

A U R O R A

THE SILHOUETTE MAGAZINE



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:
ARTILLERY ACTION
BLITZ! PROBABILITIES
CONVICTS IN THE FIELD
FICTION, FICTION, FICTION!



AURORA: THE SILHOUETTE MAGAZINE
TABLE OF CONTENTS
VOLUME 5, ISSUE 6

Shades in the Night... <i>Editor's Message</i>	2
About the Authors <i>The Whos and Copyright Information</i>	3
Convicts in the Field <i>House Rules Heavy Gear Blitz! by Gregory Morris</i>	5
Jovian Koma <i>Gallery Image set in Jovian Chronicles by John Bell</i>	8
Not Far Enough <i>Fiction set in Heavy Gear by Scott McIntyre</i>	9
Guard Duty <i>Gallery Image set in Heavy Gear by Oliver Bollmann</i>	13
Underneath the Glory <i>Fiction set in Heavy Gear by Stephen Richard</i>	14
Probabilities in Heavy Gear Blitz! <i>Rules Exploration for Heavy Gear Blitz! by Gerrit Kitts & Marc-Antoine Rondeau</i>	17
Lightning And Thunder <i>Campaign Info and House Rules for Heavy Gear Blitz! by Scott McIntyre</i>	29
Alfie's Tanners <i>Graphic Novel set in Gear Krieg by John Bell</i>	32
Messages from the Pod <i>Official DP9 Material by Jason Dickerson</i>	35
Submission Guidelines <i>How to Submit Material to Aurora</i>	36
Article Suggestions <i>What Aurora is Looking For</i>	37

AURORA: THE SILHOUETTE MAGAZINE

SHADES IN THE NIGHT

From the Editor...

Wow. October already. This year seems to have gained Flight Speed 30 and zoomed by. What is a year's TV anyway?

This month we begin a two-part article that delves heavily into statistics, mathematics, probability and the intricate guts of the Silhouette gaming system. (Suddenly I have this image of my math classes being taught all about gaming things!) In reading it for publication I realized once again something that I am sure many of us notice from time to time: gaming rules are just so *fascinating*.

We all love games for them being, well, games and the joy that comes in playing games. Even the simple game of tag we can love, and we can get more intricate as we go through sports, card games, board games, miniature games, and everything in between. Yet even in that simple game of tag there are rules, and it is these rules that, ultimately I assert here, influence how engaging the game will be. Rules set up possibilities for strategy, give framework for skills to be developed around, and limit and engage luck in a way to be tense and exciting.

For many of us, "getting under the hood" of a game and seeing just how it all fits together, and discovering its particulars, is like mind candy. Much as a mathematician can find beauty in formulae, we gamers can find beauty in our rulesets. To know how one aspect works off another and is balanced against a third and makes possible a fourth can be just delicious. When a particularly elegant mechanic is revealed, we may even whistle in awe and in appreciation of a job well done.

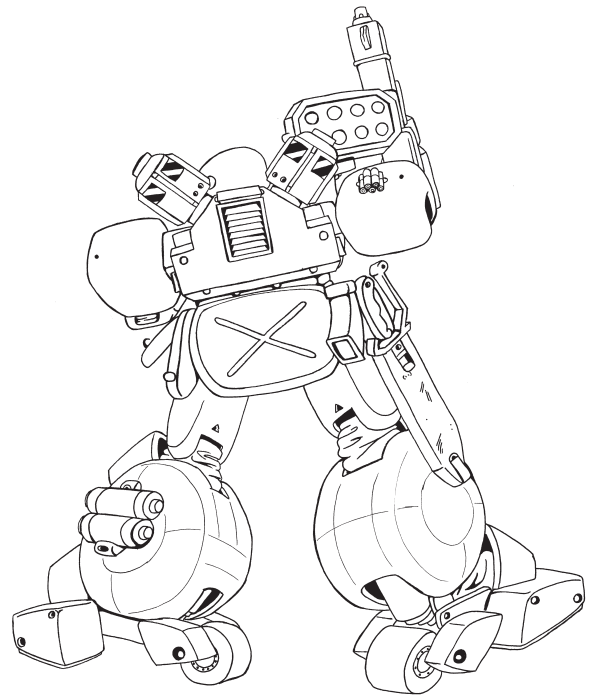
Of course, knowing the rules also allows one greater access to "winning" strategies. And therein can lie a pitfall, when knowing the game and trying to take advantage of the rules (which could be stated as playing the rules rather than playing the game) gets in the way of our, or others, enjoyment. Where this line lies, and whether we cross it, is what each of us who likes to tinker into the mechanics has to judge for ourselves and adjust accordingly. It is possible to get delight from both playing the game and understanding the guts of the rules.

And maybe later, we can take that understanding into the creation of our own games.

Welcome to issue 5.6 of your Silhouette Magazine.

Game on,

Oliver Bollmann
Aurora Magazine Editor



OFFICIAL-DP9

"Official" Dream Pod 9 rules, updates and materials can be found in the Gear Up magazine, available at DP9's store on RPGnow.com.

HOME BREW RULES

All material inside Aurora is fan submitted and are not regarded as official and do not change the games or the DP9 game-universes as written in the books. Aurora material may not be used in tournament or other official play and may differ from current or future books. Any Aurora rules or material should only be used if all players agree upon their inclusion before play.

AURORA: THE SILHOUETTE MAGAZINE

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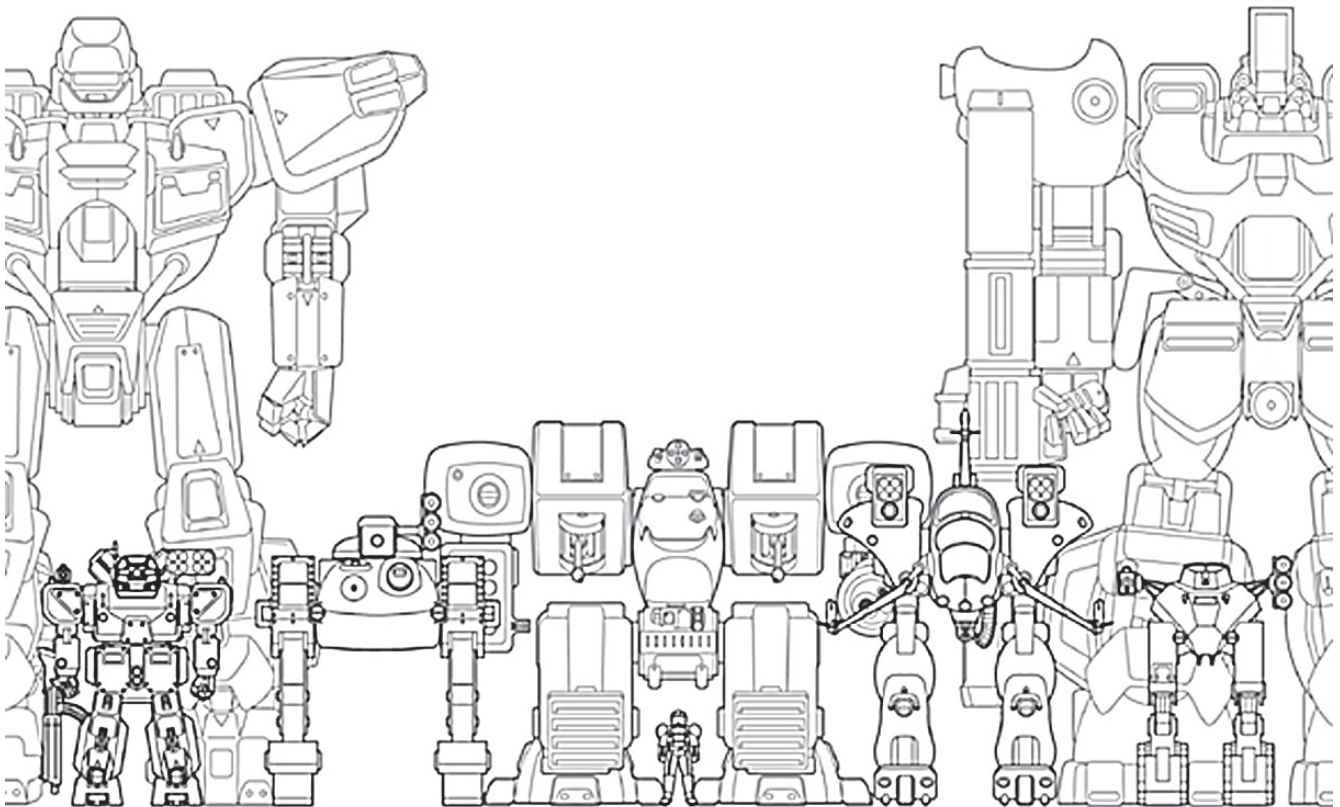
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It all started in a hobby store one day twenty odd years ago with an odd box containing something called Top Secret. Since then games have just become a big part of his life. He's been in love with the DP9 universes since the first HG release and began his direct involvement with the Pod crew a couple of years ago. He also runs a gaming imprint *Kannik Studios at rpgnow:*

http://rpg.drivethrustuff.com/index.php?manufacturers_id=291

FYI from the Editor: Yon Koma manga, a comic-strip format, generally consists of gag comic strips within four panels of equal size ordered from top to bottom, read right to left. (an FYI because I looked it up too... :)

AURORA: THE SILHOUETTE MAGAZINE ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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Aurora Magazine, Volume 5, Issue 6, Published October 1st, 2011

Synopsis: This article argues that the Convicts rule of the MILICIA is hamstrung by the other downgrade options available to the army list and proposes several solutions for making Convicts a viable unit which do not involve pricing in any additional TV discount. This article contains two paragraphs of language to consider for addition in the Convicts rules and offers several other options which make fielding Convicts more of a strategic choice for the community to playtest.

In looking at the army construction rules I have been struck by a thought: the rules for Convicts in Gears in the MILICIA/Emirates lists are a handicap to those army lists. It seems a strange thought, at first, as the use of convicts is one of the major thematic elements of the South as a whole, and is iconic for the MILICIA since they are the poster children for conscript armies. From a mechanical standpoint, in both army lists which can field them, there is precisely one circumstance which the Convict rules permit that no alternative does – fielding the Asp gear in GP cadres - and I don't know that this one circumstance is sufficient for that to be a major feature of two army lists given the major downsides of fielding Convicts.

Let me explain. In brief, in a GP cadre designated as Convicts, unless you play with the optional rules for Morale, you are just choosing between two different gear types to construct a normal GP squad. However, that squad loses every available option, except the option to be Veterans, and has a few disadvantages sprinkled in for amusement value. The Convicts can be mounted in either Asps or Stripped Jägers, for the base cost of the chassis. While this sounds like a cost savings, since the Asp and Stripped Jägers both are cheaper than the stock Jägers, that cost savings is mostly imaginary because of the other rules that apply to Convicts and the other rules available to the MILICIA in particular. The Convict squad has the disadvantage of having to stay within the CGL's Autocomms radius, further exacerbated by the fact that the Convicts cannot spend Command Points unless there is an MP cadre near the Convict in question. This presumed advantage is diminished even further by the otherwise frankly excellent Limited Resources rule for the MILICIA, which allows the player to get access to the Stripped Jäger chassis in any cadre without the Convicts rule for the same cost in TV as a Convict in a Stripped Jäger.

It is in some ways even worse for the Emirates player interested in representing Southern factionalism of the gritty variety. The only advantages to an Emir who adheres to the ideals of the AST are the Convicts and Fresh Meat rules - Limited

Resources are reserved for the MILICIA proper and the Mekong beancounters. The end result is that the Emirates/AST list has nothing advantageous, nor any cost discounts, to set it apart. From a design standpoint this makes Emirates/AST the most archetypally Southern list, as the player will be using the Swords of Pride entries from L&L with minimal modification. We'll chalk that one up to a design "feature" but it is hard to ignore the fact that every other Emirates list is better. It is also hard to ignore that the Leagueless Emirs can do 40-50% of what the AST Emirs can do but without the downsides of the Convicts rule.

None of the above needs to be negative, however. The problem is not that the disadvantages of the Convicts rule are steps in the wrong direction and the existing aspects of the rule do not need a substantial rework. I believe that there just needs to be something about the Convicts special rule which does not require playing with complicated and apparently unpopular optional rules in order to distinguish the Convict GP cadre from a bad idea that happens to cost the same as a pretty good one. I think that since further TV savings on the chassis downgrade discount are not an acceptable balance for all of the disadvantages, why not build in a non-TV discount advantage to the Convicts rule to help make them a competitive choice for a specific role?

The key here is to identify what role the Convicts are going to be competing for in MILICIA and Emirates lists. With that in mind plus the background and style of Convict units, a few minor additions can be made to the Convicts rule that will restore that option to more frequent use. After all, something has got to keep those reprobates busy! From a technical perspective, the Convicts are a discount unit – every member of the GP cadre has to be downgraded from its default Jäger and there are no upgrades available. Discount is the MILICIA's specialty, however, and so for the Convicts to have a proper niche (other than voluntary handicap) there must be something more to fielding them. For the next clue, look at what the Convicts can field for commonalities. The Stripped Jäger is more vulnerable to overkills than the standard Jäger, has fewer weapons, but the ones which remain are identical, and is faster in both Walker and Ground modes. The Asp is also more vulnerable to overkills than the standard Jäger, has fewer and weaker weapons, but has an additional hand grenade. The points of overlap are stronger than might be thought at first glance between an armour 15 and armour 13 gear with a difference in speeds also.

AURORA: THE SILHOUETTE MAGAZINE

CONVICTS IN THE FIELD

Both the Stripped Jäger and Asp, then, are very much close assault Gears with the only difference being their main targets for assault. The Stripped Jäger is an anti-gear choice meant for swamping basic troopers with numbers from the TV savings of the downgrade from a standard Jäger. With the speed boost, it can close more rapidly than the basic Jäger and it has the Jäger's LAC for creating crossfires and wearing targets down. It also has the Jäger's full complement of hand grenades for finishing off wounded targets or making drive-by Placed attacks while at combat speed in Ground mode by targets of opportunity which have been Used already. The Asp, meanwhile, looks more fragile than either Jäger, but it has substantially beefed up front armour to allow it to weather reaction-fire spray-and-pray on its way in. The HMG does not have the raw stopping power of the LAC, but it also has an excellent ROF and the AI trait. The four hand grenades are just icing on the cake for slaughtering infantry or threatening targets of opportunity once up close.

