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"If you are a roleplayer, or a gaming historian, or a fan of *D&D*, you have to read this book. That simple."
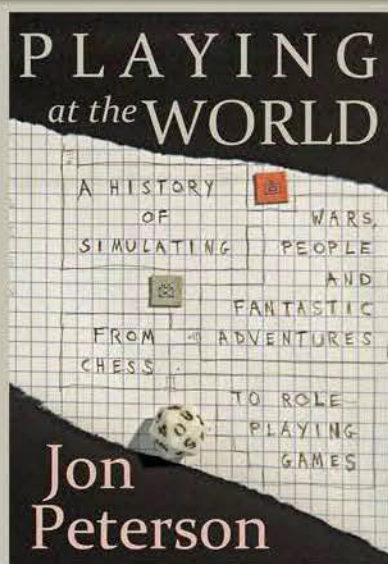**Jeff Grub**, former TSR designer, author of *Manual of the Planes*

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Frank Mentzer, author of Red Box *D&D*, and the *Temple of Elemental Evil*

Explore the conceptual origins of wargames and role-playing games in this unprecedented history of simulating the real and the impossible. From a vast survey of primary sources ranging from eighteenth-century strategists to modern hobbyists, *Playing at the World* distills the story of how gamers first decided fictional battles with boards and dice, and how they moved from simulating wars to simulating people. The invention of role-playing games serves as a touchstone for exploring the ways that the literary concept of character, the lure of fantastic adventure and the principles of gaming combined into the signature cultural innovation of the late twentieth century.

http://playingattheworld.com

PLAYING *at the* WORLD

A HISTORY OF SIMULATING WARS, PEOPLE AND FANTASTIC ADVENTURES FROM CHESS TO ROLE PLAYING GAMES

Jon Peterson

Gygax MAGAZINE

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EDITORIAL

This issue is my favorite yet! I'm committing this editorial to paper just after having coffee with Jeremy Olson, the creator of *Dracovalis,* the winner of our board game design contest. We had a great time commisserating over our respective trials and tribulations making our gaming products. Whether it's a magazine about analog gaming like *Gygax Magazine,* or a board game that needs design, playtesting, and prototyping, every creative labor of love is an iceberg — the public sees the bit above the water that is the finished product, and the creators see the hundreds and hundreds of hours of work that go into not just getting the details right, but making sure nobody can see what details *needed* getting right. I couldn't be prouder of who we chose as the winner of our board game design contest. I'd like to thank James Mathe for helping us set up the contest and get the word out to board game designers, and his valuable advice. We chose Dracovalis for its pace, ease of play, and storyline, and we ended up with a game designer who's passionate about his game and smart about his plans. I hope we'll see the boxed version in friendly local game stores soon.

Our second special attraction in this issue is a first for us — a complete roleplaying game, ready to play — *Pulp Era,* co-written by our own James Carpio. *Pulp Era* was one of the first indie RPGs to be published online, back in 1998, and it's been unavailable for years. With easy to pick up rules, fast gameplay, and the action-packed fun of the Golden Age pulps like Tarzan, Doc Savage, the Shadow, Mike Hammer and others that marked the first half of the twentieth century, it's a great system for a campaign or a one-shot adventure.

I'd like to call attention especially to our cover for this issue, by the legendary Jim Holloway. Long-time gamers will know his work from Tsojcanth, the Desert of Desolation series, Paranoia, Battletech, Chill, and of course Dragon magazine. I'm so proud to have a new Holloway painting to grace our cover, and I hope you love it too.

Jayson Elliot

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Last-minute locations: fantasy villages

Ten fantasy villages with their own plot hooks

by Jason Sinclair

Being the Dungeon Master is a tough gig. You create a campaign world for your players (or at least borrow one), populate it with hundreds of interesting non-player characters (NPCs), and cook up labyrinthine plots for them to unravel. But no matter what you do, the player characters (PCs) always want to go to the one place you didn't have time to flesh out.

For example, consider the humble, bucolic village. Home to farmers, innkeepers and various agrarian folk, it is a place where most adventures (and adventurers) seem to begin – yet often they're simply unnamed dots on a map. But fear not! Should your PCs stray off your well-planned path or need to swing by the nearest village for resupply, here's a handy list of ten villages they could visit and some idea hooks to go with them. Just pick one that works for your campaign or roll a d10 if you're feeling intrepid. Name your village as you see fit—a few pre-generated names have been created using the Village Name Generator below. Feel free to roll up your own name to keep things fresh.

 Smallbarrel

This village isn't known for anything in particular other than a fine cider they make from their apple orchards. However, if the PCs ever visit they will learn about Jasper Glunk, a peculiar old hermit reputed to be crazy as a frog in a sock. Through chance encounter the PCs will meet Jasper, who will waste no time in warning them about the "Watcher in the Woods." Jasper's hazy on the details (or proof), but he seems convinced there's some kind of malevolent force keeping tabs on the village – as to why, none can say.

Plot Hooks

- The Watcher is a hoax. Searchers find only trees, rocks and startled wildlife. It's not a total loss, however, as the PCs find several spell components and a large clump of tasty blackberries.

- Jasper's Watchers turn out to be a bandit camp with 1d10 low-level bandits and a higher level commander, all working out of a well-concealed cave. Their camp is relatively new, so they haven't collected much in the way of treasure.

- The Watchers turn out to be a small group of goblins who were sent to keep an eye on the village by their chieftain in the next valley over. However, the goblins aren't the aggressors – in fact, they're terrified of the villagers. Something is seriously wrong with the village and the goblins need the PCs help.

- Through blind luck, the PCs discover the Watchers by finding their camouflaged, self-contained research station. The Watchers are beings from another world, having travelled to the campaign world through a variety of means (dimensional gates, spacecraft, magical ships, celestial dragons, whatever). The Watchers might be hostile and planning to invade, or they might be welcoming and allow the PCs to travel to new worlds with them . . .

Village Name Generator

Roll 2d20 and assign a die to each column. Place the results from the two columns next to each other, make any grammatical adjustments needed and presto! You have a village name. This generator can also be used to name Internet start-ups in a pinch.

1.	One	11.	White	1.	Hill	11.	Row
2.	Green	12.	Silver	2.	Tree	12.	Field
3.	Up	13.	Five	3.	Well	13.	Bird
4.	Two	14.	Black	4.	Stream	14.	Road
5.	New	15.	Copper	5.	Borough	15.	Barrel
6.	Gold	16.	Down	6.	Bend	16.	Wheel
7.	Three	17.	Red	7.	Wind	17.	Bridge
8.	Brown	18.	Great	8.	Shed	18.	Wall
9.	Old	19.	Small	9.	-ville	19.	Bale
10.	Four	20.	Blue	10.	Fish	20.	Stack

Redborough

The rolling fields surrounding this village helps it raise some of the finest horses in the kingdom. Any PC in need of an excellent steed should look no further. Furthermore, the village hosts a yearly horse race, a cross-country run that draws huge crowds (and much betting). Those who win the race are allowed to ask a boon of the local powers that be, such as a ruling by a lord regarding land division, the resurrection of a loved one, or borrowing a division of soldiers to fight off a horde of orcs . . .

Plot Hooks

• The PCs attend the annual horse race, whereupon they are hired by Sir Angus Mantlemont to protect the horse he's entering in the race. Obviously, somebody doesn't want the Mantlemont to win, so the PCs have to deal with a variety of attacks on the horse, and the jockey. Who is behind the attacks? A local crime boss? A rival knight? Mantlemont's son, who wants his own horse to win?

• Alternatively, the PCs might be hired to take out the competition. They could be paid in gold or promises of items or information that would help them with a different quest. Note that the authorities would frown upon this should the PCs be caught.

• Perhaps the PCs need the boon for themselves. It's up to them to find a steed and a patron, enter the race, protect themselves from rivals and then ride at a breakneck pace across grueling terrain. To make matters worse, the other riders and their patrons aren't the only things to worry about out there. Perhaps some monsters have blundered onto the path, drawn by the enticing smell of horseflesh. Or there's a group of angry elves blocking the way. Or possibly the PC rider simply gets lost . . .

• Another possibility is that once every ten years the race is for anything except a horse. Monsters, giant sheep, mechanical devices – it's all fair as long as it involves a rider and something ridden (that doesn't fly). The PCs might need to be incredibly creative, or they could be hired to ride a dinosaur or test out a velocipede.

