them toward the operating table.

Eventually Diamond Joe will ask to see the vid-slug that incriminates Mumbles. Once shown, there can be little doubt of the informer's guilt. The unfortunate Mumbles is dragged, snuffing and stuttering, to a grisly end on the operating table. Diamond Joe will be grateful to the players, forcing Murray to pay them their winnings or give back the original stake, depending on the outcome of the competition. The 75,000 creds for the shuggy competition will also be paid, should Chuckie have won.

Diamond Joe will also instruct the players to 'come see him' in the future if they are interested

in work. Players should then make a hasty exit before Diamond Joe changes his mind.

Players having survived the whole of 'Unusual Suspects' should gain between 1,500 and 2,000 experience points.

Developing the Scenario

Unusual Suspects is designed to give fledgling perps a healthy start on the road to criminal success. Having won the gratitude of a mob boss like Diamond Joe Jagger can lead to

a variety of further adventures. Diamond Joe will be happy to help the players obtain black market weapons and technology and he will also give the players minor tasks, in return for a share in the profits.

Motormouth Moe can similarly be used to feed the players hot tips on possible jobs, maybe acting as go-between for other clients or teaming up with the players.

Murray 'The Mint' and the Pitt Bulls will not forget their humiliation at the hands of the players and they can be used as opponents in further scenarios. Alternatively, some of the members of the Pitt Bulls, impressed with the players' prowess, may decide to throw their lot in with them, becoming members of the players' gang once they reach 6th level.



Sometimes, this *really* is the last thing you want to see.

Contract Negotiation Rules Update

Players of Armageddon: 2089 have been finding that negotiating a worthwhile mercenary contract can be an impossible exercise. August Hahn explains what's what and the new rule that should make earning a few bucks a bit easier.

The fault in the Contract Negotiation rules is one of simple omission. When writing the section, my intentions were simple but the specifics got lost somewhere in the text.

There is a vital step of the process that was intended from the very beginning but was never spelled out. Many of our gentle (and not so gentle) readers have already seen the solution, but for those who like something 'official', here it is:



History Update

This recently discovered text has revealed one of the main reasons for Britain's withdrawal from the European Federation in 2086. Written in 2085, if this were part of a recipe, it would be taken with a pinch of salt.

The European Federation has just announced an agreement whereby English will be the official language of the European Federation rather than German which was the other possibility.

As part of the negotiations, Her Majesty's Government conceded that English spelling had some room for improvement and has accepted a 5-year phase-in plan that would become known as 'Euro-English.'

In the first year, 's' will replace the soft 'c'. Certainly, this will make the sivil servants jump with joy. The hard 'c' will be dropped in favor of the 'k'. This should klear up kufusion, and keyboards kan have one less letter.

There will be growing publik enthusiasm in the second year when the troublesome 'ph' will be replaced with the 'f'. This will make words like fotograf 20% shorter.

After a contract's base pay has been completely calculated and finalised, the value is multiplied by the number of Mek Assets involved in the scenario.

That means that if a mercenary team has negotiated a contract for their 4 WarMeks (even if there are five pilots and two of them share a single Mek), its total value is multiplied by 4.

In short, mercenary work is not intended to make a soldier rich beyond their wildest dreams (though this can happen if salvage is handled carefully and the opportunity to take it occurs in game), things were never meant to be quite as frugal as the initial rules made them appear.

The European Federation has just announced an agreement whereby English will be the official language of the European Federation rather than German which was the other possibility.

As part of the negotiations, Her Majesty's Government conceded that English spelling had some room for improvement and has accepted a 5-year phase-in plan that would become known as 'Euro-English.'

In the first year, 's' will replace the soft 'c'. Certainly, this will make the sivil servants jump with joy. The hard 'c' will be dropped in favor of the 'k'. This should klear up kufusion, and keyboards kan have one less letter.

There will be growing publik enthusiasm in the second year when the troublesome 'ph' will be replaced with the 'f'. This will make words like fotograf 20% shorter.

In the 3rd year, publik akseptanse of the new spelling kan be ekspeted to reach the stage where more komplikated changes are possible. Governments will enkourage the removal of double letters which have always ben a deterrent to akurate speling. Also, al wil agre that the horibl mes of the silent 'e' in the languag is disgrasful and it should go away.