What this analysis reveals is that Convicts are intended to get up close and personal with the enemy, to provide an inexpensive bulk to the force, and be entirely disposable units. The existing TV discount on the chassis downgrade for GP cadres takes care of the "inexpensive bulk" part of the statement. Offering a further TV discount on Convicts might be reasonable, but without significant playtesting I could not recommend any such discount given that the rules are currently specifically written to price Convicts at the cost of the equipment they employ. Besides which, 100TV for a cadre of four Stripped Jägers does not seem like an unreasonable cost if the substantial and crippling disadvantages of being Convicts are balanced by non-cost advantages.

For the other two parts of the Convict Cadre's purpose, there are two relatively easy and minor changes that I believe could be added to the current rules which will make choosing between a GP cadre downgraded with Limited Resources and a Convict GP cadre a non-obvious viable strategic decision. The first is to specify that Convicts can never be randomly chosen by an objective from either player. The point of this is to avoid narratively ridiculous situations such as the success of your army's deployment hinging on the escape of a unit of Convicts from the board. Or, conversely, your enemy succeeding in his mission by scanning a unit of Convicts. Disposable troops are troops nobody cares about since they will not have special equipment, secret information, or any squad-members whose survival is all that critical.

The second change is to give the Convicts an additional 3" of deployment outside of the normal deployment zones specified in the scenario so long as they are deployed normally rather than held in Reserve or made Infiltrators. Convict troops are likely to be the first part of any column or otherwise deployed in order to spring traps and ambushes. A slightly enlarged deployment zone for Convicts seems a good way to represent the disposable troops being sent in first by the officer in command.

As for formal wording, I suggest that to the Convicts rule as it is written on page 107, L&L rev 1.1 be added:

1) after "-when determining the new Combat group leader." in a new paragraph add the following:

"Convict troops are often given the dirtiest chores and put in the most dangerous positions. Not many positions are as dangerous as being the first into a combat zone and many officers choose to deploy Convict troops ahead of their regular line of battle. In part this helps guarantee that the Convicts will be the first to soak up fire and take casualties. This also lets the Convicts be the trap-springers and the first to march into ambushes. When deploying regularly, as opposed to Infiltrating, Convicts may deploy up to an additional three inches beyond the army deployment zone specified in the scenario."

2) after "-and Convict Groups are often referred to as 'les condamnee.'" in a new paragraph add the following:

"Convicts are frequently assigned missions which are too high risk and low reward for a regular unit to be committed. They also often are assigned to missions where High Command does not want to alert the enemy to the importance of the objective by moving in an elite unit with the equipment to accomplish the job with minimal losses. In that situation, Convicts can be told "do-or-die" and be sent off alone or operate under cover of larger troop movements. When determining what squads in your army are chosen by objectives that require random selection, Convict units can never be randomly chosen. This applies to your and your opponent's objectives equally."

**HOME
BREW
RULES**

AURORA: THE SILHOUETTE MAGAZINE CONVICTS IN THE FIELD

HOME BREW RULES

Additionally, I have several suggestions of my own and gleaned from other members on the forum (you know who you are) to flesh out the Convict unit that I would like to see playtested but cannot recommend as additions to the Convict rules without seeing how they impact gameplay.

Option 1 – Allow Convict units to take SDGs:

One Gear per Convict cadre may replace all of its Thrown weapons with a single SDG for +5TV. This grenade may not be thrown like a normal grenade; it must either be placed or self detonated.

Option 2 – Allow Veteran Convicts to take MFLs:

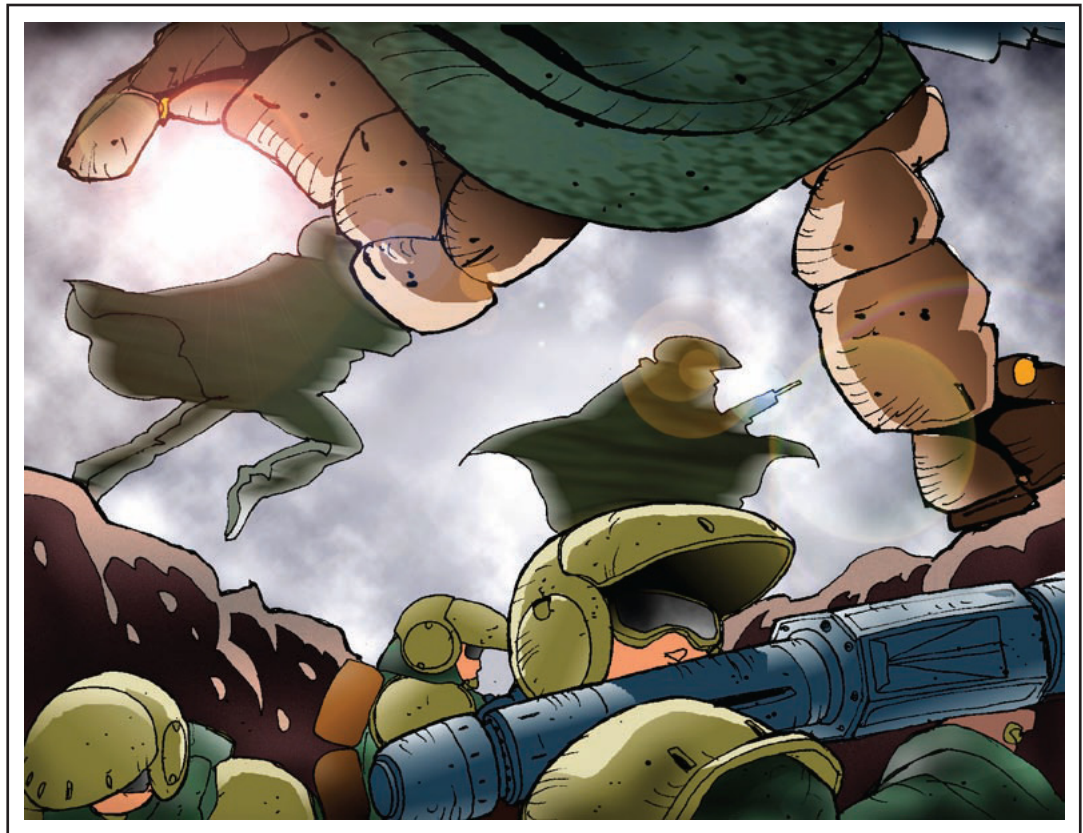
Any Gear in a Veteran Convict cadre may replace its LAC with an MFL for free. If any Gear does this, all Gears in the cadre must make this swap.

Option 3 – Give Convict Gears a viable Melee weapon:

Any Gear in a Convict cadre may add a Mace (S+2 damage, M, AC, F arc) for +5 TV

Option 4 – Allow Veteran Convicts to be deployed as disposable commandos:

A single Veteran Convict cadre may be designated “Commandos” for +10 TV. That cadre may purchase Infiltration for themselves for 1 SP.



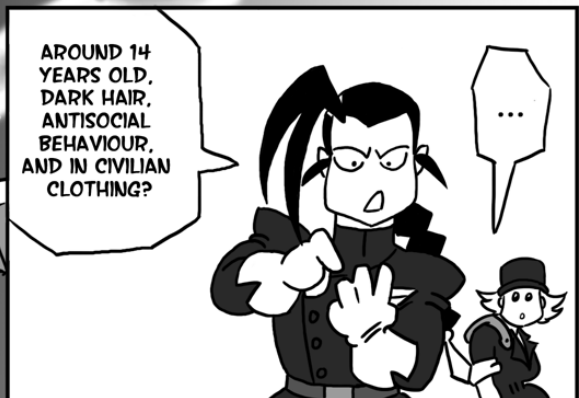
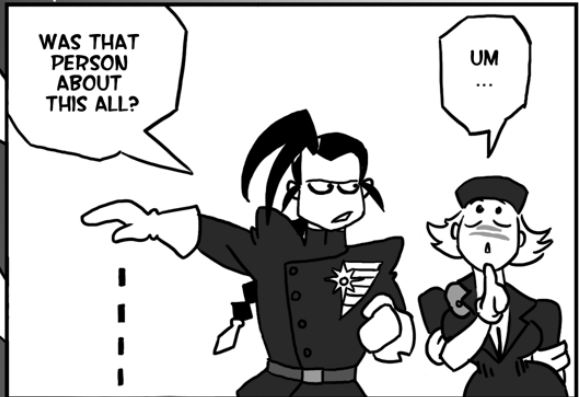
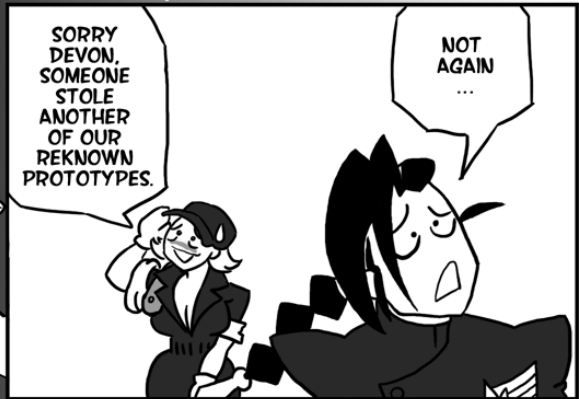
OVER THE TOP!

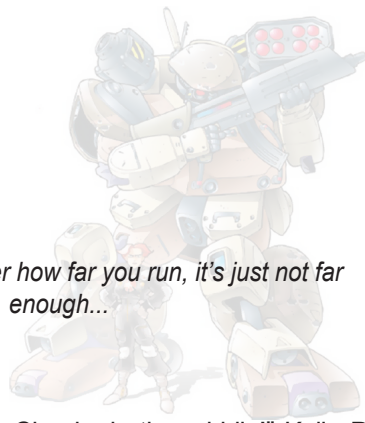
JOVIAN KOMA

JOHN BELL



STOLEN AGAIN...





Sometimes, no matter how far you run, it's just not far enough...

“Circle up, boys and girls, Chunky in the middle!” Kalin Peng pelted his way across the sparse grass of the small plateau towards his Warrior. The “Chung Tang Gang,” as the local media had dubbed them, were little more than farmers, honest, hard working men from the farmlands around Chung Tang. Forced to arm themselves against MILICIA aggression. Few of the dozen odd individuals in the group missed the irony of the fact that by arming themselves for protection they had actually forced the MILICIA's hand and been driven from their land into the wilds of the badlands.

As the trio of flighty Varis VTOLs sailed by again strafing the makeshift camp with their autocannons the collection of freedom fighters realized they hadn't run far enough.

Kalin scrambled up the short stepladder and into his gear, frantically strapping on his helmet before pulling the hatch shut. The world flared into existence around him, the darkness of the night sky superimposed with a hundred markings and labels and readouts. To someone who'd never been in a gear before it would be an unintelligible mess. But Kalin had been piloting a Valens since he was 6 cycles old.

An icon in the sky began to shade from blue towards red as one of the Varises lined up for a third strafing run. As it crossed the bright violet threshold Kalin stroked the firing stud on his left joystick. A brilliant trail of white exhaust lit from within came into existence on his gear's shoulder. The Varis pilot tried to abort his run and dodge the rockets, but all he succeeded in doing was presenting the largest possible target profile to the incoming weapons. The rockets exploded gloriously and Kalin smiled smugly as the vehicle's cockpit hatch blew away and the pilot ejected.

Kalin had already taken a dozen steps as the flaming wreckage of the aircraft spiralled away and vanished over the lip of the plateau.

The gang had chosen the high ground for their camp, in retrospect perhaps not the best choice for a group trying to hide from pursuing soldiers. The plateau was perhaps three hundred meters long, and half that wide with several stone heads atop it and clusters of stout coniferous trees around the longer edges both atop the cliff and on the ground below. Chunky, the gang's Mammoth, was backing itself up against the largest stone head on the plateau. He knew the vehicle was in bad shape, the ATM launcher had long ago been fired dry, its secondary weapons,

AURORA: THE SILHOUETTE MAGAZINE NOT FAR ENOUGH SCOTT MCINTYRE

a MAC and Frag Cannon on it's opposite arm and a Medium Bazooka jury rigged to its top turret were all dangerously low on ammo as well.

The Varis pilots had apparently not been the greatest shots as all the gang's gears and pilots seemed active and largely undamaged. The group consisted of another warrior, a pair of Falmmjaegers, two Tigers, an Iguana, a Grizzly, and of course, Chunky.

“Which way are they coming from?!” Nola was the youngest member of the group, piloting one of the Tigers, she was jumpy and scared, but she knew she was in it at this point.

Malk, the group's leader answered her over the comm, “Who knows? That's why we're circling the wagons. We'll try to make a breakout once we know where they're coming from.” The sky lit orange to Kalin's left and he looked over to see one of the Flammjaegers arcing a stream of fire over the edge of the plateau to the east.

Pella, the Grizzly's pilot, chastised him, “What the hell are you doing Jano?”

The Jaeger stopped and affected a shrug. “Call it mood lighting. Something to keep those MILICIA rats busy while they climb up to get us.”

The trees he had been firing into were still alight, casting an eerie glow over the group of gears. “What if that's the only direction they're not coming from? How are we supposed to escape through that?”

The man chuckled over the comm. “That's not my problem sweet cheeks, I'm fire-proof.”

“Why you arrogant self centred son of a-” Pella was cut off by the ring of cannon fire.

Kalin spun his gear around to see Malk firing his Tiger's MAC at a pair of Jaeger heads that had popped up over the northern lip of the cliff. For all his charisma and leadership the man was no marksman. Kalin drew a careful bead on the left Jaeger and squeezed the trigger. A single round from his own MAC zipped out, shattering the gear's eye camera. The vehicle vanished into the darkness. A Mamba head appeared to replace it as the Jaeger levered itself up to waist height rounds spranging ineffectively from its armour.