• The PCs don't care one whit about the race and they're only in town to buy a few nice horses. However, the horse they buy turns out to be stolen and the previous owners come looking for it. Or perhaps the horse they buy isn't really a horse after all, but a person cursed to take the form of a horse. Can the PCs undo the curse and free them? If they do, is the person a noble hero or a villain?

Copperwheel

If the PCs ask about this village, they're told it's a pleasant if unremarkable mining community — but nobody seems to have heard from any of the residents in quite a while. If the players investigate (or stumble upon) the village, they discover that it is completely abandoned. Looking for clues, the PCs find meals half-eaten, washed clothes partially hung up to dry and even iron in the smith's now cold forge, as if all the residents and livestock simply vanished.

Plot Hooks

• The residents are all nearby in the mine, hiding from some intelligent monsters that recently arrived in the area. The villagers are safe for now, but they're low on food and the monsters are still out there.

• The residents are still in the village, except now they've all be transformed into

inanimate objects thanks to a curse sprung by an idiot staying at the inn. The fellow in question is a man of great martial skill but scant wit, one who was hired to transport a package to a powerful mage in the next kingdom. Though he had been warned not to open the box, curiosity and a bottle of wine got the better of him and he peeked inside (the PCs are in no danger of being transformed as the magic has been spent). Instructions and papers found in the man's effects can help the PCs piece together what happened and possibly unravel the curse. Alternatively, the PCs might have to trek to the mage who hired him and explain what happened – which could lead to more adventures.

- The residents are part of a doomsday cult that worships an unnamed, sanity-shattering god. The stars have aligned, the comet is in the sky, the cicadas have hatched – whatever sign the cult needed has appeared to let them know it's time to open the gate they have constructed in the lower parts of the mine. The PCs might figure out what is happening by reading a diary found in a house or by finding a half-crazed resident who's had second thoughts and is hiding from the others in a chicken hutch. If the PCs act quickly, they could interrupt the ritual and stop the gate from opening.

4 Twobird

This village is known for the artisans who live there and the fine goods they produce. There are famers and innkeepers of course, but the real economic draw are the artists themselves. Perhaps they carve wood, assemble musical instruments, or forge fine weapons – whatever the PCs fancy. The village itself is prosperous and peaceful enough, but it's also something of an armed camp as the merchants who sell the goods the villagers produce have hired mercenaries to protect their investment.

Plot Hooks

- The PCs need to know who purchased a unique item that bears the stamp of its maker, one of the village artisans. Perhaps the item is a clue in an assassination attempt or was part of a bribe to a corrupt official. When the PCs get to the village, maybe the artisan doesn't like to divulge information about her clientele, or maybe the original owner has caught wind of the PCs plans and has silenced the artisan permanently (and possibly frames the PCs).

- The PCs are looking to buy some goodies for themselves. However, the grumpy dwarf blacksmith doesn't think the PCs are worthy enough for one of his fine war hammers, etc. Perhaps the PCs need to prove themselves

with a short quest or doing him a few favors before he'll sell.

- The PCs have cleaned out a dungeon/castle/lair/monster retirement home and need to unload some art pieces. However, merchants in the big city say the art is a forgery and worthless. If the PCs take the art to the artist who reputedly created it, they can discover the truth. Perhaps it is indeed a forgery and the artist is so upset she hires the PCs to track down the forger. Perhaps the artist is a forgery and is truly a doppelganger who has taken the (now deceased) artist's place and has been forced to produce slipshod art under the watchful eye of the mercenaries.

- The village is not at all what it seems. The artists are actually prisoners in their own homes, watched around the clock by the mercenary troops surrounding the village. The merchants force the artists to produce goods with threats, beatings and holding family members hostage. If the PCs can liberate the artists without any of the hostages getting hurt, the villagers would be intensely grateful.

5 Black Bend

Built within the largest graveyard in the kingdom, this village is in the center of where the bones of the kingdom's fallen soldiers are interred, as well as the mass graves for paupers and those of unknown origin. Most of the villagers work as coffin makers, grave diggers, headstone carvers, dressers of the dead and so forth, supplying all the various labor in the end-of-life industry (villagers can be hired as mourners in a pinch). The village and the graveyards are kept largely free of any pesky undead issues due to a strange anti-magical zone unique to the area.

Plot Hooks

- To keep track of where such a huge volume of the dead are buried, this village has an impressive set of historical records. If the PCs needs to research an event or person from the past, this is an excellent place to do it. Access to these records isn't free, however, and the PCs might need to perform a service or pay a fee to get the answers they seek.

- The anti-magic zone suppresses the undead, but a few pop up here and there. While in town, the PCs might be asked to help destroy a few lesser undead wandering around, or they might be hired to be temporary cemetery keepers until a new crew of paladins comes in from the city.

- Perhaps the anti-magic field is due to an item buried far under the village, like a

meteor or an artifact or a frozen droplet of blood from a god. Whatever the McGuffin is, some villains might be interested in it and try to dig it up. Can the PCs stop them? Or do the PCs need the item themselves as part of a quest?

- Some necromancers have figured out a way to work around the anti-magic field and set up shop in an old crypt. The PCs need to stop them before the countryside is overrun with an army of undead.

- The PCs need (or simply want) an item in one of the larger, older tombs reserved for royalty. To get said item, the PCs will have to figure out what tomb it's in, get into the tomb and bypass the copious traps, and then deal with angry villagers and guards on the way out.

Onebridge

This village is unique in that most of its structures are built on or at either side of an enormous bridge. The bridge spans a large gorge and is the only crossing for quite a distance, so it sees a fair bit of traffic. A toll house has been set up by the kingdom to extract funds for the royal coffers, but the steady flow of customers keeps the rates low. Most of the real money earned around the village comes in the form of information, in the sense that half the populace is paid to keep secrets and the other half is paid to ferret them out. As one of the main crossroads of the kingdom, clandestine meetings, duplicity and strangers skulking in the shadows are all part of a normal day here.

Plot Hooks
- The PCs might be summoned to the village to a meet with a shady individual. Perhaps

this person has a deadly secret they need protected – or just as likely, they need the PCs to find out somebody else's secrets. Whatever the reason, the PCs will meet up with stiff resistance from outside sources.

- The PCs might be tired after an adventure and simply want a room for the night. However, a case of mistaken identity can cause all sorts of harrowing things to happen, from clumsy seduction attempts to burgled rooms to attacks by masked assassins.

- The bridge is a strategic location and taking it out would be a serious blow to the kingdom. Perhaps the PCs catch wind of a plot to detonate the bridge by some rebels or invaders from a neighboring kingdom. Alternatively, the PCs themselves may be hired to take the bridge down – after they deal with the village watch, several kingdom spies and a few high-level mercenaries first.

7 Silverwind

Ages ago, a huge, magical fortress cruised the skies and provided military superiority for a long forgotten civilization. Nobody knows what brought it tumbling to the ground, but pieces of the wreckage covered a huge tract of land and can still be seen to this day. Sages, wizards and other researchers flock to the site and a village was built to support them. Nowadays it's not unusual to find a shepherd tending his flock next to an archeological dig or find mages in a loud argument over history at the local tavern.

Plot Hooks
- The PCs might need some rare spell components or a bit of knowledge to complete a new spell they're creating. Alternatively, they might have a bizarre gizmo or scroll that only the experts in this village can identify.

- While the PCs are there a crew of diggers unearths a malfunctioning construct that goes on a rampage. The PCs might get asked to stop the construct, or even capture it for study.

- One of the dig sites has proven to be especially complex and the sages need the PCs help. Perhaps spells are needed to move piles of stones or the inner chambers are booby-trapped. Even worse, some undead members of the original pilots might lurk inside.

- A powerful artifact is unearthed and starts to cause havoc on its own. Another possibility is that the artifact is benign but attracts the attention of a local warlord or villainous mage. Can the PCs keep it out of the enemy's hands?

- The PCs figure out a way to get a small part of the fortress back into the sky. Could this be a new base of operations for them? Can they control where it goes or will they drift on the wind? What if it makes a beeline for "home" and the residents there aren't too pleased with the PCs suddenly showing up?

8 Brownfield

This village is a lovely, idyllic place notable only for its relative quiet and the excellent hams and sausages they produce.