By the 4th yer peopl wil be reseptiv to steps such as replasing 'th' with 'z' and 'w' with 'v'.

During ze fifz yer, ze unesenary 'o' kan be dropd from vords kontaining 'ou' and after ziz fifz yer, ve vil hav a reil sensibl riten styl.

Zer vil be no mor trubl or difikultis and evrivun vil find it ezi tu understand ech oza. Ze drem of a united urop vil finali kum tru!



MONGOOSE PUBLISHING PRODUCT LIST

To purchase direct please go to the mail order page on www.mongoosepublishing.com

The Slayer's Guides

Slayer's Guide to Amazons	(MGP0005)
ISBN: 1-903980-07-0	\$9.95
Slayer's Guide to Trolls	(MGP0008)
ISBN: 1-903980-24-0	\$9.95
Slayer's Guide to Dragons	(MGP0009)
ISBN: 1-903980-27-5	\$19.95
Slayer's Guide to Orcs	(MGP0010)
ISBN: 1-903980-34-8	\$9.95
Slayer's Guide to Rules Lawyers	(MGP0011)
ISBN: 1-903980-36-4	\$9.95
Slayer's Guide to Duergar	(MGP0014)
ISBN: 1-903980-56-9	\$9.95
Slayer's Guide to Yuan-Ti	(MGP0015)
ISBN: 1-903980-76-3	\$9.95
Slayer's Guide to Undead	(MGP0016)
ISBN: 1-903980-80-1	\$19.95
Slayer's Guide to Harpies	(MGP0017)
ISBN: 1-903980-85-2	\$9.95
Slayer's Guide to Kobolds	(MGP0018)
ISBN: 1-903980-98-4	\$9.95
Slayer's Guide to Derro	(MGP0019)
ISBN: 1-904577-04-4	\$9.95
Slayer's Guide to Goblins	(MGP0020)
ISBN: 1-904577-16-4	\$9.95
Slayer's Guide to Games Masters	(MGP0021)
ISBN: 1-904577-25-3	\$9.95
Slayer's Guide to Giants	(MGP0022)
ISBN: 1-904577-34-2	\$19.95
Slayer's Guide to Demons	(MGP0023)
ISBN: 1-904577-39-3	\$19.95

Encyclopaedia Arcane

Necromancy – Beyond the Grave	(MGP1002)
ISBN: 1-903980-04-6	\$14.95
Constructs – It Is Alive	(MGP1004)
ISBN: 1-903980-18-6	\$14.95
Battle Magic – The Eldritch Storm	(MGP1005)
ISBN: 1-903980-21-6	\$14.95
Elementalism – Primordial Power	(MGP1008)
ISBN: 1-903980-35-6	\$14.95
Chronomancy – The Power of Time	(MGP1009)
ISBN: 1-903980-42-9	\$14.95
Enchantment – Fire in the Mind	(MGP1010)
ISBN: 1-903980-49-6	\$14.95
Star Magic – Wisdom of the Magi	(MGP1011)
ISBN: 1-903980-57-7	\$14.95
Illusionism – Smoke and Mirrors	(MGP1012)
ISBN: 1-903980-68-3	\$14.95
Crossbreeding – Flesh and Blood	(MGP1013)
ISBN: 1-903980-91-7	\$14.95
Dragon Magic – Power Incarnate	(MGP1014)
ISBN: 1-903980-93-3	\$14.95
Divination – All Seeing Eye	(MGP1015)
ISBN: 1-903980-99-2	\$14.95
Conjuration – Bell, Book and Candle	(MGP1016)
ISBN: 1-904577-09-1	\$14.95
Familiars – Crouching Monkey, Hidden Toad	(MGP1017)
ISBN: 1-904577-14-8	\$14.95
Blood Magic – Oaths and Sacrifice	(MGP1018)
ISBN: 1-904577-21-0	\$14.95
Tomes & Libraries	(MGP1019)
ISBN: 1-904577-21-0	\$14.95