Before Kalin could draw a bead on the second gear a set of green coordinates appeared floating in the air beside it. Even through the material of his cockpit he heard the bass whoomph

AURORA: THE SILHOUETTE MAGAZINE

NOT FAR ENOUGH

of Pella's mortar firing. Guided by The Iguana's target designator the mortar struck a glancing blow off the Jaeger's engine and continued to the ground below. The explosion was spectacular, and Kalin was almost certain he saw most of an Iguana's arm carried into the air by it.

"East!" Kalin twisted in response to the shouted warning to see another Iguana just barely clearing the edge of the cliff a ways north of the still merrily burning forest. Knowing how dangerous such a gear could be he pulled the trigger without his earlier careful aim, trying to drive its head back down below the edge of the cliff.

Too late.

An ATM arced into the sky from beyond the western edge of the plateau. There was only one target the MILICIA would have used such a powerful weapon on amongst their ragtag group. Chunky was no fool, the pilot, named for his strider (or possibly the other way around), knew what was coming and tried to hide behind the stone head, but his machine was far too big for that. The missile struck right where the Mammoth's right engine

pod met the cockpit section, destroying the strider utterly. Kalin had to look away from the blinding flash as the fireball left little more than a crater and a few pieces of scrap metal to mark the spot where their comrade had fallen.

"They're coming from the North, they must have circled around us. Head for the southern edge!" The gears burst into action, making their way towards the distant rise. Kalin and Pella backed their way towards their objective, laying down suppressing fire as they went. The group was farmers though, not soldiers, and no matter how much the two led by example the others continued in a mad dash occasionally firing wildly back over their shoulders.

All except for Mella, the other warrior pilot had been getting closer and closer to Chunky as the group fled into the wilderness, and was pretty obviously distressed at his sudden and violent passing, as evidenced by her mad rush towards the western edge of the plateau. "Mella, MELLA! What are you doing? Fall back!" A Blitz Jaeger, most likely the source of the missile that had levelled the strider suddenly hefted itself over the lip of the cliff. Though the crazed pilot had not responded to Kalin's desperate plea she was obviously aware of her surroundings, if not quite

thinking straight. Every weapon on the gear opened fire, MAC, LRP, even the almost useless APGL rained down on the MILICIA machine. These pilots were made of sterner stuff than most MILICIA, Kalin realized, as the vehicle barely flinched in the face of the maelstrom. With both its hands occupied keeping it from falling off the cliff face the Blitz Jaeger did the only thing that made sense.

Kalin looked away, this time from emotion, as the gear's second ATM neatly skewered the charging Warrior, sending Mella off to meet the Prophet. The Jaeger paid for its transgressions a few moments later, now at

almost waist level with the cliff edge and raising its first foot a line of HAC shells from Pella's Grizzly punched holes all the way across the gear's chest. The vehicle simply pitched backwards, falling from the cliff.

The others had started to come to their senses as weapons fire from the northern edge of the plateau intensified and had taken what sparse cover they could. All of them except for Jano, the man's Flammjaeger had switched to ground mode and was powering towards the cliff at full speed. His selfishness was the end of him though. Kalin saw an Iguana Commando take a knee behind one of the smaller stone heads before its bazooka spoke, the shell flying unerringly into the v-engine of the fleeing farmer.



AURORA: THE SILHOUETTE MAGAZINE

NOT FAR ENOUGH

Finally getting some covering fire Kalin and Pella turned their backs on the advancing MILICIA troops and darted into cover of their own. The air lit up suddenly around Kalin. He heard a scream as his armour was hit and one of the shoulders on his status display turned red. Switching his camera to a rear view he watched the Blazing Mamba spray laser death downrange as it charged headlong towards them. The warrior pilot literally dove the last half dozen meters to a small ridge on the hill where his comrades were taking cover.

Pella was not so lucky, he watched in horror as the light beams seared hole after hole in the much less agile gear. After what seemed like an eternity of withering fire one of the bolts penetrated the gear's mortar magazine, touching off the explosives within. Felex in his Iguana and Nola watched, transfixed in horror as the explosion bloomed into life in front of them. The heavy grizzly chassis, utterly out of control but propelled forward by the force of the explosion on its back careened into the Iguana, slamming the much smaller gear into the soil and triggering another explosion. Nola, didn't stand a chance, as the destroyed gear fell she found herself standing motionless in the open before the still charging Blazing Mamba.

Even as the young woman was felled though the Mamba met its fate. Her older brother, Halor, opened fire from his Flammjaeger, bathing the Mamba in IRP fire. The gear stumbled and tripped, the pilot no doubt trying to cope with horrendous heat within the vehicle's cockpit. His ordeal came to an end when the flaming chemicals managed to find a fuel line. "THAT is a blazing Mamba you southern bastards!" Halor yelled over an open comm channel.

Three of the fleeing gears remained now to face down the MILICIA advance that had only faltered slightly as the spearhead Mamba was consumed by flame. Kalin could see the cliff's edge a scant three dozen meters away. Malk came over the radio. "Halor go, we'll cover you!"

Kalin saw the Jaeger break from cover and run for the edge of the cliff. He broke cover himself, racing sideways firing wildly towards the advancing southerners. He ducked behind another stone head as the MILICIA's shells burst all around him.

A throbbing red indicator in the upper corner of his vision caught his attention and he turned his eyes skyward to see indicators for the two surviving Varises suddenly appear again on his scopes. Realizing what was about to happen a moment too late he shouted wordlessly at Halor even as the gear reached the

edge of the cliff and leapt, intending to vault down the fifteen or so meters to the scrub-land below. The Varis' AGM hit him mid air, coring the gear and leaving its flaming wrecked to plummet to the earth below.

Malk's nerve finally gave out and he broke cover, pelting towards the cliff as a half dozen lines of tracer fire converged on him. The gear had perhaps the least spectacular death of the night, face planting lifelessly at the edge of the cliff, skidding just far enough that one arm hung over the precipice.

Kalin cursed loudly as he hunkered down behind the stone head. Reflecting for a moment on how his former leader's position epitomized what had happened the the Chung Tang Gang: just couldn't run far enough fast enough.

The jaeger and long fang Mamba ran up to the stone head, pausing for a moment to coordinate before spinning around opposite sides of the structure dramatically. Neither of them had more than a heartbeat to register the hand grenade held in the Warrior's hand before it went off, destroying all three vehicles.

.....

"In news that will help the residents of the Mekong Dominion sleep a little more soundly tonight. Reports last night that the terrorist organization known as the Chung Tang Gang were finally brought low in a raid by the MILICIA's SIU have been confirmed. Although exact details are of course classified a MILICIA spokesman went on record as saying casualties were 'high but acceptable' and that all members of the Terrorist organization were killed in an 'ill-considered last stand'. He went on to state that he hoped this would show any malcontents that the AST, the Dominion, and the Republic would broke no armed radicals operating within-"

A dusty badlands voice interrupted the news broadcast in the small saloon. "We're ready to roll stranger. Caravan don't wait for no one."

Kalin finished his glass of whiskey and stood up, collecting his oddly shaped briefcase. Few people on Terra Nova wouldn't recognize it as a Gear CPU, but in an Oasis town like this people were smart enough to not ask questions when a new face drifted into town, as long as he drifted out again fairly quickly.

AURORA: THE SILHOUETTE MAGAZINE NOT FAR ENOUGH

“SIU,” He thought to himself as he flipped the barkeep a coin and followed the caravan leader out of the bar. “That would explain the fancy toys and rock hard pilots. I should probably feel honoured.” He looked at the line of Camels, Elans, and Longrunners that had arranged themselves in the main street of the small community. “At least I still have the option to run, unlike the others, and I doubt I’ve gone far enough.”

The man who’d come to get Kalin climbed aboard the obviously many times re-salvaged Klemm that headed up the Caravan as Kalin accepted a helping hand to get into the bed of a nearby Camel. Checking with his headset the man waved his arms dramatically before pointing forward and shouting. “Port Arthur HO!”

The Caravan started to roll out with belches of petrol exhaust and rumbling of engines. Kalin sat back and pulled his hat down over his eyes. “not nearly far enough.”

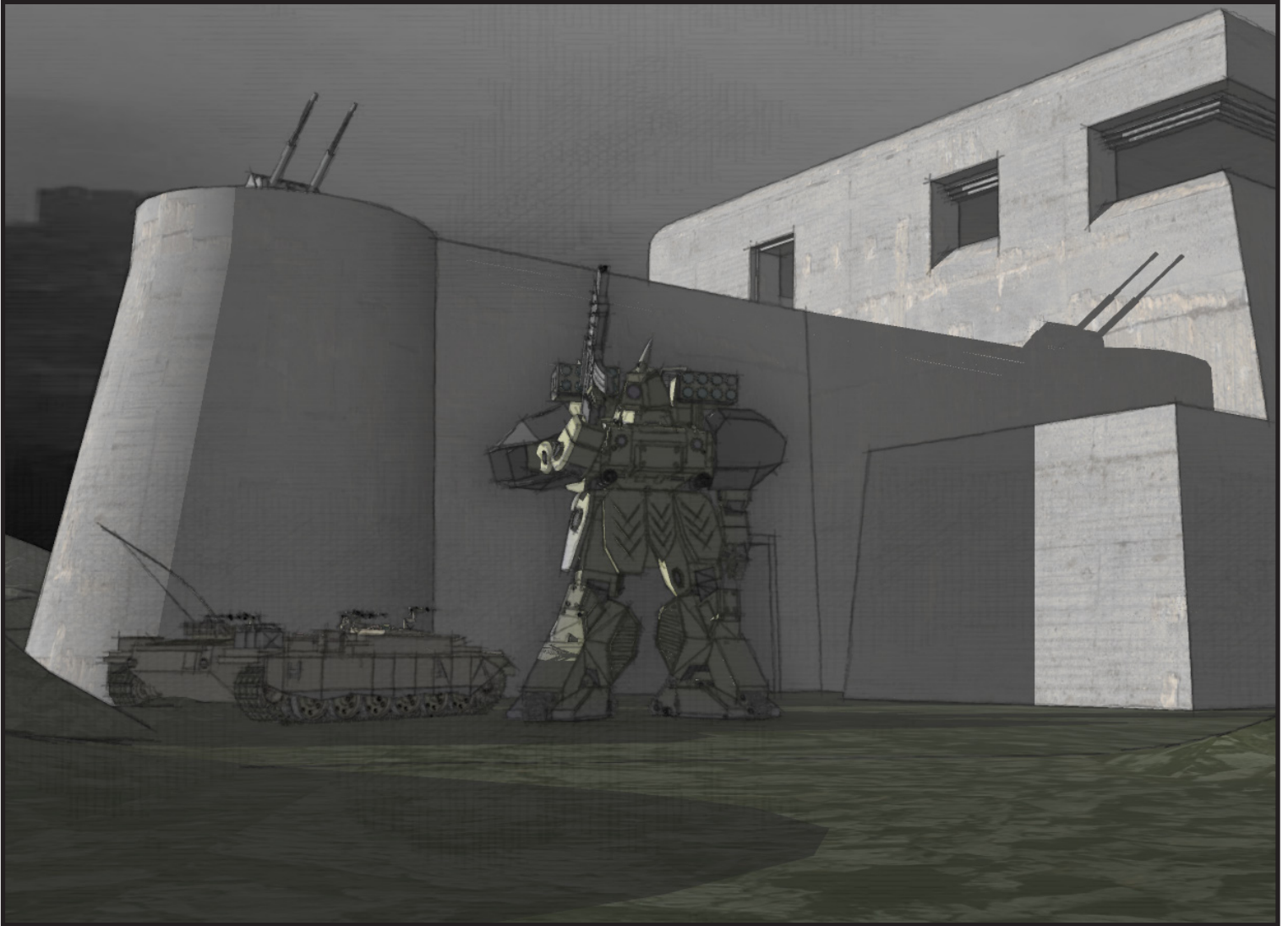


GETTIN PERSONAL

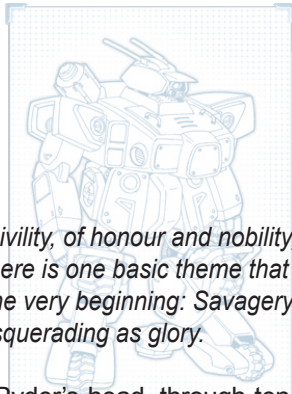
Aurora Fiction Foray!

This grows mostly out of a starting deployment that I though was just perfect in its hopelessness one game against Bryan. I took some liberties with how the game actually flowed after that, but the ending comes from the ending of the game, which I lost because my AC Tiger just didn't have the MP or Initiative to dash from cover to cliff edge and (relative) safety getting Bryan his assassinate objective.

Photo by Bryan Rombough, post processing by Scott McIntyre



With Models By:
KangaroOz 3D, LordGood, Akharr77 & jakednb



Beneath all the veneer of civility, of honour and nobility, of selflessness and heroism there is one basic theme that has run through humanity from the very beginning: Savagery, self destruction masquerading as glory.

Above Elizabeth 'Fire Rider' Ryder's head, through ten feet of concrete and two feet of sand, the roar of the crowd echoed that sentiment. There were no words in that echoing cry of pure exhilaration, there was only emotion. And that emotion had one command: Destroy.

Elizabeth let out a slow breath and gripped the bench tighter. The dressing room she occupied was a small space, barely three meters by three meters, and mostly dominated by the lockers on one side, but before her was a bench with a mirror dominating one wall and she was afraid to look at it. Instead all she could see was her own hands gripping the bench. For a second she just took in the red fabric of her jumpsuit, savouring the momentary distraction before her eyes slowly completed the journey up towards the mirror.

All she saw was a face. It was not an unattractive face, some could describe it as pretty but what truly terrified her is that, deep down, she did not recognise it. On a conscious level she looked at the blue eyes, the fair complexion, the short cropped red hair, and she knew that is who she was, but deep down she felt no attachment to the slouching, tired looking stranger staring back at her. Staring into a mirror felt like bumping into an unknown in the street. She knew these feelings, she had wrestled with them for years now, and she knew both how to make them go away, and how to make them so much worse.