Plot Hooks
- The village is a complete fake. Aside from a lone pig farmer (the source of the excellent sausages), everybody in the village is part of the kingdom's elite private guard. The village operates as a safe zone for political dissidents of rival countries, illegitimate-but-sane heirs to the throne, and whatever else the top brass of the kingdom needs. Perhaps the PCs are sent there to collect and transport a person of interest – or remove them permanently. If the latter, they'll meet stiff resistance from the elite guard. The village is a complete fake, run by a gang of criminals, possibly thieves, assassins or worse. Perhaps the PCs need to get training for a rogue or bardic character. Maybe they've been hired to bring the gang to justice. Maybe the village is run by a rival gang and the PCs have been sent by their own gang to rob them blind. A bad possibility is that the tired PCs have stumbled into town looking for a room for the night and have quite a surprise on their hands if they figure things out.

- The village is a complete fake. The villagers are really operatives from an enemy kingdom and the village is their base of operations. Alternatively, the danger level could be raised by making the invaders intelligent monsters posing as humans (such as demons, devils, githyanki and so forth).

9 White Stream

Long ago, weary pilgrims found rest at a hot spring they discovered. Seeing it as divine providence, they stayed and built a shrine to their gods. A village was built to care for the shrine and those who visit. On a less spiritual note, the village also makes a small profit by operating a bathhouse and relaxing spa.

Plot Hooks
- The PCs need to visit the shrine as part of their clerical or paladin training, or perhaps it's one of the stops they need to make on the path of atonement.

- The shrine and the village is part of a different pantheon than the official religion of the kingdom. The kingdom officials are unhappy about this and send the PCs to shut the shrine down for good. Obviously the villagers will do everything to prevent this from happening.

- The village and shrine is in a really remote place, so far away that they don't get much communication from the major political and religious centers of the kingdom. The PCs may have been sent to check on villagers or bring updated information, or they might have stumbled in after a hard adventure elsewhere. Whatever the reason they are there, the PCs find the religious teachings have gone horribly awry from what is believed everywhere else. The difference could be comical, deadly, or bizarre.

- The PCs go to the village for the hot springs and to relax a little in-between adventuring. Sadly, their vacation is ruined when a villain the PCs previously defeated follows them to the springs and attacks when the PCs guard is down. Or perhaps a water elemental forms in the hot spring while the PCs are having a soak . . .

0 Greatshed

An adventurer of some repute retired to this village after he passed his fighting prime. He got involved in local politics and was quickly elected as the chief alderman. Using his wealth from his former career and his political status, the alderman built his own personal zoo to remind him of his grand days of adventure. It's a small zoo, but well-built and stocked with some unusual – and deadly – specimens. Besides the usual employment in the village, many villagers also work as zookeepers, guards and trainers. Furthermore, the zoo draws many visitors, ranging from the merely curious to mages researching a particular creature, so the three village inns are always busy.

Plot Hooks
- The PCs need a rare spell component or must research a monster for some reason, and it so happens that the zoo has a mated pair.

- The alderman wants to expand his zoo. He'll pay handsomely for the PCs to go out and get some monsters for him, provided the beasts come back alive and unharmed. Alternatively, clients want the PCs to swipe a live monster from the alderman's zoo and bring it back to them, such as an intelligent monster trying to get back its kidnapped children.

- One of the monsters in the zoo is really a shapeshifted or cursed person. The PCs need to rescue the trapped person and get them out of there so they can be transformed back to normal. Unfortunately, the person/monster might think with a monster brain and be quite uncooperative.

- A group of well-meaning but over-zealous druids and rangers invade the village and set all the animals free, with ensuing mayhem. The PCs need to protect the villagers, break up fights between monsters, and possibly return a few to their cages, all the while exchanging blows with the druids. On the other hand, maybe the PCs are hired by the druids to free the creatures and the PCs come to blows with a gang of savage hunters. ■
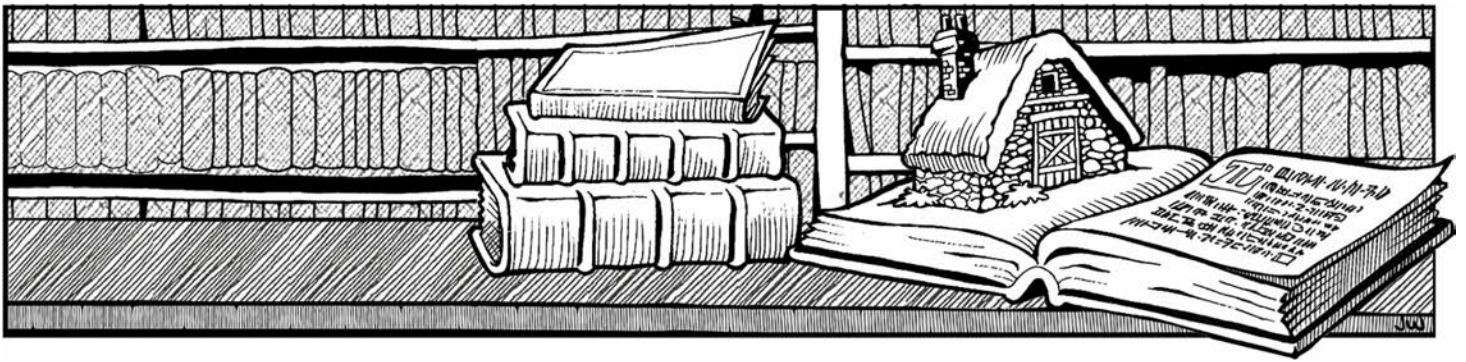
Leomund's Secure Shelter

Telepathy in first edition AD&D
by Lenard Lakofka

Telepathy in *1st Edition AD&D* is a psionic science; there is a crystal ball with telepathy and a Helm of Telepathy. Additionally, this article will add a *telepathy* spell and a potion that grants telepathic abilities. Both the spell and potion are of limited duration. The other three ways of gaining telepathic powers are regulated by psionic strength or the limits of the magic items listed.

The essence of telepathy is communication with a (typically) known being whose intelligence is at least five. This means that the target need not be another telepath, but must be known to the telepath. Some being in visual range can be attempted as well, thus allowing for those who are unknown.

Telepathic projection is more powerful and allows for attempts at suggestion and even possession. This capacity is explained in the *Advanced Dungeons and Dragons Players Handbook*, Appendix: Psionics.

A crystal ball can see only (1-50 on d%), add hearing (clairaudience 51-75), add ESP (76-90), or add telepathy (91-100)

The Helm of Telepathy has very limited range, but does allow for implanting a *suggestion* if the target fails a save vs magic.

Can a telepath transfer a memorized spell via telepathy?

I was asked by Dan Howe if a "hive mind" of telepaths could load spells from one person in the hive to another person in the hive. (Which leads to many conjectures if the answer is yes.) At first I said no, but I finally said "why not?" If this is possible then what are the rules and principles involved in moving memory of a spell to another person (as if the recipient had read the spell or received the answer to a prayer)?

After I gasped, I took an extra blood pressure pill, and moved forward.

To begin this conjecture we have to start with a telepath. telepathy can be endowed to a psionic that has access to that major science. First the person must be psionic (an intelligence, wisdom and/or charisma of 16 or more and a defined percentage roll—usually in the high 90s).

Then the person has a 60% chance of one or two psionic sciences, and then a 3 in 20 chance of either rolling telepathy or the ability to choose telepathy. Those are crappy odds.

Might telepathy come from some other route? A *wish* comes to mind. The decree of a deity. A magic item, especially an artifact. A crystal ball with telepathy. Or perhaps from a spell? There doesn't seem to be a spell but we can fix that minor oversight.

Telepathy

Level: *5*	Area of Effect: *One creature*
Class: *Cleric, Druid, Magic-User*	Components: *None*
	Casting Time: *1 round*
Range: *Special*	Saving throw: *Special*
Duration: *4 rounds plus bonus (see below)*	

This spell functions in a similar manner to the psionic power telepathy (see *1st Edition AD&D Players Handbook by Gary Gygax, 1978*) with the following modifications.

To another known willing telepath on the same plane of existence the range is 186,000 miles (one light second). To a known non-telepath (a search process) 100 miles per point of spellcaster's intelligence, wisdom and/or charisma above 15. This sought-after non-telepath need not accept contact and he/she will be allowed a save vs possible suggestion, ESP intrusion/manipulation, or precognition interruption using intelligence or wisdom, whichever is better. He or she will be aware of the attempt to contact if he or she saves versus magic. The target of telepathic contact gains a bonus to their saving throw of +1 per point of intelligence or wisdom over 16 (whichever is better).

To an unknown person the range is line of sight.

Duration is 4 rounds plus 1 round per point of Intelligence, Wisdom and/or Charisma over 15. If two scores are 16 or better add 3 more rounds. If all three scores are 16 or better add 7 more rounds.