Components & Foci	(MGP1020)
ISBN: 1-904577-43-1	\$14.95
Abjuration - Shielded by Sorcery	(MGP1021)
ISBN: 1-904577-64-4	\$14.95

Encyclopaedia Divine

Fey Magic – Seeking the Reverie	(MGP1007)
ISBN: 1-903980-30-5	\$14.95

Travellers' Tales

Seas of Blood	(MGP3001)
ISBN: 1-903980-08-9	\$19.95

The Collector's Series

The Quintessential Fighter	(MGP4001)
ISBN: 1-903980-09-7	\$19.95
The Quintessential Rogue	(MGP4002)
ISBN: 1-903980-13-5	\$19.95
The Quintessential Cleric	(MGP4003)
ISBN: 1-903980-19-4	\$19.95
The Quintessential Wizard	(MGP4004)
ISBN: 1-903980-23-2	\$19.95
The Quintessential Elf	(MGP4005)
ISBN: 1-903980-28-3	\$19.95
The Quintessential Dwarf	(MGP4006)
ISBN: 1-903980-33-X	\$19.95
The Quintessential Monk	(MGP4007)
ISBN: 1-903980-40-2	\$19.95
The Quintessential Witch	(MGP4008)
ISBN: 1-903980-47-X	\$19.95
The Quintessential Psychic Warrior	(MGP4009)
ISBN: 1-903980-55-0	\$19.95
The Quintessential Druid	(MGP4010)
ISBN: 1-903980-66-6	\$19.95
The Quintessential Samurai	(MGP4011)
ISBN: 1-903980-75-5	\$19.95
The Quintessential Paladin	(MGP4012)
ISBN: 1-903980-79-8	\$19.95
The Quintessential Psion	(MGP4013)
ISBN: 1-903980-84-4	\$19.95
The Quintessential Barbarian	(MGP4014)
ISBN: 1-903980-92-5	\$19.95
The Quintessential Bard	(MGP4015)
ISBN: 1-903980-97-6	\$19.95
The Quintessential Gnome	(MGP4016)
ISBN: 1-904577-03-2	\$19.95
The Quintessential Sorcerer	(MGP4017)
ISBN: 1-904577-13-X	\$19.95
The Quintessential Drow	(MGP4018)
ISBN: 1-904577-19-9	\$21.95
The Quintessential Ranger	(MGP4019)
ISBN: 1-904577-24-5	\$21.95
The Quintessential Halfling	(MGP4020)
ISBN: 1-904577-42-3	\$21.95
The Quintessential Half-orc	(MGP4021)
ISBN: 1-904577-38-5	\$21.95
The Quintessential Human	(MGP4022)
ISBN: 1-904577-48-2	\$21.95
Cities of Fantasy	
Stonebridge – City of Illusion	(MGP5004)
ISBN: 1-903980-82-8	\$14.95
Sheoloth - City of the Drow	(MGP5005)
ISBN: 1-904577-20-2	\$34.95

Mongoose Pocket Player's Handbook (MGP2220)
ISBN: 1-904577-66-0 \$19.95

Classic Play

Book of Strongholds & Dynasties (MGP8801)
ISBN: 1-904577-41-5 \$34.95
Book of Dragons (MGP8802)
ISBN: 1-904577-50-4 \$34.95
Book of Encounters & Lairs (MGP8803)
ISBN: 1-904577-63-6 \$34.95

Supplementary Rulebooks

Ultimate Prestige Classes (MGP9001)
Volume One
ISBN: 1-903980-50-X \$34.95
Ultimate Feats (MGP9002)
ISBN: 1-903980-67-4 \$34.95
Ultimate Equipment Guide (MGP9003)
ISBN: 1-903980-81-X \$34.95
Ultimate Games Designer's Companion (MGP9004)
ISBN: 1-904577-00-8 \$34.95
Ultimate Arcane Spellbook (MGP9005)
ISBN: 1-904577-15-6 \$34.95
Ultimate Character Sheet (MGP9006)
ISBN: 1-904577-32-6 \$4.95
Ultimate Prestige Classes Volume Two (MGP9007)
ISBN: 1-904577-35-0 \$34.95
Ultimate Monsters (MGP9009)
ISBN: 1-904577-56-3 \$34.95