She jumped a little in surprise when the door shuddered on its hinges a few times from the pounding of a fist. "Liz! You ready? We're up after the match coming!"

"I'll be ready in a minute" she shouted in reply. Her eyes drifted across to the hook upon which hung that familiar helmet. Her hands trembled as she reached over and plucked it from its perch and brought it down to rest on her head. Through the clear screen of the gear-helmet she looked at the reflection in the mirror again.

AURORA: THE SILHOUETTE MAGAZINE UNDERNEATH THE GLORY STEPHEN RICHARD

"There you are" she said to the familiar figure staring back. She was no longer flesh and bone, there were no doubts or fears, only the job. Instead of fraying red hair she saw a jumpsuit patterned in flames. Instead of tired, sunken eyes there was the reflective visor of her helmet that seemed to stare into people's souls. She was not a person plagued with uncertainty, she was a pilot and she had a job to do. Elizabeth turned on her heel and walked to the door, flinging it open to see Marcus standing there waiting for her, his green patterned jumpsuit resting snugly on his muscular frame and helmet resting under his arm.

"Ready?" he asked in his deep voice. He knew she was ready, when the helmet went on it was a sign she had accepted her job, but it was part of their ritual.

"For now." She replied as her part of the ritual. He nodded and slipped his own helmet on. She envied the ease in which he could take on the role they found themselves in, for him it was just a helmet he wore rather than a persona he must adopt. He fell into step alongside her as they walked the familiar path from the secondary dressing rooms to the hanger. Alongside them the non-descript hallway faded into the background, and the hubbub of conversation between technicians and engineers, publicity agents and handler, all blurred into an absurd counterpoint to the dull thud of explosions and the roar of pure bloodlust echoing over their heads. A few of the 'civilians' in their way stepped aside out of respect, but most did so out of a dull sense of fear. These were not just gear pilots, these were duellists.

At last reaching the hanger bay, the pair saw the other three members of their team standing near a monitor watching the match before them unfold. This much closer to the battle, the sound of fire on metal and combat in its most visceral form was much more audible. Around them, standing like silent sentinels, were dozens of gears illuminated by the florescent lighting of the enormous hanger, but given a soft green tinge by the warning light over the closed hanger doors. Many of them sporting various degrees of damage, having been used in the preliminary bouts building up to the main events, and most were swarming with technicians diagnosing problems and concerns. Many of the undamaged Gears had their cockpits open, the chest cavity folded down to allow easy access to the cramped pilot's space within the torso of the gear. Even with the damage or opened chests, they seemed terrifying to the comparatively frail humans scurrying around them.

AURORA: THE SILHOUETTE MAGAZINE

UNDERNEATH THE GLORY

The Gear, the foremost weapon of war on Terra Nova. Standing between three and five meters tall in a basic humanoid configuration, it had dominated warfare on this planet for centuries, occupying a niche between infantry and heavy armour. The Gear was fast and manoeuvrable enough to take advantage of the terrain, but large enough to carry genuinely terrifying amounts of ordinance. Between the angled armour plating of the Northern designs and the rounded dome-like constructions of the Southern designs, there was usually some gear that fit into each person's personal nightmares, from the tall, imposing Heavy Spitting Cobra like the enormous, blue painted bazooka armed model Elizabeth walked past, to the angular, sleek Bobcat that stood ready further down the line.

One of their team mates, Edward, turned as he heard them approach, the black painted beard on his gear helmet looking as odd as ever when he waved them over. As they approached he gestured at the monitor.

"Check out Revenant, he just iced Iceberg's Cheetah with a single move. How the hell does he make that Black Adder move like that?" Elizabeth just watched the monitor and did not reply.

Marcus winced as he watched the Black Adder confirm Edward's assessment. The white-painted Cheetah they knew to belong to Iceberg lay on its back, both legs severed at the knees. A second Cheetah painted a deep red – aside from the omnipresent sponsor logos – ducked forward and lashed out with its rapier, the metal ringing with its constant subtle vibration. Before the tip of the weapon could touch the Black Adder, the shaft of its customised vibrohalberd slammed into the side of the thinner weapon, knocking it aside. With a flick of the wrist of the enormous four meter tall war machine, the Black Adder extended the vibrohalberd so the scythe-like blade on the end slashed through the Cheetah's left leg. The crowd roared and the commentator screamed something intended to be insightful but instead merely displaying his envy. Only failed duellists became commentators.

The Black Adder stepped back and stood tall, the ornamental hood and cloak fluttering over the humanoid war-machine's hunched shoulders and atop its stumpy head, much to the appreciation of the mob. Rumour had it the hooded cloak covering the Gear's shoulders interfered with the processes of the V-engine mounted on its back, occasionally causing it to run hot, not to mention interfered with the sensors it ran. But the crowd loved the showmanship, and Revenant played it perfectly. Revenant's Black Adder did not even move as a third Gear formed up behind it. The pistol-like autocannon in the humanoid Jager's hand lined up on the back of the Black

Adder, aiming at the V-Engine. Before any shot could be fired a thick chainsaw attached to a sword-like hilt slammed down, sparks flying as it sheared through metal and machinery to cut the Jager's arm off at the wrist. The damage gear turned just in time to see the weapon's owner, a red-painted Gladiator lift its left wrist from which a mounted flame thrower belched out flame that coated its opponent and caused the less experienced pilot to panic. Instead of trying to draw a bead and return fire, it stumbled back and beat in futility at the flames spreading across the war machine. The Gladiator inhabited by the pilot known to the duelling world as Pyromaniac lifted its other arm, the fragmentation cannon held in that hand firing off like a shotgun burst at close range. The pellets sliced through the Jager's knee, destroying actuators and rendering the Gear essentially useless in the face paced combat of the Arena. Pyromaniac and Revenant both hoisted weapons into the air, the former screaming his own war cry as he did so, the speakers in his gear making the wordless shout echo around the arena in response to the cries of the crowd. As always, Revenant did nothing more than a salute with his Gear's sole weapon, the scythe-shaped vibrohalberd.

"The Reapers. Have they even lost a game this season?" asked Marcus, his helmet muffling his voice slightly.

"Course not, they haven't faced us yet" spoke Emilio. His helmet was still tucked under his arm, an enormous grin being the only thing he wore on his face. Short cropped blond hair framed a handsome face while broad shoulders and a muscular frame answered the unspoken question of why this duellist was so popular. The fact that he was one of the up and coming duellists to watch did not hurt either. Emilio 'The Thundergod' Vasquez was well known for unorthodox but effective fighting styles and tactics, and was without a doubt the star of the team. Commentators would joke that people tuned into the Hermes network for Janice or Elizabeth, but the truth was that watching Emilio in action was like watching an artist who painted in the medium of destruction. And he loved every moment of it.

Any further conversation was cut off as the green light suddenly switched to a deep red. The team turned and looked up at it, all knowing what it meant.

"It's ShowTime" spoke Edward, grinning and slipping his helmet on. He turned and jogged towards his nearby Gear as the rest of the team approached their own. Elizabeth was jostled as the last member of their team Janice 'The Janissary' Menez bumped into her with deliberate subtlety on par with the explosions rocking the arena above them.

AURORA: THE SILHOUETTE MAGAZINE UNDERNEATH THE GLORY

“Bitch” muttered Janice before continuing on her way. Elizabeth did not even spare her a glance, as right now she was not Elizabeth. She approached her Wildcat and looked up at the red paint-job reminiscent of the colour scheme used by Pyromaniac. Red and orange flames were painted on the Gear from top to bottom, barring areas reserved for Sponsorship logos. Elizabeth Ryder affectionately patted the light war machine on the knee as she mounted its unfolded chest, climbing up into the Gear and settling in. The tight fit seemed slightly claustrophobic for a moment, but within seconds the chest folded up once more and snugly fit itself in, somehow this completion of the transformation from cramped space to tomb helping to relax Elizabeth. Her helmet flared to life, changing from bulky head covering to advanced sensor readout, translating the myriad of sensors around the Wildcat and transforming the black space around her into the world beyond her current armour casing. As she tilted her head, the Gear mimicked the movement, showing her the world around her as she willed. Systems came on line and the heads-up display notified her as each one flared to life.

She was no longer Elizabeth.

The Wildcat’s long strides easily carried her out of the bay her gear had been stationary within. In the back of her mind she was aware of the absence of explosions from the Arena ground, and the echoing nonsense of the announcer. The crowd screamed as he spoke, but it did not matter to her. The head of her Gear tilted to take in the anti-gear missile system resting on her mount’s shoulder, then down to view the long, thick vibro-claws planted along her Gear’s left forearm. Then at last the targeting data of the medium-rated Rifle in her right hand flared up, overlaying the viewscreen within her helmet with a computed trajectory of its fire arc to let her know the last of her weapons was online.

Part of her was aware that as she came to rest standing before the thick gateway that led to the Arena that her teammates were alongside her, including the only one she would ever trust. Part of her was aware that this could be her last match, that in the Arena mistakes were possible and people could die, and that her own mortality was always up for the test.

But she was no longer Elizabeth Ryder. Now she was ‘The Fire Ryder’, who had earned respect in the arena a hundred times over. A Gear was her true home, and in battle was the only place she knew who she was. The gates slid open and the blinding glare of the arena lights floated into her eyes. The crowd cheered, and The Fire Ryder would give them a show they would never forget.

At least not until the next one.



Heavy Gear Blitz is built upon the Silhouette dice mechanic, a very unique system that fans of the series come to either love - or hate - passionately. Unlike most dice systems, Silhouette (referred to in the remainder of the article as Sil) tends to promote consistent, predictable results and minimizes randomness.

Gambling on the dice paying off rarely works in your favor, but this gives the game a distinct flavor, as your decisions are often more important than the fact you're rolling loaded dice.

Unfortunately, a major side-effect of the system is that the concept of just how much the dice contribute in a specific case is often difficult for new players to understand. It's easy to talk about what the dice will do in general (make your rolls consistent) but much harder to figure out how a specific set of modifiers and the number of dice you chuck impact your final result. Most players will never wonder why a positive Attack modifier is better than a negative Defense modifier, but there is a difference that makes an impact on your final result.

This article will examine the Silhouette system as it relates to Heavy Gear Blitz! in depth. We hope to give you a better understanding of where the system works well, where it breaks down and of its many inherent quirks. Though this isn't an academic treatise, we do have to discuss some statistical concepts; but we will attempt to keep the language as 'down to Earth' as possible. If you're interested in just 'playing the game' you will probably find parts of this article boring, dry or outright nerdy!

And yes, there are maths involved. You have been warned.

GENERAL MECHANICS

Most readers will be familiar with the general concepts of the Silhouette system, but here's a quick refresher for those who are not. At its most basic, a *Roll* indicates that you are supposed to throw some number of dice (typically a D6) and look at the values on the faces of the die, keeping the highest face value. For instance, if you *Roll 2D6*, you'd throw two six sided die, and keep the highest face value as your *Roll Result*. A *Roll* of **2D6** where the one die shows a 2 and the other a 5 would be counted as a 5, and a *Roll* of **2D6** where the face values are a 3 and 3 would be counted as a 3. A *Roll* where more than one die shows a six adds +1 to it's *Roll Result*; if you *Roll 3D6* and the the face values are [3, 6, 6] you'd count the *Roll Result* as a 7. A *Roll* where all die show a face value of one is considered a *Fumble*; and we count the *Roll Result* as a 0.

The exception to these rules are for 'unskilled' attempts, when you are asked to *Roll 0D6*. In this case, you throw two six sided die, and keep the *lowest* face value. If you were to *Roll 0D6* and the face values are [2, 6] you count the *Roll Result* as a 2. Further, if either die face shows a 1, the *Roll* counts as a *Fumble*, and the *Roll Result* is considered a 0.

Once you've determined your *Roll Result*, you then add any applicable modifiers to determine your *Final Result*. Modifiers are often given as part of the *Roll* as either an addition or subtraction, like **3D6+1** or **2D6-2**. If you were to *Roll 3D6+2*, and the face values are [3, 4, 5], you'd count your *Roll Result* as a 5 and your *Final Result* as a $5 + 2 = 7$. Any *Final Result* that is below 0 counts as 0 instead; if you roll **2D6-5** and the face values are [2, 3] your *Roll Result* is 3, and your *Final Result* is $3 - 5 = -2$, which instead counts as a 0. *Fumbles* never apply modifiers and always count their *Final Result* as 0.

Tests in Sil are always made against a threshold, which is either a *Final Result* from a defending player or a static *Threshold*, which counts as an opposing *Final Result*. In either case you compare the *Final Result* from the attacker against the *Final Result* of the defender (or the *Threshold*, if there is no defender). The difference in values determines how successful the attempt was. If the difference between the attacker's *Final Result* and the defender's *Final Result* is greater than 0, we call the difference a *Margin of Success (MoS)*; if the difference is 0 or less we call it a the *Margin of Failure (MoF)*.

AURORA: THE SILHOUETTE MAGAZINE

PROBABILITIES IN HEAVY GEAR BLITZ!

For instance, let's say the attacker rolls **2D6+2** versus the defending player's **2D6-1**. The attacker's face values are [3, 5] so they count their *Roll Result* as a 5, and their *Final Result* as a 7. The defending player's face values are [6, 6] so they count their *Roll Result* as 7, and their *Final Result* as a 6. We subtract the defending player's **6** from the attacker's **7**, and get a result of 1. In this case, we say the attacker has a *MoS* of 1. If instead the *Final Results* were 4 and 6 respectively, we would get a result of 4 - 6 = -2, and say the attacker has a *MoF* of 2. If the *Final Results* are equal - say 5 and 5 - then we say the attacker has a *MoF* of 0.

Attacker and Defender Bias

At this point we need to discuss the first 'gotcha'; which is that the system is heavily weighted in the defender's favor. As ties favor the defender, in any situation where the attacker has equal modifiers to the defender it can be difficult to get past that 'tie' on dice rolls alone. We're going to show you that the difference in modifiers between the attacker and defender is extremely important when figuring out results; and typically more-so than even the dices contribution. For the remainder of the article, I'm going to refer to this difference (in modifiers) as the *attacker bias* if it's in the attacker's favor, or the *defender bias* if it's in favor of the defender. This is a simple comparison that reflects the idea that if the *defender bias* is positive, the attacker is going to have a difficult time winning based only on the *Roll Result*.