Transfer of spells via telepathy

Process One:

Can a spell casting telepath who has memorized a spell transfer that spell to the memory of another willing telepath? Well it would be anticlimactic if I said no, wouldn't it?

So, *yes*, but now the restrictions:

- If the receiver is of the same class and has an appropriate slot open, then there is no restriction. Furthermore, that spellcaster could cast it if it was a known spell by the receiver.

- If the receiver is of a spellcasting class but not the same class as the sender, the receiver can hold the spell *regardless* of capacity but he/she *cannot* cast it. One exception: if the spell is known to other spellcaster in a slightly different format, such as *dispel magic*, *light*, and *detect magic*.) For different spellcasting classes casting similar spells in a different format, only third-level spells and below can be cast.

- If the receiver is not a spell casting class but is a telepath, they can accept the spell into memory but there is a chance of spell corruption equal to 10% per level of the implanted spell.

  Exception: the receiver (not of the same class) could cast the following list of spells (if instructed by the sending telepath at some prior time for a period of at least one full hour): *Cure Light Wounds, Detect Magic, Light,* and *Faerie Fire*

If there is no prior instruction the receiver can still attempt to cast one of these first-level spells if the sending telepath provides brief (6 segments) telepathic instruction. However, the non-spellcaster now has a 25% chance to fail in the casting.

Those are all first-level basic spells that allow a non-spellcaster the minor ability to cast a specific spell. The list could become longer, but my thought to is to dramatically reduce the list of fighters (and fighter sub-classes) and thieves. *(The exception to that rule is the ranger or paladin who has gained the ability to cast spells on his/her own by becoming 8th or 9th level, respectively.)*

How long does it take the sending telepath to send the spell(s) to a receiving telepath?

I like one-half of the spell's normal casting time. That would take some spells, with long casting times, and rule them right out. So moving *polymorph other* would take two segments because casting *polymorph other* takes four segments.

One must also be mindful of the duration of the telepathic contact. The sender must have some telepathic duration to spare. The receiver may not need any duration capacity whatsoever. He or she is the storage medium and is not actively pulling the spell from the sender.

Process Two:

Can a telepath who sent the spell to another telepath then take the spell back into memory? Thus the first telepath is using a second willing telepath as a temporary receiver for a spell. The spell, let's say *fireball*, is sent to a second willing telepath for storage. That would take 1½ segments (*fireball*'s casting time is 3 segments) to send it, and another 1½ segments to redeem it later . . .perhaps days later! The first telepath would have to have an opening in his or her current memory at that level. Plucking the spell out would not harm the receiver in any way save for the fact that spell is gone. The receiver would be aware of this removal/transfer.

The first telepath could redeem a spell in one round and then cast it during the next round, thus limiting the number of spells transferable in a single round to only one. The first telepath could not cast some other spell during that round. He or she might be limited to operating an item with a discharge count (like a wand of *detect magic*) only on the round before or after the redeem attempt. Wearing a constantly operating magic item like a ring, *bracers of defense* or a +1 shield would not affect the redeeming of the spell since no charges are involved.

Process Three:

Can one telepath pluck a spell from another spell storage receiver, regardless of whether that receiver is willing or unwilling? This receiver does not have to be a spellcaster.

Plucking cries out for a saving throw (if the DM allows such a process to occur) if the receiver is unknown or unwilling. Furthermore, would the plucker have to know that the pluckee had some specific spell in the first place? Or could the plucker take an inventory in one round and then pluck away in the next round? That has some lovely possibilities, doesn't it?

A shielded mind cannot be inventoried, much less plucked of a known spell. I would say that you cannot pluck a spell that you don't "know" from an unwilling mind. So a cleric can't yank *fireball* out of a mage's mind. When he tried to take an inventory only spells like *detect magic* or *light,* known by both mage and cleric might be considered.

Potion of telepathy

This potion will convey the power of limited telepathy based on the concoction being imbibed.

Roll	Range (miles)	Suggestion	Duration (rounds)
1-80	100 + d100	No	8 + 2d8
81–95	200 + 2d100	Yes	10 + 2d10
96–00	300 + 4d100	Yes (+command)	12 + 4d12

Important: if the imbiber does not have an intelligence, wisdom, and/or charisma of at least 16 the imbiber is subject to madness, paranoia and/or fear. Such a result will happen after imbibing the potion. That being gets a save versus constitution at +3 to the die roll. That means a person with a 16 con must roll 1-16 on d20, but the +3 is added to the roll, possibly producing an ill result. Otherwise the person just gets a headache for 3 to 18 turns.

Basic telepathy allows the imbiber to concentrate on a known, not necessarily telepathic being, and convey information to that being. Those with psionic barriers are 80% likely to feel the mental touch and might choose to block it psionically. Those who are telepathic to another potion, a spell or due to a magic item are 60% likely to be aware of the metal touch.

This potion does not convey the power of *clairaudience*. It is basically a one-way communication of information from the telepath to known target. Those beings with magic resistance can apply that resistance to block the message. Further some beings that have magic resistance are also empathic or telepathic and can therefore respond with thoughts and/or feelings.

Those who are unknown to the telepath, but in his/her line of sight, may attempt to make contact. Once that contact is established however, line of sight is no longer necessary, assuming the figure accepts the contact or is unaware of it.

Non-telepaths are only 40% likely to be aware of contact until such time as the telepath tries to convey information.

The potion does convey some ability to read the surface thoughts of a known or unknown being who is not blocking the contact. Surface thoughts are those that are current or what is being thought of while speaking. Deep plots or hidden feelings are rarely touched by this reading (only 10% likely). Touch does not mean that you can search the person's mind for information.

A stronger potion also has the above powers but has the ability to attempt up to three separate *suggestions* to that being. Any being whose intelligence or wisdom is 17 or higher will never fall victim to a suggestion. A being of intelligence 13 to 16 obtains a save versus this suggestion, rolling against intelligence or wisdom (the higher of the two). A being of intelligence 6 to 12 does get a save, but at -6. A being of intelligence below 6 gets no save, but must be able to understand the suggestion. So language can be a barrier.

Lower level beings (2 HD, or 2 levels or less) might be subject to a suggestion to a small group of them: two to five such beings, all within a circle of 30 feet diameter. The rules of contact apply.

The most powerful potion has the above abilities plus the power of the telepath to issue a one or two word command to someone his mind can touch per the above discussion. Commands like "kill yourself" will be disregarded out of hand. If obvious end result of obeying the command is serious injury the being gets a save versus his intelligence score. Beings of 17+ intelligence are immune to commands, as are lesser and greater deities, major demons and devils, and powerful beings who are not all that smart.

The potion of telepathy also allows the telepath to transfer spells per the preceding discussion.

New exposure to telepathic ability

A potion of telepathy or the casting of spell of telepathy could produce the effect for someone who has never experienced this ability before. The first reaction would most likely be disorientation, followed a possible flood of new information if other sentient beings are nearby.

If the spell is taught by a mentor, then that mentor will most likely guide the spellcaster through the first uses of the spell, transmitting data back and forth (the mentor casting the spell at the same time as the pupil) so that the new user will become familiar with the powers and uses of the telepathic ability. It is very unlikely that a new user would want or even be able to take a memorized spell and move to someone else. That ability would have to come from trial and error or guided practice.

The potion, on the other hand, could be quaffed when there is no one with knowledge of telepathy to guide the imbiber. He or she will suddenly have the ability but may not realize how to go about using it.

The DM can have the user make saves vs his/her intelligence or wisdom score (whichever is higher) to see the user can fathom what is happening because of the spell (which could come from a scroll) or the potion. A person who is psionically telepathic based on his/her charisma score would still save on the higher intelligence or wisdom score.

Hive minds

Hive hinds are usually a collection of three or more person or beings who have the psionically endowed science of telepathy. Persons or beings that can become telepathic due to a magic item, a spell or a potion can also be members of a hive of psionic telepaths.