Power Classes

Assassin (MGP1101)
ISBN: 1-903980-58-5 \$2.95
Gladiator (MGP1102)
ISBN: 1-903980-59-3 \$2.95
Exorcist (MGP1103)
ISBN: 1-903980-60-7 \$2.95
Noble (MGP1104)
ISBN: 1-903980-61-5 \$2.95
Knight (MGP1105)
ISBN: 1-903980-87-9 \$2.95
Artificer (MGP1106)
ISBN: 1-903980-88-7 \$2.95
Hedge Wizard (MGP1107)
ISBN: 1-903980-89-5 \$2.95
Explorer (MGP1108)
ISBN: 1-903980-90-9 \$2.95
Pirate (MGP1109)
ISBN: 1-904577-05-9 \$2.95
Alchemist (MGP1110)
ISBN: 1-904577-06-7 \$2.95
Cabalist (MGP1111)
ISBN: 1-904577-07-5 \$2.95
Fool (MGP1112)
ISBN: 1-904577-08-3 \$2.95

The Judge Dredd Roleplaying Game

Judge Dredd RPG (MGP7001)
ISBN: 1-903980-31-3 \$39.95
Rookie's Guide to the Justice Department (MGP7002)
ISBN: 1-903980-32-1 \$14.95
Rookie's Guide to Block Wars (MGP7003)
ISBN: 1-903980-37-2 \$14.95
Mega-City One's Most Wanted (MGP7004)
ISBN: 1-903980-38-0 \$9.95
Rookie's Guide to Psi-Talent (MGP7006)
ISBN: 1-903980-44-5 \$17.95
The Sleeping Kin (MGP7007)
ISBN: 1-903980-45-3 \$9.95

Rookie's Guide to Criminal Organisations (MGP7008)

ISBN: 1-903980-51-8 \$14.95
Russian Roulette (MGP7009)
ISBN: 1-903980-52-6 \$9.95
Rookie's Guide to Brit-Cit (MGP7010)
ISBN: 1-903980-62-3 \$19.95
Target: Mega-City One (MGP7011)
ISBN: 1-903980-63-1 \$9.95
Rookie's Guide to Crazes (MGP7012)
ISBN: 1-903980-72-0 \$14.95

Slaine, the Roleplaying Game of Celtic Fantasy

Slaine RPG (MGP8001)
ISBN: 1-903980-46-1 \$34.95
Tir Nan Og (MGP8002)
ISBN: 1-903980-53-4 \$19.95
The Invulnerable King (MGP8003)
ISBN: 1-903980-54-2 \$19.95
The Fir Domain (MGP8004)
ISBN: 1-903980-64-X \$9.95
Teeth of the Moon Sow (MGP8005)
ISBN: 1-903980-65-8 \$19.95
The Sessair (MGP8006)
ISBN: 1-903980-78-X \$9.95
The Ragnarok Book (MGP8007)
ISBN: 1-903980-77-1 \$19.95
The Way of the Horned God (MGP8008)
ISBN: 1-903980-83-6 \$19.95
The Tribe of Shadows (MGP8009)
ISBN: 1-903980-94-1 \$9.95

Armageddon 2089 - Total War

Armageddon 2089 RPG (MGP1201)
ISBN: 1-903980-95-X \$44.95
War Machines of 2089 (MGP1202)
ISBN: 1-903980-96-8 \$24.95
Earth 2089 (MGP1203)
ISBN: 1-904577-02-4 \$24.95
Behind Enemy Lines - Kazakhstan (MGP1204)
ISBN: 1-904577-11-3 \$24.95
Armoured Companies (MGP1205)
ISBN: 1-904577-01-6 \$24.95
The High Frontier (MGP1206)
ISBN: 1-904577-29-6 \$21.95