For instance, if the attacker is rolling **2D6-2** versus the defender's **2D6+1**, we would say the *defender bias* is **+3**; the attacker would need a *Roll Result* that's 4 higher than the defender to get any sort of *Margin of Success*. If the attacker is rolling **2D6+0** versus the defender's **2D6+0** we still say the *defender bias* is **+0**; the attacker needs a higher *Roll Result* than the defender. Conversely if the attacker is rolling **2D6+2** versus a defender's **2D6-2**, we say the *attacker bias* is **+4**; if the *Roll Results* are equal, the attacker is still going to end up with a favorable outcome.

Bias is a very convenient short-hand to quickly determine how likely a given *outcome* is; when the *bias* is greater than +1 the dice tend to have **less** influence on the outcome than the modifiers to the roll.

MoS	Roll Combinations	Probability
6	[6,0]	1/36 ~ 2.8%
5	[5,0]	1/36 ~ 2.8%
4	[6,2] [4,0]	2/36 ~ 5.6%
3	[6,3] [5,2] [3,0]	3/36 ~ 8.3%
2	[6,4] [5,3] [4,2] [2,0]	4/36 ~ 11.1%
1	[6,5] [5,4] [4,3] [3,2]	4/36 ~ 11.1%
0	[6,6] [5,5] [5,6] [4,4] [4,5] [4,6] [3,3] [3,4] [3,5] [3,6] [2,2] [2,3] [2,4] [2,5] [2,6] [0,0] [0,2] [0,3] [0,4] [0,5] [0,6]	21/36 ~ 58.3%

The 'Floor Effect'

Now let's look at something even less intuitive. Remember how rolls less than 0 (i.e. -1, -2, etc.) count instead as 0? This little quirk ends up influencing opposed rolls in a way that's not immediately obvious at first glance. While the *defender bias* is something people learn as they play, the *'Floor Effect'* isn't necessarily obvious even to veteran players. This *Floor Effect* is the observation that a positive *bias for the Attacker* is better than a negative *bias for the Defender*. In other words, when we talk about an *bias* of +3, the attacker ends up with 'better' results if the *bias* is be positive modifiers on the *Attack roll*, rather than negative modifiers on the *Defense roll*.

To prove this point, let's look at an opposed roll of **1D6+0** versus **1D6+0**. I've chosen **1D6** for simplicity's sake, since there are fewer outcomes to think about than with **2D6** or **3D6** results. When rolling **1D6+0**, your *Final Result* will be one of (6,5,4,3,2,0). The probability of getting any particular number is 1/8, or 16.6% - just to clarify, you have a 16.6% chance of getting a 6, and a 16.6% chance of getting a 3, on *one particular roll*. If we take all of the attacker's *Final Results* and compare it against all of the defender's *Final Results*, we get a table like the following.

In all cases, the format is **[Attacker, Defender]**; so if the attacker rolls a 3 and the defender a 6, the combination would be presented as **[3,6]**.

To determine the percentage of a specific *MoS/MoF* (i.e. a combination of a set of outcomes, we can total up the *number* of occurrences in a given row, and divide it by the *total number* of occurrences. There are 36 total outcomes in the table below, making it easy to calculate any row's probability (which I've conveniently already done for you). Notice how in a roll of **1D6+0** versus **1D6+0** the defender is favored, with a 58.3% chance of a *MoF* 0 (the green row).

AURORA: THE SILHOUETTE MAGAZINE

PROBABILITIES IN HEAVY GEAR BLITZ!

The Defender Floor Effect

Now, let's look at the outcomes table when there is a +1 *attacker bias*, and see what happens. In this first table, the bias is a +1 to the attack roll; in other words, the attacker is rolling **1D6+1**:

MoS	Roll Combinations	Probability
7	[6,0]	1/36 ~ 2.8%
6	[5,0]	1/36 ~ 2.8%
5	[6,2] [4,0]	2/36 ~ 5.6%
4	[6,3] [5,2] [3,0]	3/36 ~ 8.3%
3	[6,4] [5,3] [4,2] [2,0]	4/36 ~ 11.1%
2	[6,5] [5,4] [4,3] [3,2]	4/36 ~ 11.1%
1	[6,6] [5,5] [4,4] [3,3] [2,2]	5/36 ~ 13.8%
0	[5,6] [4,5] [4,6] [3,4] [3,5] [3,6] [2,3] [2,4] [2,5] [2,6] [0,0] [0,2] [0,3] [0,4] [0,5] [0,6]	16/36 ~44.4%

Notice the change from adding a single point of bias; you gain 13.8% to your total chance of success simply by getting that +1. That will be important later.

Now, what if we consider the attacker *bias* as a -1 to the defense roll (in other words, the Defender is rolling **1D6-1**)?

MoS	Roll Combinations	Probability
6	[6,0]	1/36 ~ 2.8%
5	[5,0] [6,2]	2/36 ~ 5.6%
4	[6,3] [5,2] [4,0]	3/36 ~ 8.3%
3	[6,4] [5,3] [4,2] [3,0]	4/36 ~ 11.1%
2	[6,5] [5,4] [4,3] [3,2] [2,0]	5/36 ~ 13.8%
1	[6,6] [5,5] [4,4] [3,3] [2,2]	5/36 ~ 13.8%
0	[5,6] [4,5] [4,6] [3,4] [3,5] [3,6] [2,3] [2,4] [2,5] [2,6] [0,0] [0,2] [0,3] [0,4] [0,5] [0,6]	16/36 ~ 44.4%

That's a flood of numbers, so let's try to present it a bit nicer on the next page:

AURORA: THE SILHOUETTE MAGAZINE

PROBABILITIES IN HEAVY GEAR BLITZ!

+1 ATK %	MoS	-1 DEF %
1/36 ~ 2.8%	7	
1/36 ~ 2.8%	6	1/36 ~ 2.8%
2/36 ~ 5.6%	5	2/36 ~ 5.6%
3/36 ~ 8.3%	4	3/36 ~ 8.3%
4/36 ~ 11.1%	3	4/36 ~ 11.1%
4/36 ~ 11.1%	2	5/36 ~ 13.8%
5/36 ~ 13.8%	1	5/36 ~ 13.8%
16/36 ~ 44.4%	0	16/36 ~ 44.4%

I've highlighted the rows that have a difference for your convenience. What you should notice about those outcomes is that while the *total chance for success* is exactly the same, the +1 ATK gives you the possibility, however slight, of **much higher damage**. The -1 DEF modifier tends to 'squeeze' the results together (towards the 'floor' of 0, remember) which tends to give lower MoS values for the attacker. This trend continues, by the way, as you get higher and higher modifiers:

+2 ATK %	MoS	-2 DEF %
2.8%	8	
2.8%	7	
5.6%	6	5.6%
8.3%	5	8.3%
11.1%	4	11.1%
11.1%	3	13.9%
13.9%	2	16.7%
11.1%	1	11.1%
33.3%	0	33.3%

So while it seems 'obvious' that +1 ATK is equal to +1 DEF; there's actually a substantial difference!

The Attacker Ceiling Effect

If we look at the floor effect a bit longer, we find another concept - the 'Attacker Ceiling'. A negative attack modifier limits your potential MoS, making it harder to drive a successful outcome - even when the total bias doesn't change. If you stop and think about it this makes sense; any negative modifier on your roll means you have a limit on your *Roll Result*. Most importantly though, the lower your attack modifier, the harder it becomes to make any sort of difference between the attacker's *Final Result* and the defender's *Final Result*. This is yet another way that Sil favors the defender in the long run. See the table on the next page:

AURORA: THE SILHOUETTE MAGAZINE

PROBABILITIES IN HEAVY GEAR BLITZ!

MoS	2D6-4 v. 2D6-4	2D6-3 v. 2D6-3	2D6-2 v. 2D6-2	2D6-1 v. 2D6-1	2D6+0 v. 2D6+0	2D6+1 v. 2D6+1
7	-	-	-	-	0.08%	0.08%
6	-	-	-	0.08%	0.77%	0.77%
5	-	-	0.3%	1.00%	0.93%	0.93%
4	-	0.69%	3.4%	3.40%	3.24%	3.24%
3	1.23%	7.48%	7.18%	7.02%	6.87%	6.87%
2	13.04%	12.35%	11.73%	11.57%	11.42%	11.42%
1	18.83%	17.44%	16.82%	16.67%	16.44%	16.44%
0	66.90%	62.04%	60.49%	60.26%	60.26%	60.26%

Pay attention to the bottom rows - notice how as your ATK modifier shrinks, you're getting a larger chance to fail, even when the odds 'should be' even. As you shift your Attack modifier further towards zero, you start making it harder on yourself to beat the defender on straight dice. And further, you limit your chance to 'roll big' and get a higher MoS with each negative ATK modifier.

Note there is a hard upper limit to the *Dice Result*, depending on the skill. Before accounting for modifiers, skill 2 can never roll better than a 7, skill 3 can never roll better than an 8, etc. In addition, rolling above 6 is relatively uncommon; these combine to make the common maximum value a 6, plus or minus whatever modifier is applied.

This points out a **major** problem with attack penalties; at -2, the maximum MoS is 4. But since the defender has to roll a 0 to get that MoS (another uncommon event), your chances for any large MoS are not terrific! So the next time you have to choose between taking a shot in the open against a target, or getting them in a crossfire through some cover, keep the above in mind.

TAKEAWAYS

- Equal dice rolls tend to balance each other out, making modifiers the main way of determining an outcome
- A +1 ATK is 'better' than a -1 DEF as you get higher possible MoS outcomes
- Negative DEF modifiers tend to 'clump' outcomes around MoS 1 and MoS 2

EXPECTED VALUES FOR OUTCOMES

The easiest way to talk about the impact of skill difference is to use a statistics construct called the *Expected Value*, which is essentially a convenient method to guess the raw result of a particular roll. You determine this particular value using the equation

$$\sum_x p(x)x$$

but all you really need to know are the actual values, which we've presented in a simple table for you:

	0D6+0	1D6+0	2D6+0	3D6+0	4D6+0	5D6+0
E.V.	2.5	3.5	4.5	5.04	5.39	5.67

Each column represents a specific roll of the dice, with the expected value being the average *Roll Result* if you were to make that roll over and over again several thousand times. Keep in mind that these are only approximations (fumbles and the floor effect complicates the calculation) but they are fairly accurate.

AURORA: THE SILHOUETTE MAGAZINE

PROBABILITIES IN HEAVY GEAR BLITZ!

Now obviously, you can't roll 5.04 on **3D6+0** - what that 0.4 means is that if you were to roll **3D6+0** ten thousand times, you should get 5 most of the time, with 6 being ever so slightly more common. In general, while some individual dice rolls will be above or below this number, most individual rolls should be expected to be close to the expected value. This does not prevent the dreaded double fumble (or any other unlikely result) - it just says that they are unlikely in the bigger picture.

Note that modifiers apply directly against the expected value for a single roll, which makes the expected value a very convenient estimating tool:

Modifier	Skill 1	Skill 2	Skill 3	Skill 4	Skill 5
-2	1.67	2.53	3.04	3.39	3.67
-1	2.50	3.50	4.04	4.39	4.67
0	3.33	4.47	5.03	5.39	5.67
1	4.17	5.44	6.03	6.39	6.67
2	5.00	6.42	7.02	7.39	7.67

Expected Values for Opposed Rolls

It's quite possible to calculate an expected value for Opposed Rolls :

Defender	Attacker		
	1D6+0	2D6+0	3D6+0
1D6+0	1.11	1.65	1.99
2D6+0	0.51	0.83	1.06
3D6+0	0.29	0.50	0.68

But note that these values are not what you might be expecting if you simply subtracted the values from the expected values table for individual rolls above; due to the way rolls interact it's quite difficult to go straight from the first table to this one. Sil makes you work for your analysis!

However, once we have the expected values for an opposed roll, we can apply modifiers directly to the expected value, like for individual rolls.

Defender Modifier (left) / Attacker Modifier (top)

	-2	-1	0	1	2
-2	0.77	1.37	2.14	3.02	3.96
-1	0.40	0.80	1.4	2.17	3.05
0	0.20	0.43	0.83	1.43	2.2
1	0.10	0.22	0.46	0.85	1.46
2	0.07	0.13	0.25	0.48	0.88

Note how a +1 modifier for the attacker tends to multiply the expected value by around 1.6, while a +1 modifier for the defender tends to multiply the expected value by 0.5, but these numbers are not quite exact! Unfortunately this tends to limit our ability to make assumptions about modifiers and the expected value - you pretty much have to run a calculation to know at any particular time what your expected value should actually be - but we can use the 1.6 and 0.5 numbers as rough ballpark values if we want.

AURORA: THE SILHOUETTE MAGAZINE

PROBABILITIES IN HEAVY GEAR BLITZ!

As a tangent, this table also shows the differences in bias quite nicely. Each diagonal has the same *bias*, but higher results occur when the attacker's modifiers are positive. For instance for the 2D6+1 vs. 2D6+0 row, we see the expected value is **1.43**; but for 2D6+0 vs. 2D6-1 we see the expected value as 1.4 - that's a very minor difference of 0.03, but it's still present. And that trend continues all along the colored diagonals, as we previously mentioned.

These tables lay the groundwork for several important concepts:

- Skills are important, but modifiers are better (look at 3D6+0 vs 2D6+0 or 2D6+1 vs 2D6+0),
- You can (very roughly) expect a MoS of about 1+half the attacker/defender bias.
- An attacker should always choose a +1 ATK modifier over a -1 DEF modifier
- A defender should always choose a -1 ATK modifier over a +1 DEF modifier

Finally, expected values can be easily combined - and used to see the effect of a sequence of actions. In the appendix, you will find the expected damage for various combinations of weapons against a few typical targets. You can easily see the effect of a series of shots - just add the expected values of each individual shot. You can also use this to evaluate the firepower of a Combat Group; just add the expected value of the best weapon of each individual model in the Combat Group, and use that as a comparative ranking.