Once three or more persons or beings become telepathic a hive is formed. That hive can perform actions that are enhanced over what a single telepath or pair of telepaths are capable of. ∎

The great outdoors
Outdoor Survival and the early years of *Dungeons & Dragons*

Walworth Archives

by Jon Peterson
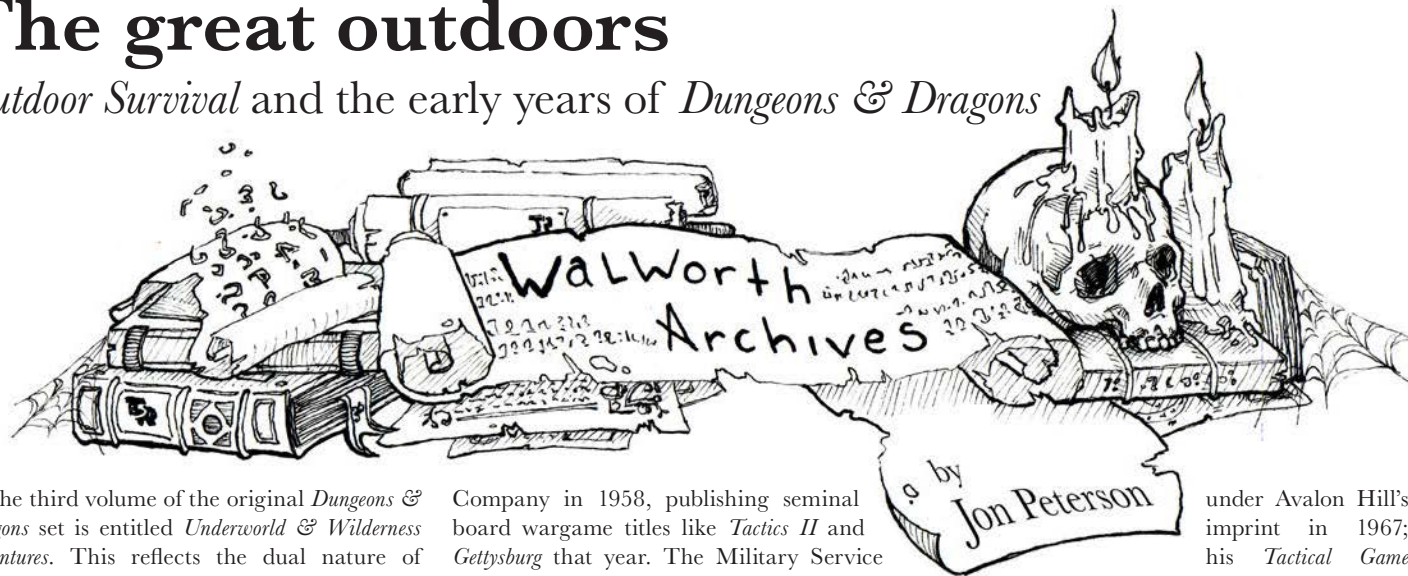
The third volume of the original *Dungeons & Dragons* set is entitled *Underworld & Wilderness Adventures*. This reflects the dual nature of adventure in the game: that players may seek it either in dungeons beneath the ground, or in the expanses of the wilds, a place of foreboding castles and wandering monsters. The two settings have radically different systems: the underworld is represented on graph paper made up of squares, whereas the wilderness is depicted on hex paper. Each square in the dungeon typically shows only a claustrophobic ten-by-ten foot space; in the overworld, a hex is about five miles across. A turn in the underworld lasts ten minutes, and time is measured in even shorter intervals during combat; upstairs, turns last a full day each, during which a character could presumably undertake all kinds of tasks. Only a small band of adventurers can fit into the confines of a dungeon, but in the great outdoors, a party might number in the hundreds, if not the thousands.

Famously, Dave Arneson and his gaming group in the Twin Cities of Minnesota invented the dungeon as a place of adventure. They drew on fantasy fiction, most of all Conan's subterranean exploits, and the pen-and-paper mapping system for underground military mines proposed by the wargame *Chainmail*, which Gary Gygax designed with Jeff Perren. The first edition of *Dungeons & Dragons* kept one foot firmly planted in *Chainmail* by listing its rulebook as equipment necessary for play. Only one other game shares that distinction, and it was from this title that *Dungeons & Dragons* borrowed the wilderness system that ushered in many a hexcrawl: *Outdoor Survival*, a board game by Avalon Hill.

The story of *Outdoor Survival* goes back to the genesis of Avalon Hill. When Charles S. Roberts self-published his first game *Tactics* (1954) under the imprint of the Avalon Game Company, no wargame industry as yet existed. Only a few brave distributors agreed to carry *Tactics* as a mail-order title; one was the Military Service Publishing Company, which mostly distributed books of interest to readers in the armed services. The initial success of *Tactics* led Roberts to found the Avalon Hill Game

Company in 1958, publishing seminal board wargame titles like *Tactics II* and *Gettysburg* that year. The Military Service Publishing Company, for its part, merged in 1959 with Stackpole Books, an imprint of many nonfiction works on the outdoors, like guides to edible plants or handbooks for fishermen.

Although Avalon Hill is remembered as a wargames company, Charles S. Roberts had ambitions beyond battle. He aspired to make board games for adult consumers, games with greater sophistication than traditional children's board games. Thus, alongside *Tactics II* and *Gettysburg*, in 1958 Avalon Hill published *Dispatcher*, a railroad simulation game. A year later that title was joined by *Verdict*, a courtroom game where one player took the part of the prosecution and the other of the defense counsel. Then another year later, gamers could purchase *Management*, a simulation where two to four players each acted as the chief executive of a company—later, Avalon Hill would retitle it *Business Strategy*.

Roberts himself left Avalon Hill in the early 1960s, but Stackpole Books remained connected to his company. In 1972, they approached Avalon Hill about a joint venture, a board game that would teach outdoor skills through a simulation—not a wargame, but a game that cast players as hikers in the wilderness. In this era, Avalon Hill produced only two board games every year, and had little by way of a design staff. Tom Shaw, an Avalon Hill executive, had anonymously produced many of the company's designs, but after a recent restructuring, he had limited time to dedicate to these endeavors. When the request came in from Stackpole, Avalon Hill therefore reached out to a familiar freelance consultant: Jim Dunnigan.

Dunnigan ran a competing wargame company called Simulation Publications, Inc., famous as the producers of *Strategy & Tactics* magazine and the games that shipped with each issue. Nonetheless, Dunnigan frequently surrendered his best work to Avalon Hill. His first commercial wargame design, a World War I naval simulation called *Jutland*, appeared

under Avalon Hill's imprint in 1967; his *Tactical Game 3*, originally advertised in *Strategy & Tactics* #18, later became one of Avalon Hill's most successful titles of all time, *PanzerBlitz* (1970). In 1971, Avalon Hill again relied on Dunnigan for its *Origins of World War I*, and in 1972, both of Avalon Hill's releases came from Dunnigan, including the initial design for *Outdoor Survival*.

"There were time constraints on this one," Tom Shaw later recalled, "and Jim saved our you-know-what." However, Shaw also felt that Dunnigan's design was a bit ambitious: "I figured it would have to be priced at around $30, so I cut it down with a redesign of my own." Shaw subsequently delegated the *Outdoor Survival* final development work to Don Greenwood, who put some finishing touches on the title. A review in *Strategy & Tactics* #43 warily calls *Outdoor Survival* a game "by James Dunnigan (with some changes by the manufacturer, not all of which were approved by J.D.)" Such designs were often a collaborative effort, but the fierce competition between Avalon Hill and SPI made this joint venture an especially uneasy one.

Outdoor Survival came out on September 1, 1972, under the dual imprint of Avalon Hill and Stackpole Books, though Stackpole retained the copyright on the game. Within its handsome bookcase packaging, in addition to game components *Outdoor Survival* included a twenty-four page Stackpole booklet called the *Outdoor Survival Primer*, which provided practical guidance on real-life wilderness survival technique—and also contained a handy catalog of related Stackpole Books titles on its back page for those eager to learn more.

The *Outdoor Survival* game board depicted approximately 13,200 square miles of wilderness, divided into hexes of about nine square miles. The "honeycomb" hex overlay, which equalizes the length of moves between hexagons in a way that eight-way movement between squares on a grid cannot, was a signature Avalon Hill feature the company

had regularly used for its products since its 1961 revision of *Gettysburg*. Each hex in *Outdoor Survival* contains a particular terrain type, with terrain separated into six categories: clear (or "open"), woods, desert, mountains, rivers, and swamp. Some hexes contain buildings—where the player will start in various scenarios—and others contain small ponds or catch basins.

Dunnigan at this time had a particular interest in games with small unit scales: his *PanzerBlitz* was renowned as the first board wargame to portray troop movements in a tactical scale, and in 1973, his *Sniper!* would go further still, with units representing individual soldiers rather than masses of troops. In *Outdoor Survival*, players took on the part of individuals in the wild: the unit players moved around the board was called a Person counter. Each Person had a character sheet, effectively, which tracked the Food, Water and Life levels of the Person. As Persons lost Life through misadventures, they sacrificed mobility, until eventually their movement dropped to zero and they withdrew from the game.