The Babylon 5 Roleplaying Game

Babylon 5 RPG (MGP3330)
ISBN: 1-904577-11-3 \$44.95
Fiery Trial (MGP3331)
ISBN: 1-904577-12-1 \$24.95
Coming of Shadows (MGP3332)
ISBN: 1-904577-18-0 \$24.95
The Earth Alliance (MGP3333)
ISBN: 1-904577-23-7 \$34.95
Minbari Federation (MGP3334)
ISBN: 1-904577-26-1 \$34.95
Point Of No Return (MGP3335)
ISBN: 1-904577-30-X \$24.95

Macho Women with Guns Roleplaying Game

Macho Women with Guns RPG (MGP1400)
ISBN: 1-904577-33-4 \$34.95

OGL CyberNet - Cyberpunk Roleplaying

CyberNet RPG (MGP6601)
ISBN: 1-904577-61-X \$39.95

DON'T RISK MISSING OUT! SUBSCRIBE NOW!



'I want you to sign up right now, mister!'

Signs & Portents is every roleplayer's essential monthly purchase. Back issues are hard to come by so why take the chance of missing a crucial issue? Take out a subscription to Signs & Portents right now!

Take out a one year subscription today for just \$70.99 to the US or \$76.99 for the Rest of the World. *This figure includes postage.* That's two issues you will get absolutely FREE.

Subscriber Benefits:

- † Guaranteed delivery to your door.
- † Two FREE issues.

Signs & Portents gives you:

- † Exclusive articles supporting Mongoose products.
- † The latest news.
- † Previews of forthcoming Mongoose releases.
- † Hard copy information for Mongoose customers.
- † Product expansions.
- † Full mail order product list.
- † Gaming reports.
- † Intelligent gaming analysis.
- † All in full colour.

Contact us for
UK£ prices

And so much more!

Follow the link at www.mongoosepublishing.com, phone (+44) 07890 962059 or send a cheque to Mongoose Publishing PO Box 1018 Swindon Wiltshire SN3 1DG, UK

Dungeons & Dragons and Wizards of the Coast are trademarks of Wizards of the Coast, Inc. in the United States and other countries and are used with permission. 'd20 System' and the 'd20 System' logo are trademarks of Wizards of the Coast, Inc. and are used according to the terms of the d20 System License version 5.0. A copy of this License can be found at www.wizards.com/d20.

OPEN GAME LICENSE Version 1.0a

The following text is the property of Wizards of the Coast, Inc. and is Copyright 2000 Wizards of the Coast, Inc ("Wizards"). All Rights Reserved.

1. Definitions: (a) "Contributors" means the copyright and/or trademark owners who have contributed Open Game Content; (b) "Derivative Material" means copyrighted material including derivative works and translations (including into other computer languages), potation, modification, correction, addition, extension, upgrade, improvement, compilation, abridgment or other form in which an existing work may be recast, transformed or adapted; (c) "Distribute" means to reproduce, license, rent, lease, sell, broadcast, publicly display, transmit or otherwise distribute; (d) "Open Game Content" means the game mechanic and includes the methods, procedures, processes and routines to the extent such content does not embody the Product Identity and is an enhancement over the prior art and any additional content clearly identified as Open Game Content by the Contributor, and means any work covered by this License, including translations and derivative works under copyright law, but specifically excludes Product Identity. (e) "Product Identity" means product and product line names, logos and identifying marks including trade dress; artifacts; creatures characters; stories, storylines, plots, thematic elements, dialogue, incidents, language, artwork, symbols, designs, depictions, likenesses, formats, poses, concepts, themes and graphic, photographic and other visual or audio representations; names and descriptions of characters, spells, enchantments, personalities, teams, personas, likenesses and special abilities; places, locations, environments, creatures, equipment, magical or supernatural abilities or effects, logos, symbols, or graphic designs; and any other trademark or registered trademark clearly identified as Product identity by the owner of the Product Identity, and which specifically excludes the Open Game Content; (f) "Trademark" means the logos, names, mark, sign, motto, designs that are used by a Contributor to identify itself or its products or the associated products contributed to the Open Game License by the Contributor (g) "Use", "Used" or "Using" means to use, Distribute, copy, edit, format, modify, translate and otherwise create Derivative Material of Open Game Content. (h) "You" or "Your" means the licensee in terms of this agreement.