HOW SKILL LEVELS IMPACT RESULTS

Now that we have an understanding of the *defender bias* and *floor effect*, let's talk about what adding (or subtracting) dice does to an opposed check. It's pretty intuitive that you want to throw more dice than your opponent, and that more dice in general helps you get multiple sixes - and to avoid a fumble. But less well understood is just how much dice bonuses influence the final outcome of a roll, and how much is too much.

Let's look at an expected value table again:

0D6 v. 0D6	1D6 v. 1D6	2D6 v. 2D6	3D6 v. 3D6	4D6 v. 4D6	5D6 v. 5D6
0.98	1.11	0.83	0.68	0.61	0.58

As we can see, there is usually a small bias in favor of the attacker, but this bias drops as the skill level increases. That happens because the higher the skill, the more consistent the result. When rolling at skill 1, the results are evenly distributed and more uncertain. When the skill is 5, the result is almost always going to be a 6. Since this applies to both the attacker and the defender, the expected MoS is small. Skill 0 is a special case, where the results are more consistent than Skill 1, but they tend to be consistently bad for both players - which causes a lower deviation in MoS.

This property holds even when the skills are not identical. Skill 2 is less consistent than Skill 3, but in both cases the result is generally going to be 4, 5 or 6. The increase in expected value starts to shrink as either player increases their skill level:

0D6 v. 2D6	1D6 v. 2D6	2D6 v. 2D6	3D6 v. 2D6	4D6 v. 2D6	5D6 v. 2D6
0.22	0.51	0.83	1.06	1.26	1.44

0D6 v. 3D6	1D6 v. 3D6	2D6 v. 3D6	3D6 v. 3D6	4D6 v. 3D6	5D6 v. 3D6
0.10	0.29	0.50	0.68	0.84	0.99

The authors personal views are that increases beyond 3D6 tend to be too expensive for what value they give you, if you're talking only about raw damage output. Higher skills have some additional benefits that we'll see in a second, but you quickly hit the wall where you're throwing good TV after the idea of always rolling a 6, and that doesn't always hold true.

AURORA: THE SILHOUETTE MAGAZINE

PROBABILITIES IN HEAVY GEAR BLITZ!

Outcome Spread

To this point we've shown you the effect of increasing your skills in the aggregate; assuming you throw enough dice, you'll tend to end up with the expected value as described above. But when you're staring down the barrel of a SC, what is most important to you is what you're going to roll next! Obviously we can't show you mathematically what you're going to roll each and every time, but what we can talk about are the probability distributions of a specific result, across the various dice rolls. In simpler terms, how often are you going to fumble, versus how often are you going to get that natural six? In essence we're talking about the consistency of the dice roll.

Let's look at some tables for the common skill values, assuming a modifier of 0. This won't be the entire picture - higher skills tend to compensate for negative modifiers and emphasize positive modifiers - but this will be close enough for our discussion. What we want to try to look for are values where there's a major difference between a lower skill and a higher skill, and try to figure out whether or not it's worth upgrading from one skill level to the next.

MoS	2D6+0 v. 2D6+0	3D6+0 v. 2D6+0	4D6+0 v. 2D6+0	5D6+0 v. 2D6+0
10	-	-	-	0.0003%
9	-	-	0.002%	0.009%
8	-	0.01%	0.04%	0.09%
7	0.08%	0.19%	0.32%	0.48%
6	0.77%	1.00%	1.21%	1.43%
5	0.93%	1.43%	1.98%	2.60%
4	3.24%	4.42%	5.52%	6.57%
3	6.87%	8.89%	10.53%	11.93%
2	11.42%	14.06%	15.94%	17.34%
1	16.44%	19.23%	20.74%	21.48%
0	60.26%	50.77%	43.72%	38.08%

The yellow areas represent results that you're likely not going to seem very often (anything less than 0.5% of the time) - while they happen, they are very rare overall and likely to be remembered as the the 'major turning point' of a game. For those of you not paying attention and wondering why these values are so low, it's because we're talking about opposed results, not individual rolls. Yes, you're going to roll a 7 on 2D6+0 far more often than 0.08%; but it's unlikely that your opponent is going to fumble as well!

The green areas represent the line above which you've got more than a 1 in 10 chance to roll on any individual roll; you'll have to take our word for it, but generally these are the types of results you can 'bank' on - these are going to be the results you notice if you pay attention during your course of play.

The first thing that should be obvious is that each additional rank of skill gives you roughly a 10% increase in your chance to do **something**, which is reflected in the decrease of the *MoF 0* percentage as you get higher and higher in skill (against a defender at 2D6). That's quite possibly the best benefit, as if you start comparing the individual results against each other, they seem less impressive. More importantly though, you should notice that your benefits tend to come at the bottom of the table, not spread equally throughout. For instance if you go from 3D6 to 4D6 you get a total of approximately 10% better results; but nearly 3% of that ends up in the MoS 1 category, 2% ends up in the MoS 2 category and the remainder is split between the MoS 3-8 categories.

This is the big 'secret' of Skill increases - they maximize your chances of getting a MoS 1 or MoS 2, but not of getting the 'larger' MoS values. When we look at damage results in a later section keep this in mind, as it's **critical** to evaluating the effective values of weapons against each other.

AURORA: THE SILHOUETTE MAGAZINE

PROBABILITIES IN HEAVY GEAR BLITZ!

Skill vs Skill

We have already shown that while having the higher skill is always better, the effect is usually not that pronounced. Further, we've shown you that differences in skills tend to concentrate in the MoS 1 or MoS 2 category. Now let's take a further look at the attacker's chance to generate MoS 1+ as skills vary between attacker and defender:

Attacker Chance of MoS 1+

Defender Skill (left) / Attacker's Skill (top)

	1D6+0	2D6+0	3D6+0	4D6+0	5D6+0
1D6+0	41.7%	58.3%	67.2%	73.0%	77.8%
2D6+0	25.5%	39.8%	49.3%	56.3%	62.9%
3D6+0	17.4%	29.0%	38.2%	45.0%	51.0%
4D6+0	12.6%	22.2%	30.0%	36.7%	42.8%
5D6+0	8.5%	17.4%	24.3%	30.5%	36.4%

As we can see, when skills increase at the same rate (the green areas), the expected MoS for the attacker drops - which everyone should have been expecting at this point. Making a roll at 2D6+0 vs 2D6+0 is better for the attacker than making a roll 3D6+0 vs 3D6+0 or 4D6+0 vs 4D6+0; the attacker is more likely to get a MoS of 1 or more.

Further, notice that the attacker benefits far more from an imbalance in skills than the defender. Going from 3D6+0 vs. 2D6+0 (yellow area) to 3D6+0 vs. 3D6+0 drops the attacker's chance of success 11%; this is the case when the defender buys an additional skill level. Comparing 3D6+0 vs. 3D6+0 to 3D6+0 vs. 4D6+0 (red area) the attacker's chance of success drops only 8%; this is the case when the attacker buys an additional skill level over the defender.

Since having the higher skill in any given roll is better than having the lower skill, skill upgrades tend to become an arms race. Ironically this plays to the defender's advantage somewhat; they rarely want to exceed the attacker's skill level, since the benefit isn't that great. On the other hand the attacker wants to get their skill as high over the the defender as possible, for many reasons. If attackers try to keep increasing their skills over the defender, the defender simply has to counter, not up the ante; and thus they are on the winning side of the arms race. Once again, Silhouette favors the defender in many subtle ways!

Skill Increases Versus a Threshold

The impact of increasing your Skill against a static threshold is relatively well understood - more is (generally) better. Especially for indirect fire units, who need to place their rounds on target each and every time, skill level increases are a great way to add reliability on the (sorta) cheap. Increasing your skill level (i.e. going from **2D6** to **3D6**) tends to cut your chance of failure by $\frac{2}{3}$ (66%), which can be a significant drop at times. And even better, the effect trends the same way no matter the value threshold, so even if you're trying to hit a threshold of 6 you're better off chucking more dice.

Since everybody knows the above, one question we can help with is - where do you draw the line? How much of a good thing is too much? First, let's look at just the percentage to actually land on our target, assuming we're rolling against a threshold of 4. In other words, we're rolling **XD6+0** vs. **4**, to place our IF shot.

AURORA: THE SILHOUETTE MAGAZINE

PROBABILITIES IN HEAVY GEAR BLITZ!

MoS	DT	2D6 %	3D6 %	4D6 %	5D6 %
6	10	-	-	-	0.01%
5	9	-	-	0.07%	0.3%
4	8	-	0.4%	1.5%	3.2%
3	7	2.8%	6.9%	11.6%	16.1%
2	6	27.8%	34.7%	38.5%	40.2%
1	5	25.0%	28.2%	28.2%	27.0%
0	0-4	44.4%	29.6%	19.8%	13.1%
1+	>= 5	55.6%	70.4%	80.2%	86.9%

So obviously, the results match what we expected. Buying up that Attack 3 for your Spitting Cobra is a pretty good deal, since it both protects you from an Out of Ammo, and it gives you nearly a 15% boost to land on target. But what's really important in the above data is the way the *Defense Threshold (DT)* changes from each particular skill bracket. The DT value is the unmodified Attack roll, which is as the attacker's *Final Result* for the defense check. Notice how as you add skill levels, the number of results above the orange line (which represents your single most common unmodified result) increases by a fair amount. This means you'll have more results where the Defender is going to have to defend against a 7 or greater as you increase skill level - which generally means more damage.

This table shows a recurring trend for the first time. Beyond **3D6**, you start getting fewer and fewer payoffs for taking more dice. Bumping your roll to **4D6** makes it pretty likely that you're going to place your round on target - and gives you a great chance of getting a 6. But **5D6** seems a bit lackluster by comparison, increasing your chances only slightly. The payoff comes in that 7 or 8 bracket, but it's only a few percentage points. Keep this in mind - we'll revisit it later in force.

TAKEAWAYS

- If modifiers and skills are equal, the attacker has a 40% chance of MoS 1
- Attackers generally want +1D6 over the Defender's skill; more than that is wasted
- Attackers should always choose a +1 ATK modifier over a -1 DEF modifier
- Defenders should always choose a -1 ATK modifier over a +1 DEF modifier
- Defenders want a skill equal to attackers; more than that is mostly wasted
- For Indirect Attacks, higher skill helps place but only marginally increases damage

ARE MODIFIERS BETTER THAN SKILLS?

Unlike skills, a change in the modifier for your roll always impacts the final outcome in a significant way. As we've already shown, if you are rolling equivalent dice (i.e. 2D6 vs. 2D6), then modifiers are the deciding factor to your expected outcome. While the dice contribute some uncertainty, in general you can't depend on them to carry the day for you. Further, a difference in skill tends to yield +1 MoS in the best case (i.e. 1D6 vs. 2D6), while a modifier always gives its face value. Finally, skill increases only contribute to the Attacker Ceiling in a very minor way; the probabilities of getting a really good result from your dice is pretty minimal (you should see a MoS 8 from only dice about 1 in 10,000 rolls of 3D6+0 versus 2D6+0).

AURORA: THE SILHOUETTE MAGAZINE

PROBABILITIES IN HEAVY GEAR BLITZ!

Modifiers in Opposed Rolls

Let's look at some tables to confirm what I'm telling you. First, we'll look at the impact of adding modifiers versus adding dice in a very common case:

MoS	2D6+0 v. 2D6+0	3D6+0 v. 2D6+0	4D6+0 v. 2D6+0	2D6+1 v. 2D6+0	5D6+0 v. 2D6+0
10	-	-	-	-	0.0004%
9	-	-	0.002%	-	0.009%
8	-	0.01%	0.04%	0.08%	0.09%
7	0.08%	0.19%	0.33%	0.77%	0.48%
6	0.77%	1.00%	1.21%	0.93%	1.43%
5	0.93%	1.43%	1.98%	3.24%	2.60%
4	3.24%	4.42%	5.52%	6.87%	6.57%
3	6.87%	8.89%	10.53%	11.42%	11.93%
2	11.42%	14.06%	15.94%	16.44%	17.33%
1	16.44%	19.23%	20.73%	20.52%	21.48%
0	60.26%	50.77%	43.72%	39.74%	38.08%

Notice that I've arranged these in order of their chance of MoF 0; perhaps surprisingly the +1 modifier trumps not only 3D6 but also the 4D6 rolls! You have to increase your skill to 5D6 (!) before you get better outcomes than simply adding a +1 modifier. And even if you can get your models to 5D6 the benefit is very limited (from a MoS perspective); you only get about a +1% increase in your chances to actually do anything, which hardly seems worth it. The only real benefit skills have is they 'unlock' the chance at a really high MoS - albeit an *extremely* low percentage of the time.

Note that this observation does not hold in the reverse case, where we add negative modifiers to a roll:

MoS	0D6+0 vs. 2D6+0	2D6-2 vs. 2D6+0	1D6+0 vs. 2D6+0	2D6-1 vs. 2D6+0	2D6+0 vs. 2D6+0
7	-	-	-	-	0.08%
6	0.08%	-	0.46%	0.08%	0.77%
5	0.23%	0.08%	0.46%	0.77%	0.93%
4	0.62%	0.77%	1.85%	0.93%	3.24%
3	1.62%	0.93%	4.17%	3.24%	6.87%
2	3.55%	3.24%	7.41%	6.87%	11.42%
1	5.86%	6.87%	11.11%	11.42%	16.44%
0	88.04%	88.12%	74.54%	76.70%	60.26%

Notice that it's better to take the negative modifier rather than drop a skill level once you get below 2D6 skill; your chance of rolling well enough to counter-act the negative modifier vanishes at skill 1D6 and 0D6. At that point, random chance begins to become a major factor in your opposed rolls, preventing you from keeping up with your opponent's ability to roll a 4, 5 or 6.

Finally, what about rolling against a flat threshold **when the modifier is dropped** - which is better to have, a skill or a modifier? If you've been with us so far, you know the right answer - the skill, right? Wait, you said the modifier - no, no no, that's a horrible choice! Let's stop guessing take a look at what happens when we drop the modifier to an attack roll, and why skills become more important.