Outdoor Survival comprised five basic scenarios, though these really break down into three categories: the players are trying to reach the edge of the board; or attempting to assist a lost person; or pursuing a fleeing person. Depending on the scenario, the winner could be the first to reach civilization, or in a pursuit game, the target would win by evading the hunters. In most of the scenarios, players can lose their way if they score certain values on the Direction Ability chart, which forces them to move in a random direction. The *Outdoor Survival* board itself has a "Random Direction" chart embedded in its upper left hand side, which illustrates another virtue of hex maps: that a six-sided die can be used to determine the direction a lost Person will travel.

Perhaps the single most historically significant innovation in *Outdoor Survival* was the concept of a "wilderness encounter." It was an optional rule that, at the end of each turn, a player would roll a six-sided die. If it came up with any number from one through four, the turn ends uneventfully. On a five or a six, however, the turn ends with an encounter. Encounters came in three varieties: there are natural hazards, like inclement weather; personal hazards, like consuming polluted water; and then animal or insect encounters. An encounter may, by a die roll, be either positive or negative—a Person might sustain a poisonous snake bite, thereby losing a Life Level, or fortuitously slay a deer for food, thereby increasing the Person's Food Index. But this novel concept of random encounters would provide a key inspiration for a certain forthcoming game system: *Dungeons & Dragons*.

Dave Arneson's group in the Twin Cities became early adopters of *Outdoor Survival*. By the fall of 1972, when *Outdoor Survival* reached the market, the Blackmoor campaign had

progressed for more than a year, and the core "Blackmoor Bunch" players had long since been exiled from the titular town. Many at this point resided in the swamp town of Loch Gloomen, but a great deal of adventuring took place in the wilderness. The *Outdoor Survival* board proved an essential tool for these improvised adventures. But *Outdoor Survival* brought a lot more to Blackmoor, and *Dungeons & Dragons*, than just a hex map. It is probably easiest to consider the wilderness adventure component of *Dungeons & Dragons* to be a mini-game designed as an *Outdoor Survival* variant.

In the "Mornard Fragments," a partial draft of *Dungeons & Dragons* typed by Gary Gygax in 1973 (which I covered in Gygax Magazine #5), we see some of the ways *Outdoor Survival* was reimagined for a fantastic environment. The section on the "Upper Land," as the wilderness is called in the draft, states that the "small dwellings on the *Outdoor Survival* mapboard will represent towns and villages." A simple die roll decided the size of a newly discovered town: in the largest and most cosmopolitan ones, you might even find "a dragon market in which to sell your catch," if you happen to have a dragon to spare. "The ponds of water on the *Outdoor Survival* board will represent castles," which will be occupied by neutral or hostile forces, who might send the party on a forced quest, or perhaps demand a joust. Parties could move between towns, explore unknown regions, and even establish their own castles.

Traveling the enchanted wilderness had its perils. In his *First Fantasy Campaign*, Arneson reproduced a chart that shows his first adaptation of the "wilderness encounter" rules to the fantasy setting of his Blackmoor campaign. Different encounters may be found on each of the six basic terrain types represented on the *Outdoor Survival* board. Rather than enumerating various wilderness beasts, Arneson's encounter charts show monsters entirely drawn from *Chainmail*—such as Orcs, Elementals, Wights and Balrogs—and various types of hostile people appropriate to the terrain including Bandits, Nomads and Pirates.

Exploring the wilderness is a lot easier when you can ride a dragon. Arneson introduced rules for all sorts of mounts and vehicles for wilderness travel, from simple wagons to the tarns of John Norman's Gor setting. But in the wilderness of *Dungeons & Dragons*, earthbound parties may become lost. The chance is low in the clear or by a river—just one in six—but grows progressively higher as parties adventure in the woods or a swamp. Here, *Dungeons & Dragons* follows the system of *Outdoor Survival* entirely: "a lost party must move in the direction indicated by the die roll (1-6, as shown in the *Outdoor Survival* board)." But the original *Dungeons & Dragons* rules are clear that the *Outdoor Survival* board serves as a place only for impromptu adventures; for campaign use, the

referee should create a secret wilderness map of their own, and let the players adventure on a blank hexagon map, only learning the contents of a hex when they arrive there.

The commercial decision to make *Dungeons & Dragons* depend on *Outdoor Survival* must not have been an easy one, and some of Gygax and Arneson's pre-publication drafts partially reproduced the *Outdoor Survival* rules instead of referencing them. While Gygax had an incentive to encourage purchases of *Chainmail*—and indeed, the year after *Dungeons & Dragons* came out, TSR would begin publishing *Chainmail* itself—he received no compensation for *Outdoor Survival*, a game that retailed for the same amount as *Dungeons & Dragons*, a hefty $10. But like Dunnigan before him, Gygax was also submitting freelance designs to Avalon Hill at this time: shortly after the release of *Dungeons & Dragons*, Avalon Hill reissued his 1972 game *Alexander* under its own imprint. So the endorsement of *Outdoor Survival* in the first edition of *Dungeons & Dragons* might have been a friendly gesture. In a letter to Don Greenwood of Avalon Hill dated June 3, 1974, Gygax offhandedly asks, "And how do you like Dungeons & Dragons? You should be picking up some OS sales about now, by the way." Overall, Avalon Hill deemed *Outdoor Survival* a good performer—as they would put it, "a good steady, year-in and year-out seller."

Only for its first few years did *Dungeons & Dragons* carry an endorsement for *Outdoor Survival*. There is no mention of *Outdoor Survival* in Holmes Basic *Dungeons & Dragons* (1977) nor in the Advanced books. The *Dungeon Masters Guide* (1979) instead incorporates its own hex adventure system, though obviously one derived wholly from the wilderness encounters pioneered by *Outdoor Survival*. The sprawling *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* system very deliberately would not require any other game system to play, not even the venerable *Chainmail*.

But by the late 1970s, nothing could curtail the far-reaching influence of *Outdoor Survival*. In 1977, the Judges Guild inaugurated a long tradition of third-party hex map campaigns with the Installment "K" Campaign Map. Their *Campaign Hexagon System* adventure supplements bounded scenarios within a hex that might be discovered on a campaign map at the referee's discretion. But more fundamentally, the decision to divide the fantastic game space of *Dungeons & Dragons* into the underworld and wilderness has enjoyed a long legacy in game design. Early computer role-playing games like *Akalabeth*, the precursor to the *Ultima* series, required adventurers to travel from towns to dungeons through an overworld wilderness where monsters lurked. And today, many tabletop gamers still enjoy the classic hexcrawl experience that *Outdoor Survival* pioneered. Why not shutter that dingy dungeon and choose the great outdoors for your next adventure? ∎

The *Correllian Starduster*

A storied starship for *Star Wars: Edge of the Empire*

By Dave Mansker

The *Corellian Starduster* is a modified Corellian Engineering Corporation YT-1300 Light Freighter for use with the *Star Wars: Edge of the Empire* roleplaying game, designed to provide flavor and uniqueness while remaining balanced for starting characters.

In the *Star Wars* roleplaying game, beginning or novice characters are typically presented with a starship (the Wayfarer, the Corellian YT-1300, or the Firespray) meeting the "stock" requirements for the model class. However, starships in the *Star Wars Expanded Universe* are often nearly unique or have been modified to some degree (especially YT-1300s), and it usually makes more sense for starting characters to begin in a used starship. For Game Masters (GMs) who choose to start the players with a starship that has a "lived-in" feel, the *Corellian Starduster* can form a new option.

The History of the Corellian Starduster

A common axiom among spacers is that "there is no such thing as a 'stock' light freighter," and the *Corellian Starduster* embodies that sentiment. A product of seventeen standard years of repairs, modifications, and neglect under a number of different owners, each with his or her own agenda, the *Starduster* is certainly a unique craft.

The *Corellian Starduster* began life as a stock YT-1300P transport (then named the *Ryote Colisi*) with passenger space for nine, ordered and purchased by a Morseerian named Thun Bekarn, who intended to use her for a regular passenger run from Morseer to Drackmar. The specialized atmospheric requirements of both Morseerians and Drackmarians lead to the ship's first modification: an environmental converter add-on allowing the internal atmosphere to be adjusted to allow living conditions for virtually any species. Despite the fact that the captaincy of Thun was a short

one, and that none of the owners since has been of a species requiring special atmospheric requirements, the environmental converter system has never been removed, as it can simply be shut off, and could come in handy one day.