2. The License: This License applies to any Open Game Content that contains a notice indicating that the Open Game Content may only be Used under and in terms of this License. You must affix such a notice to any Open Game Content that you Use. No terms may be added to or subtracted from this License except as described by the License itself. No other terms or conditions may be applied to any Open Game Content distributed using this License.

3. Offer and Acceptance: By Using the Open Game Content You indicate Your acceptance of the terms of this License.

4. Grant and Consideration: In consideration for agreeing to use this License, the Contributors grant You a perpetual, worldwide, royalty-free, non-exclusive license with the exact terms of this License to Use, the Open Game Content.

5. Representation of Authority to Contribute: If You are contributing original material as Open Game Content, You represent that Your Contributions are Your original creation and/or You have sufficient rights to grant the rights conveyed by this License.

6. Notice of License Copyright: You must update the COPYRIGHT NOTICE portion of this License to include the exact text of the COPYRIGHT NOTICE of any Open Game Content You are copying, modifying or distributing, and You must add the title, the copyright date, and the copyright holder's name to the COPYRIGHT NOTICE of any original Open Game Content you Distribute.

7. Use of Product Identity: You agree not to Use any Product Identity, including as an indication as to compatibility, except as expressly licensed in another, independent Agreement with the owner of each element of that Product Identity. You agree not to indicate compatibility or co-adaptability with any Trademark or Registered Trademark in conjunction with a work containing Open Game Content except as expressly licensed in another, independent Agreement with the owner of such Trademark or Registered Trademark. The use of any Product Identity in Open Game Content does not constitute a challenge to the ownership of that Product Identity. The owner of any Product Identity used in Open Game Content shall retain all rights, title and interest in and to that Product Identity.

8. Identification: If you distribute Open Game Content You must clearly indicate which portions of the work that you are distributing are Open Game Content.

9. Updating the License: Wizards or its designated Agents may publish updated versions of this License. You may use any authorized version of this License to copy, modify and distribute any Open Game Content originally distributed under any version of this License.

10. Copy of this License: You MUST include a copy of this License with every copy of the Open Game Content You Distribute.

11. Use of Contributor Credits: You may not market or advertise the Open Game Content using the name of any Contributor unless You have written permission from the Contributor to do so.

12. Inability to Comply: If it is impossible for You to comply with any of the terms of this License with respect to some or all of the Open Game Content due to statute, judicial order, or governmental regulation then You may not Use any Open Game Material so affected.

13. Termination: This License will terminate automatically if You fail to comply with all terms herein and fail to cure such breach within 30 days of becoming aware of the breach. All sublicenses shall survive the termination of this License.

14. Reformation: If any provision of this License is held to be unenforceable, such provision shall be reformed only to the extent necessary to make it enforceable.

15. COPYRIGHT NOTICE

Open Game License v 1.0a Copyright 2000, Wizards of the Coast, Inc.
System Reference Document Copyright 2000-2003, Wizards of the Coast, Inc.; Authors Jonathan Tweet, Monte Cook, Skip Williams, Rich Baker, Andy Collins, David Noonan, Rich Redman, Bruce R. Cordell, based on original material by E. Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson.
Traps & Treachery Copyright 2001, Fantasy Flight Inc.
Deadlands d20 Copyright 2001, Pinnacle Entertainment Group, Inc.
Dragonstar: Starfarer's Handbook Copyright 2001, Fantasy Flight Inc.
Armageddon 2089: Total War copyright 2003, Mongoose Publishing.
Warmachines of 2089 copyright 2003, Mongoose Publishing.
Babylon 5 Copyright 2003, Warner Brothers Ltd.
Signs & Portents Copyright 2003, Mongoose Publishing.
CONAN® and/or CONAN THE BARBARIAN® and related logos, characters, names and distinctive likenesses thereof are trademarks of Conan Properties International LLC unless otherwise noted. All Rights Reserved. Mongoose Publishing Authorised User.
Judge Dredd Copyright 2002, Rebellion A/S.
Slaine Copyright 2002, Rebellion A/S.
Macho Women with Guns Copyright 2003, Mongoose Publishing. Original Macho Women with Guns Roleplaying Game Copyright Greg Porter.
Lone Wolf Copyright Joe Dever.