AURORA: THE SILHOUETTE MAGAZINE

PROBABILITIES IN HEAVY GEAR BLITZ!

Def. Thres	2D6+0	3D6+0	2D6+1	4D6+0	2D6+2
9	-	-	-	0.08%	-
8	-	0.46%	-	1.54%	-
7	2.78%	6.94%	2.78%	11.57%	2.78%
6	27.78%	34.73%	27.78%	38.58%	27.78%
5	25.00%	28.24%	25.00%	28.47%	25.00%
4	-	-	19.44%	-	19.44%
3	-	-	-	-	13.88%
Scatter	44.44%	29.63%	25.00%	19.75%	11.11%

The table above shows you the results of an attack against a threshold with MoS 1+; you can think of this as Indirect Attacks that didn't scatter. Yes attacks that scatter may still do damage; but for our purposes we're not going to take that into account right now (as it depends heavily on the AE and DAM of the weapon, along with the armor of the defender). Notice that the results are ordered from left to right based upon how likely they are to scatter; as you might have expected, increasing your modifier works better to decrease your chance of scatter than increasing your skill did.

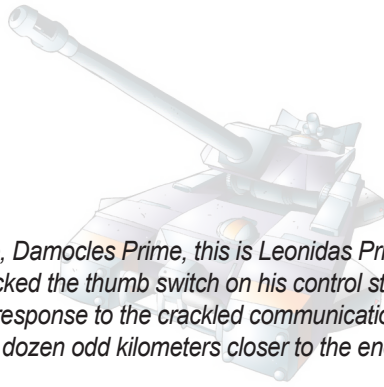
But here's the catch. Because defenders have to roll against your **unmodified result**, the benefit of the modifier only applies to the roll to hit; once you start calculating damage the higher trend of the skill level tends to pay off with bigger explosions. The green line shows the most likely result for the defense threshold - a 6, which is no great surprise - but what's most interesting is how 3D6 and 4D6 have most of their gains over 2D6 above the line (higher MoS values) than below the line. Increasing your modifier does *not* guarantee you more damage, unlike a normal roll - so this is one particular case where you should typically choose the skill increase!

TAKEAWAYS

- **Modifiers are almost always better than skills**
- **Always take +1 ATK over +1D6 ATK**
- **Always take -1 DEF over -1D6 DEF**
- **Choose skills over modifiers for indirect attacks, especially against +1 MAN units**

NEXT ISSUE!

Putting it all into practice, diving into the anatomy of the direct attack, weapon comparisons, and more!



"Damocles Prime, Damocles Prime, this is Leonidas Prime, respond." Tevor flicked the thumb switch on his control stick to activate his radio in response to the crackled communication from the troop leader a dozen odd kilometers closer to the enemy.

"Roger Leonidas, this is Damocles, go ahead." He waited for a response. Frowning his brow when it wasn't forthcoming.

Finally the radio crackled to life. "The is Leonidas Two, Leonidas Prime is down." Tevor cursed under his breath, that was why he liked his posting, right in the thick of it everything could hit the fan far too quickly for his liking. The young trooper continued "We are in it where it's deep, multiple enemy units, multiple types, multiple vectors. We require immediate fire support. Uploading coordinates."

Tevor watched the number scroll in, and the furrow deepened. "Leonidas 2, confirm no scramble, these coords are practically up your intakes."

"Confirm no scramble, Damocles." The radio squealed with feedback and transmitted a screech of tearing metal as something tore into the side of the trooper's tank. "Like I said, in it where it's deep."

These colonials were really starting to get under Tevor's skin. "Roger that Leonidas. Tighten up, this is probably going to hurt you more than it hurts me." The Maxwell & Cassandra GRELS sitting in the seats behind him had already received the coordinates and fed them to the targeting computer, making last minute adjustments as the HRT-68 Self Propelled Artillery Vehicle continued forward behind the CEF advance. With a beep and a softly modulated voice the computer announced ready to fire.

Tevor nodded and the Maxwell stabbed the fire button. The lieutenant's controls locked, his safety straps tightened automatically and the vehicle's turbines kicked into overdrive, propelling the vehicle nearly straight upwards. Tevor held on as the tank bucked like a wild bronco, accompanied by series of thunderous booms as the vehicle's mass driver propelled shells downrange at supersonic speeds. Finally a half dozen shots in the thunder stopped and the tanks engines changed pitch as the vehicle dropped again to the ground.

Tevor counted off seconds on his watch while he retook control of the vehicle and continued on course behind the advance. Finally he opened his comm channel after the shells should have arrived, "Leonidas 2, report status." He waited, hoping he hadn't done the colonial's work for them.

Finally the radio crackled to life. "Leonidas 2 reporting, 5 effectives still in the field, and Leonidas 4's grounded but alive. Nice shooting ace, we can take it from here." Tevor smiled to himself for a job well done.

**HOME
BREW
RULES**

.....

CEF ARTILLERY SUPPORT

The NEC, and later the CEF, have always practiced a somewhat unique style of warfare, but some things are universal on the battlefield. One of them is the need to be able to call down long range fire support. However, when your standard battle tactics allow you to move out of the range of even the heaviest artillery pieces in a matter of minutes, you need special tools to carry out these roles. During World War Three the NEC developed the HRT-68 and HRT-72 Self-Propelled Artillery Vehicles to fill this niche

Armed with a light artillery piece the HRT-68 was able to keep up with the rapidly changing front lines of an NEC advance, while still being able to provide effective fire support. It served with distinction on Earth, Caprice, Home, and Eden. The HRT-72 was a less successful "big brother" to the HRT-68. Armed with a larger weapon, it could not fire on the move and so was somewhat more challenged to keep up with the main body of the force. Despite this it served passably in heavier fire support missions.

They did not, however, fare so well on Terra Nova or Utopia.

These wars were unlike anything the Earth forces had faced previously and, like the HC-3 Command Cars, the HRT-68 and 72 were deemed to be in need of upgrades before another invasion of Terra Nova would be attempted.

Two main issues were identified by High Command and the CID with the artillery tanks. Firstly they were very susceptible to enemy units that got too close to them. While they had armour equivalent to the battletank chassis they were originally based on they had little in way of defensive weapons. The HRT-68 was completely helpless against a foe who moved inside the effective range of its gun, and the HRT-72 was defended solely by banks of anti-personnel charges. This was a minor issue in previous campaigns, where the long range of the vehicle's guns and high speed of the vehicles ensured the enemy would be unable to close effectively. On Terra Nova and Utopia, however, the rugged terrain they faced made ambushes much more easily arranged by defenders, and many HRTs were lost to short range assaults.

CEF ARTILLERY SQUADRON

TV: 360

CEF: Specialist
Utopia: Elite
PAK: Elite

Overview

The CEF's artillery elements follow closely in the wake of an advancing CEF offensive, responding rapidly to any threats the forward elements of the force may identify, be it a fortress, a tight concentration of enemy units, or a single high-priority target. The artillery forces of the CEF are somewhat unusual in that they still make extensive use of the 60 series chassis, the HRT-72 having received a lukewarm reception. This unit is most efficient when deployed in support of a force with good forward observation abilities.

Basic Unit + Skills

Combat Group Leader

1x HC-3A
Attack 2
Defense 2
EW 2
LD 1

1x HRT-68

Attack 2
Defense 2
EW 2

Additional Tanks

Attack 2
Defense 2
EW 2

Options:

- Add up to 2 additional HRT-68s for +290TV each.
- Upgrade any HRT-68 to an HRT-72 for +45TV each.
- The Combat Group Leader's HC-3A may be upgraded to a GREL crew for +40 TV. A GREL crew has Attack, Defense, and EW of 3, and Leadership of 2. *Utopian Armies may not take this option.*
- Any HRT-68 or HRT-72 may upgrade its crew to a GREL tank crew for +50TV. GREL crews have Attack, Defense, and EW of 3. *Utopian Armies may not take this option.*
- If the CGL does not have a GREL crew, upgrade its leadership to 2 for +10TV

- Upgrade any HRT-68 or HRT-72 to its Hunter Variant for +100TV each. If any HRTs are swapped in this way all HRTs in the group must be swapped.
- Any member of the unit may be outfitted with an NAI Matrix for +5TV. Each matrix allows up to 2 N-KIDU [S] or N-KIDU [R] drones to be added to the combat group for +30TV each. You may mix drone types. *PAK armies may not take this option.*

Veteran Options:

- An HRT without a GREL crew may upgrade their Attack and Defense by one level (to a maximum of 3) for +15TV per skill.
- The CGL's HC-3A crew may upgrade their Attack, Defense, and/or EW to level 3 for +10TV per skill.
- Any HRT-68 may replace its MRP/36 with an AGM(F, LA4) for +25TV. Any HRT-72 may replace both its MRP/36 with an AGM (F, LA6) for +25TV.
- Any HRT may be upgraded to a FLAIL crew for +45TV. This gives the tank Attack, Defense, and EW of 3, and the ANN perk. *PAK and Utopia armies may not take this option.*



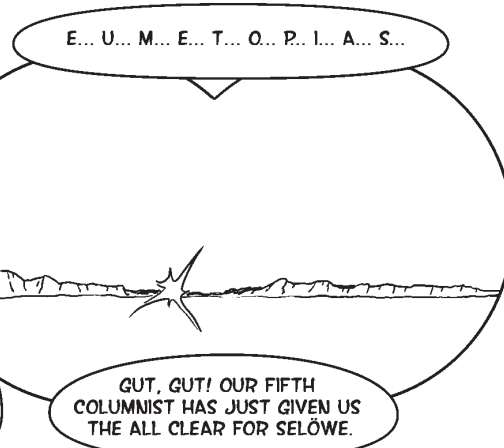
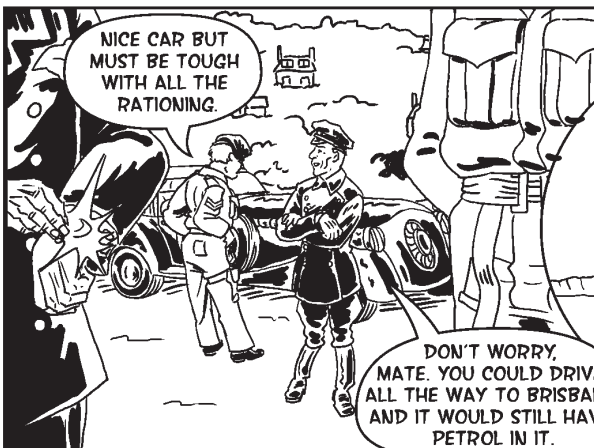
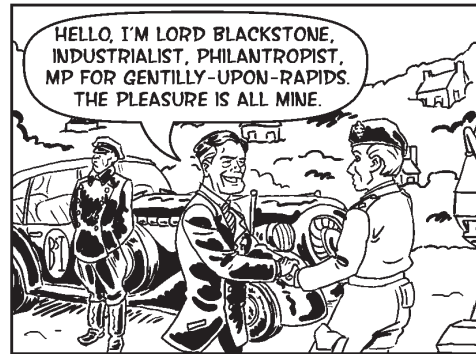
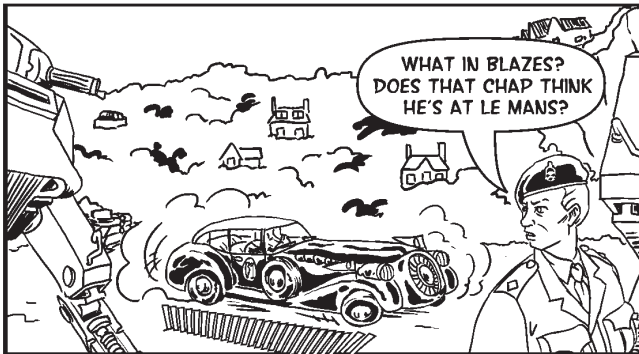
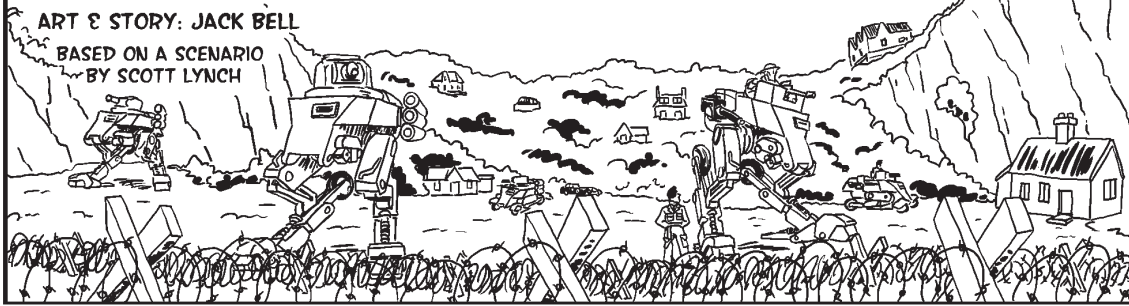
JOHN BELL