After only a standard year and a half, Thun was having difficulty making ends meet, and the *Ryote Colisi* was repossessed and resold by the bank. Her next captain, An Ord Mantellian merchant captain named Ella Halcyon, had enough funds and engineering skill to begin modifications in earnest.

Now named the *South Vistal Sea*, Captain Halcyon ran the ship for about two standard years. One of her first modifications was to build a passenger cabin into the forward cargo bay, and removed the rear passenger cabin in favor of a standard cargo bay module; thus retaining the full passenger and cargo capacity while creating a small cargo space behind the new passenger cabin that could be used as a secret smuggling compartment. Halcyon eventually scan-shielded the smuggling compartment and was planning to camouflage the doorway, until a forward collision with a rogue asteroid prematurely ended her career and caused severe damage to the cockpit module and cargo loading mandibles.

The *Starduster* was found and towed to an orbital junkyard by a deep space salvage team, where she spent a few years adrift among the space junk. Eventually a captain, a human from Bestine named Torrik Bolt, came across her while nosing through the hulks for spare parts, and realized that, with some obvious exceptions, the *Starduster* was in better condition than the ship he was already trying to rebuild. He bought the entire ship immediately for salvage prices, and set about combining parts from his two partial ships to create a whole.

Bolt opted to use the majority of the *Starduster*'s body with added parts from the

other ship, mainly the forward systems normally contained within the cargo mandibles and the cockpit unit. The cockpit unit from his other starship was a portside cockpit unit, so after the removal of the damaged forward-port passenger module, Bolt dropped in the portside cockpit, removed the cargo-loading mandibles and capped the passageway that lead to the former cockpit with a large transparisteel viewport, adding a few luxury reclining swivel chairs to make a sort of lounge/viewing area. Doing so inspired him to cap a large hole in the hull above the passenger galley/lounge with another such viewport.

Captain Bolt felt the viewports added a lot to the livability of the vessel, but he didn't focus only on damage repair and cosmetics. He was the captain responsible for adding the forward cargo bay by dropping in a customized inter-mandibular cargo bay module (while the module itself was designed for inter-mandibular installation, in the absence of the mandibles Bolt built a custom superstructure to hold the module in place), giving the ship more total cargo space than a YT-1300F model (at the expense of Handling). He offset this deficiency to some degree by upgrading the lateral thrusters, thus returning the Handling of the ship to nearly the same as it had been before the cargo pod was added (although this did give the ship some strange Handling characteristics, see Notable Quirks).

The standard sensor package was completely destroyed, and was replaced with a forward-mounted trefoil sensor wand suite marketed by Kuat Systems Engineering. Not a common choice among YT-1300 captains, it is nevertheless as effective as the sensor suite available on the stock vessel.

Finally, Bolt modified the hull armor, including the addition of a large rear armor plate he salvaged from his other ship and

placed over the engines to prevent attacks from the rear (which also serves to house the relocated systems modules normally found in the now-absent mandibles), and added a turret with a pair of fire-linked ion cannons to the ventral gunwell to augment the standard dorsal laser turret set-up (which he raised to gain clearance over the new forward cargo module). He felt that up-gunning the ship a bit seemed wise, considering the dangers inherent to the spacelanes.

Bolt ran the ship, now named *Banni's Dreamer*, making smuggling runs amid the regular cargo trips for about six standard years before losing her betting on podraces. Her new owner was a Saurin named Quenti, who made only a few trips in her before selling her.

The Captain who bought her next was a Corellian tramp captain and scavenger named Carney Wills. Carney liked three things: tinkering, droids, and comfort. Carney was also a bit paranoid; which is not to say that a certain degree of paranoia doesn't come in handy when you're a smuggler.

Carney removed the bunks in the ship's rear cargo bay and installed a droid maintenance station with an oil-bath facility. He moved one of the bunks forward to a recessed area in the main passageway near the lounge to serve as the captain's bunk. Carney wanted to carry more passengers if the need arose, so he installed the additional bunk aftermarket kits from CEC to make each passenger cabin a five bunk cabin instead of the standard three bunks they would normally contain, upgraded the comfort level of the interior with a basic luxury upgrade, and placed some additional seating near the cockpit. He then replaced the rear cockpit computer modules with more streamlined units, and installed a cockpit passenger seat and astromech socket capable of allowing his trusty R5 unit to serve as co-pilot.

As a security-minded (some would say paranoid) captain, Carney salvaged a few Imperial Holocam units and placed them in two key areas inside the ship, installed door locks capable of making the smuggling compartment into a brig (finally camouflaging the long-neglected secret compartment doors while he was at it), and built a secret, scan-shielded compartment with a pair of completely refurbished battle droids (salvaged from an old Trade Federation cruiser wreck) into the Main Corridor near the starboard Airlock/Boarding Ramp, along with a droid control unit (small and old, only capable of allowing the droids about a 1 kilometer range from the ship) and recharge/deployment rack. He connected all of the ship's security systems to the cockpit, his personal bunk, and a wrist com unit he wore at all times. In addition, he wired an old CZ model communications droid brain directly into the ship's central computer to provide advanced communications encryption algorithms.

Finally, he salvaged a medbed unit and Bacta tank and built them into the old cockpit corridor, with the Bacta tank recessed into the wall. He left the swivel recliners in place, and the area turned into a small medbay with a view.

Carney renamed the ship the *Corellian Starduster*, and she was finally in her current form. He ran her for several years, but what became of him, and how the *Starduster* eventually came to the market again, is a mystery.

Corellian Starduster **Deck Plan Detail**

1. **Cockpit**: The Corellian Starduster has been retrofitted to be flown by a single pilot and an astromech droid. She has a pilot's seat in the standard front portside position, with a snug, half-circular roll-up astromech socket directly behind it. Most of the rear cockpit computer systems have been removed and replaced with more modern, streamlined units, allowing the addition of the aforementioned droid socket and a passenger chair. The co-pilot's seat is still capable of serving as such, if the astromech droid isn't available, or it can be used to seat an additional passenger in the cockpit. In addition to all the functions normally available in a ship's cockpit this size, the security computer main controls are located here, alerting the captain to intruders or systems alerts, and allowing viewing through the holocams in areas 2 and 3.
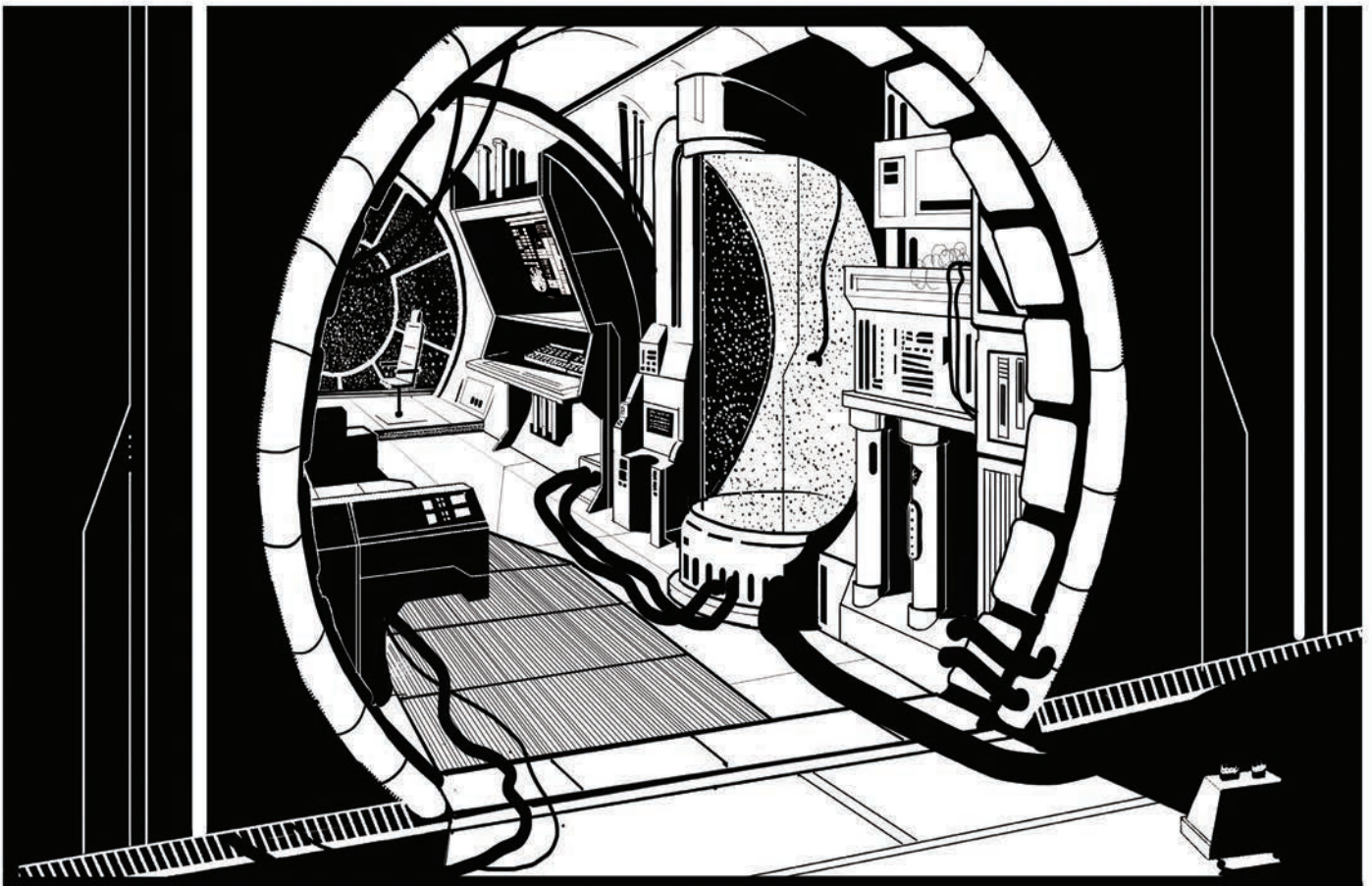
2. **Cockpit Access Corridor**: This seemingly standard access corridor holds a Merr-Sonn Munitions 57C holocamera mounted near the ceiling on the port side of the corridor (near the "bend"), giving those in the cockpit a full view of the bulk of the access corridor. The camera can also be swiveled to provide a view of the cockpit access hatch and is routed through a complex image-recognition and alert system programmed to trigger an alarm in the cockpit, captain's bunk, and/or wrist controller when certain conditions are met (such as unauthorized intruders, or passengers with weapons drawn moving up the corridor).