**ALFIE'S
TENNERS**

ART & STORY: JACK BELL

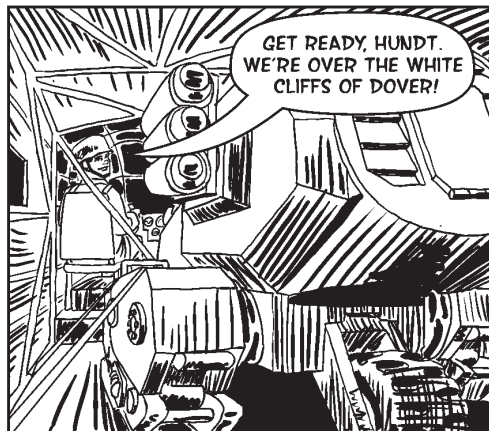
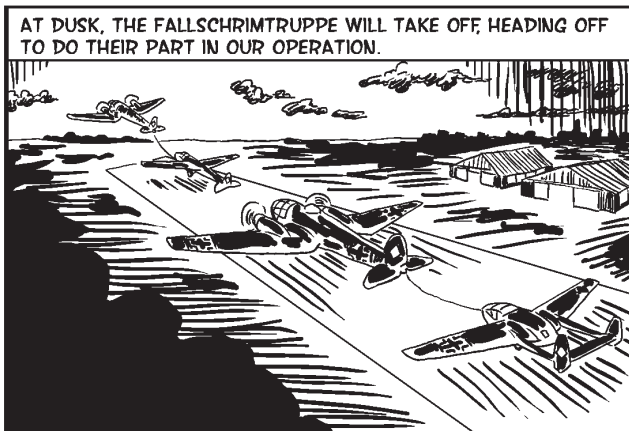
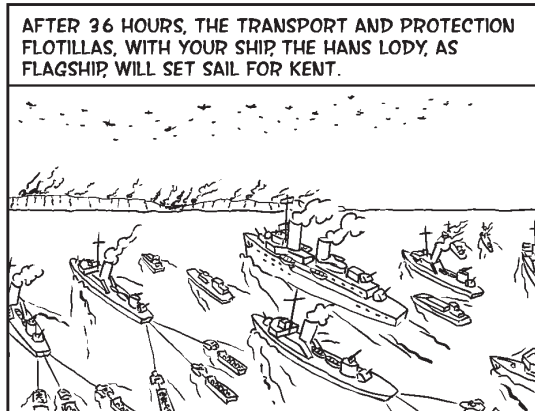
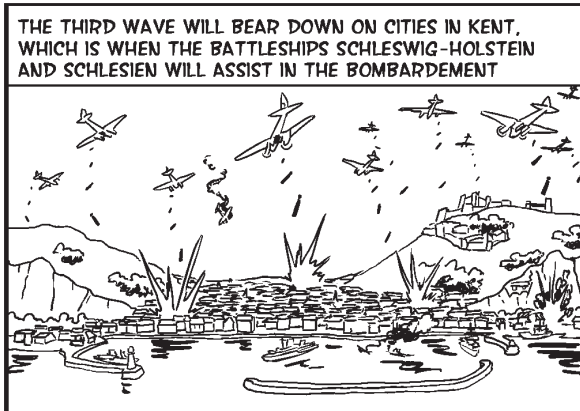
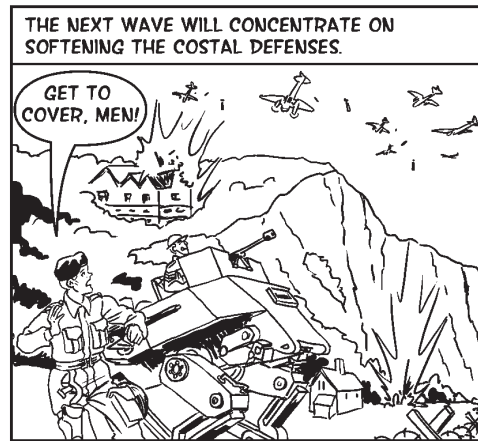
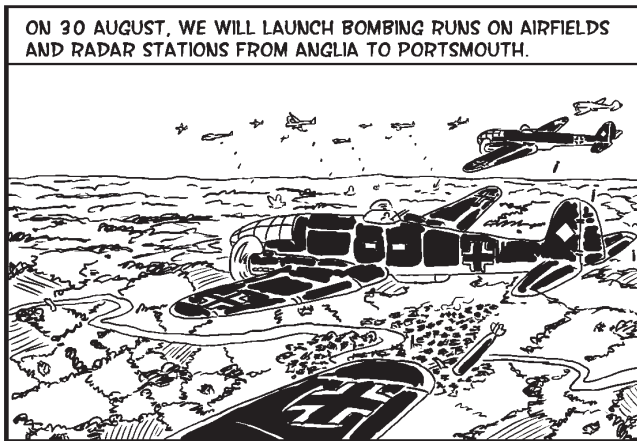
BASED ON A SCENARIO
BY SCOTT LYNCH

AUG 29, 1940. HAVING CONQUERED FRANCE BY THE END OF JUNE, HITLER NOW SET HIS EYES UPON BRITAIN. IN THE MONTHS SINCE, THE BRITISH PEOPLE HAVE BEEN REBUILDING THE ARMY, FORTIFYING THE SHORES OF ALBION, EXPANDING THE ROYAL AIR FORCE, ORGANISING A CIVILIAN DEFENSE FORCE, THE HOME GUARD, ALL SO AS TO PREVENT A GERMAN INVASION, BE IT BY AIR OR BY SEA. AMONG THE ARMY TROOPS DEFENDING THE COAST WERE 2/LT ALPHONSE MARCH AND HIS WALKER TROOP, VETERANS OF THE BATTLE OF FRANCE...



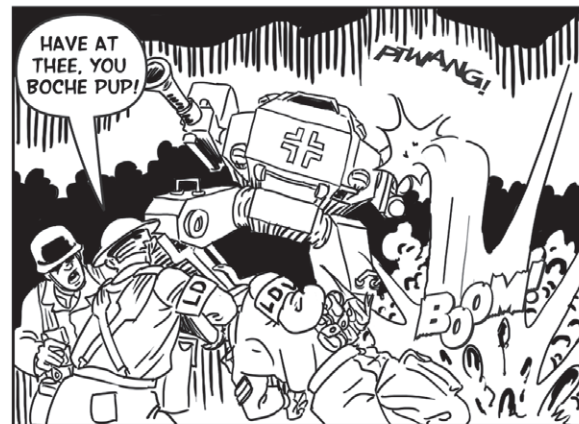
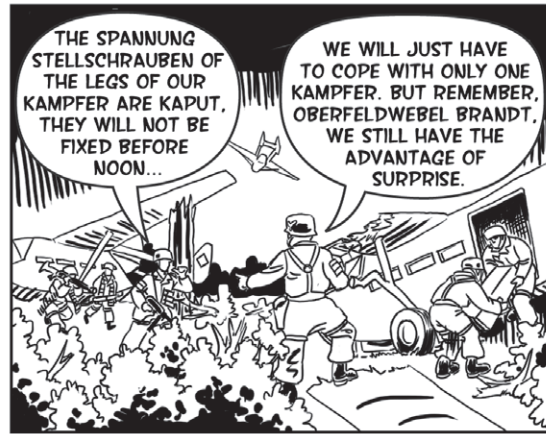
AURORA: THE SILHOUETTE MAGAZINE

ALFIE'S TENNERS



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NEXT TIME: OLIVER IS HERE! THE GERMANS HAVE LANDED! TOMORROW, JUST YOU WAIT AND SEE!

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ISSUE 4

GEAR UP

THE OFFICIAL DREAM POD 9 MAGAZINE

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AURORA: THE SILHOUETTE MAGAZINE

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Article Guidelines

The Aurora Magazine focuses on the worlds created by Dream Pod 9. As such, we are primarily interested in, but not limited to, articles dealing with SilCore and Blitz rules (variants, additions, explorations of the rules) and on fiction, mechanized designs, equipment and the like that draw on established DP9 universes. This does not mean, however, that articles that are generic in nature or that do not deal with unique or original material, only that the focus is on exploring Silhouette and its attendant universes.

Any article that is a promotion piece for another product, be it an excerpt or a lead-in to another product, must be clearly defined as such within the article body.

No articles will be accepted that use another's Intellectual Property or Copyrighted material without an included signed permission to use said material.

Fiction may be a one-off or serial based, as desired. Please note that long works of fiction may be split into multiple pieces over multiple issues for length reasons; if you are writing a long story it is best to indicate breaks in the story (chapters, for example) that allow us to choose the best point to split the story, if necessary. In keeping with the nature of the magazine we ask that fiction be accompanied by Silhouette CORE or Blitz! rules detail of some kind, be it stats for characters or equipment in the story, game scenarios, mechanized designs, new rules or explanations of how to simulate aspects of the story using the Silhouette/Blitz rules. This is not a hard requirement, and you may request that another contributor be asked to create the rules support based on your story.

Aurora is also looking for original artwork. Art may be used to accompany the article and/or for the cover of the APA. Please see below for copyright information regarding images.

Submission Guidelines

All work for Aurora should be submitted in an .rtf (Rich Text Format) file. The text within should be in Arial 10pt font, and single-spaced. Hard returns should be used only to separate paragraphs (with a double hard return) or with bullet points and list items. Do not indent paragraphs. You may use italics, boldface or bullets where deemed necessary.

Tables may be included in the submission. Preferably, tables should be created with minimal lines between cells, instead using background colour and/or cell spacing for clarity. Tables may also be included in courier-font/fixed-formatting. Identify these kind of tables with the following: <<<Table>>>

The article's title should be clearly noted at the beginning of the file, followed by a short (less than 75 words) introductory text. This introductory text can either be a synopsis, a quote, story, etc. It will be used at the beginning of the article to 'set the stage'.

The file should end with the Author's name(s), contact information (if desired) and a short bio (optional). This information will be placed on a Contributing Author's page in the magazine.

Please spell check and proofread your article. English or American spellings may be used as desired.

Photos, drawings or images should be accompanied by photo credits as well as a brief description/caption for each photo (optional). Indicate within your article where the images are to be included like so: <<<Image_Filename.ext>>>. Images should be sent at a maximum of 150dpi for greyscale or colour images, 300dpi for black & white images (1-bit). Given the size of a page, images should be no larger than 7 by 7 inches (18 by 18 cm). If we need a higher resolution image, we will contact you. Images should be compressed with an appropriate method; please check the quality of your images before sending. If by including images the submission would grow over 2 megabytes in size, please place the images on an Internet-accessible server where we will download them (don't forget to tell us where they are located).

Copyright Guidelines

Quotes or information that are attributable to other sources are permissible in appropriate quantities, and should be identified/cited (including page numbers), preferably within the article. Be sure that each quote is written exactly as it appears in the original source.

If you wish to include photos/drawings/images with your article, please provide the photo credits (artist/photographer/illustrator and subject if applicable). You may only submit images for which you have obtained permission to include in your article.

All articles and images used by Aurora remain in the copyright of the original submitters. You, as the author, must consent to release the article for publication by Aurora, with the knowledge that Aurora will not provide any compensation other than what has been listed above, and that Aurora, as an online magazine, will be downloaded by third-parties in a PDF format. All work for Aurora is volunteer-based. Should DP9 decide at a later time to compile and sell articles within a contract will be negotiated with the author at that time.

The End Print

Please send all submissions to the following email address:

auroramag@gmail.com

Thank you everyone for your interest, and we look forward to seeing your submissions soon!

Deadline for Submissions for Issue #6.1: December 15th 2011

AURORA: THE SILHOUETTE MAGAZINE

ARTICLE SUGGESTIONS

Historical Articles

Under this broad category are pieces meant primarily for illuminating or detailing something within the game universe. This can be truly historical in nature (describing history), detailing a region, the language, customs, architecture, technical systems, corporations, social structure, music, and more, to name a few. Articles may either be written from a neutral point of view (impartial observer from above) or written 'in character', that is, in the manner such information may be presented if it were available in the game world. See the Historical Accuracy note, below (especially important for this category).

Fiction

Any story (narrative with characters) that takes place within the established DP9 game worlds falls under this category. See the Historical Accuracy note, below, and also see the submission guidelines for further requirements.

Modules

Also known as adventures, a written collection of plot, character, and location details used by the gamemaster to manage the plot or story in the DP9 RPGs. All manner of modules are open for submission, from espionage to social to military to a combination of all three. Module submissions must be detailed enough for the GM to run the entire adventure, including descriptions and dispositions (where applicable) of major NPCs, locations, accessories and story/plot. See the Historical Accuracy note, below.

Scenarios

These are the tactical equivalent of modules, an encounter between two (or more) factions set up for combat. A complete scenario will detail the background of the encounter (the why), the forces engaged (the who -- what physical units at a minimum, regiment and designations to go the full way), the map and terrain (the where) the victory conditions (the how) and any special rules or conditions (the what). Scenarios should be designed to be balanced for each side, either via the types/numbers of units or through special circumstances or conditions. If the scenario is not balanced this must be mentioned in the background. See the Historical Accuracy note, below.

Note: Historical Accuracy

Aurora is committed to accuracy within the established DP9 worlds. All articles that take place 'within' the game world should be checked for its accuracy within the established timeline, faction dispositions, available equipment, etc. Submitted articles will be run by the game world historians, so check your work! You may, however, submit your article clearly marked as "Alternate History" and if published the article too will bear this mark. Be sure, if you submit this way, to provide in the background all that is necessary to describe what has changed.

Designs

New mechanical designs/vehicles/ships for use in the DP9 worlds. Designs must be legal and use either the latest SilCore rules (including all errata and the FAQ) or Blitz rules. Please indicate which design rules were used. Mechanical designs should fill a void that is not already covered by another unit. Background and a description must be included with the design, while artwork is optional and preferred. See the Historical Accuracy note, above.

Artwork

Aurora accepts all artwork for consideration, no matter the media type (rendering, sketch, painting, etc) within the rules set herein. Miniature photographs will also be accepted (dioramas encouraged!). Artwork must relate to an established DP9 universe and be easily identified as such. Artwork with nudity, racial undertones, sexism or sex will not be considered. See the submission guidelines on how to submit images.

House Rules

Original rules for the Silhouette/Blitz! system and modifications to existing rules. All rules submittals must include an explanation of the rule's purpose, the rules themselves clearly written, and an example of the rule in play.

Note: Blitz! Rules

House Rules covering existing Blitz! Rules will be limited. New Rules covering areas of the game not explicitly contained in the existing rules (as found in the Blitz! line of books) may be submitted freely. House Rules that modify or replace the written Blitz! ruleset (as found in the Blitz! line of books) will be forwarded to the line developer for review and comment. They will then contact you if the idea may proceed forward. Note that this applies only to the Blitz! line -- rules may be freely submitted for any other SilCore game.

Tactics

Have you won countless battles? Have a strategy you would like to share? Write a tactics article. Usually this type of article will be in a step-by-step (or turn by turn) format to illustrate the tactic. An introduction and conclusion is required to create a complete package and to convey to the reader where the tactic is applicable and how it came about.

Miniatures/Modeling

Any article on preparing miniatures, painting, terrain making, sculpting, foliage techniques, etc will be accepted. Photographs and/or diagrams are strongly encouraged.