   Two seats frame the doorway to the cockpit, allowing overflow of passengers who wish to remain close by the cockpit during take-off and entry to hyperspace to strap in.

3. **Main Corridor**: The main corridor serves as the primary connection for all areas of the ship. A holocamera exactly like that in area 2 (and tapped into the same image recognition computer system) has been placed in this corridor, perfectly positioned to view directly down the starboard airlock/boarding ramp.

3a. **Battle Droid Compartment**: A small concealed and scan-shielded compartment containing a rack large enough to store and recharge two folded B-1 battle droids is situated just off the main corridor near the starboard airlock/entry ramp. Deploying the completely refurbished droids takes only a single round, and can be initiated from either the cockpit or a wrist command unit with a one kilometer range (silent communication with the droids can also be accomplished via either method, as well). The droids are controlled by a small broadcast computer system located in the cockpit (with a one-kilometer range) and are programmed to be loyal to the owner of the *Starduster*. Use the "Antiquated Battle Droid" stats from pg. 410 of the *Edge of the Empire Core Rulebook* to represent these droids.

4. **Passenger Lounge**: The ship's passenger lounge is small (the space was decreased by the addition of the forward cargo hold) but is still quite comfortable. The table seats ten passengers if they care to get friendly (three in seats capable of serving as luxury recliners), and also sports a small laundry, gourmet food prep area, and food storage capable of accommodating fresh foods to augment the shelf-stable (and boring) fare available from the autochef module on board most starships. The basic luxury upgrade adds a touch of stylish décor and means the entertainment systems are nicely up-to-date, with a variety of the most popular in hologame entertainments, holovid news and amusements, and an excellent sound system programmed with contemporary music. The luxury upgrade programs have been kept up to date regardless of whether the *Starduster* was regularly carrying passengers or not, as Carney was a man who enjoyed his holovids. A large transparisteel 'skylight' was installed in the upper hull above this room, part of a customized repair of a large hole that had been torn in the dorsal hull by an asteroid fragment when the *Starduster* suffered the collision which nearly destroyed her.

5. **Main Cargo Bay**: This area, much taller and longer than any other area on the ship, stores the bulk of the ship's cargo. A pair of forward doors allows cargo to be loaded when the ship is landed or attached to a docking ring (the primary airlock and the lift in the engineering bay can serve as alternate methods of cargo transfer). The main cargo bay can be sealed and opened to space, serving as a crude (if overly large) airlock, and in an emergency it can be blown without pumping the atmosphere, ejecting whatever (or whoever) is stored within.

6. **Cargo Bay 1**: The addition of a passenger module constructed into the forward cargo bay has left the remainder of the bay quite cramped (but still serviceable) as far as cargo storage goes, but the real intent was to create and disguise a small smuggling compartment. The area is scan-shielded and the door is concealed from the outside. The interior door controls have been removed and maintenance hatchways in this room have been sealed, allowing it to be used as a small brig in times of need. As a precaution, Carney added a vibrating "door-open" alert to the ship's wrist command unit, and a feature making it capable of opening the door by remote, to prevent the ship's captain from being accidentally locked inside his/her own brig.

7. **Forward Passenger Cabin**: A small passenger cabin module has been built into cargo bay 1, but the amenities in this cabin aren't any different than those in the aft passenger cabin. A standard Corellian YT-1300 passenger cabin module was used as the base unit; it has been upgraded with the additional passenger aftermarket customization package, which adds two extra bunks for a total of five (the bunk furthest from the room's door can't be turned into a stacked double-berth due to the curvature of the ship's upper hull), and of course the basic luxury upgrade has made the space more livable as well. Each bunk has three drawers built in beneath it, and each is fitted with a sound and holosystem tapped into the ship's entertainment computer, allowing each passenger to watch or listen to whatever entertainments are available while lying in the comfort of one's own bunk. The head of each bunk can be lifted to create a comfortable reclining couch for leisure-time amusements, or lowered flat to allow for comfortable sleep. Built-in wall units allow each passenger to customize his/her own requirements, from air circulation, to temperature, to humidity. A light and sleep timer complete the amenities, and a sound and light dampening privacy panel can be slid over the opening of each bunk. Two closets and two cargo hatches allow for stowage of hanging clothes and larger luggage, and a small refresher (shower) and head are available.

8. **Captain's Bunk**: A bunk has been built into the main corridor, allowing the ship's captain to stay in a central position. The base unit was taken from the old rear cargo bay berths, but has been modified since by the basic luxury upgrade, making it the equal of the ship's passenger bunks in every way, except it locks, and the security computer is tapped into this bunk, alerting the captain to intruders or systems alerts, and allowing viewing through the holocams in areas 2 and 3.

9. **Gunwells**: Like most YT-1300s, the Corellian Starduster has a central passage tube that extends from the ventral to the dorsal hull. A built-in ladder allows access to the small room at the end of each tube. Euphemistically marketed as an 'observation deck', these little rooms are each topped by a large window that allows expansive views to the top or bottom of the ship, and gravity compensators allow passengers to sit in a comfortable viewing orientation behind each transparisteel viewport. Also like most YT-1300s, the *Starduster* has guns installed at each viewport: a double ion turret on the ventral side and a double laser turret on the dorsal side.

10. **Medical/Observation Suite**: One of the Corellian Starduster's most intriguing features, this tubular room was once the cockpit access corridor until the *Starduster* had her cockpit smashed off in a catastrophic asteroid collision. The damage was too great to be economically repaired; the entire module needed to be replaced (due to the YT-1300s modular nature, it is sometimes cheaper to pull a whole module and drop in a new one), but Bolt had only a portside cockpit at hand, rather than a starboard module that would have replaced the existing one, which left an unused corridor on the starboard side. He installed a large transparisteel viewport and a pair of reclining chairs on

swivel mounts at the end of the corridor so he could invite a guest to share the view. Later, Carney salvaged the remnants of an advanced medical suite; installing a bacta tank, a medical bed, the computer and control systems for each in the tube-shaped room, creating a cramped but fully functional medical suite.

11. **AIRLOCK/BOARDING RAMP**: The starboard side passage tube is exactly like that of a standard YT-1300f freighter, which consists of a docking port (making cargo transfers easier when the ship can't land or enter a docking bay) and a cargo loading ramp. The entire area can be sealed and used as an airlock, external egress made via the boarding ramp or the docking tube entry. Three Immediac Model 10 spacesuits and six Roamer-6 breath masks are kept here in wall lockers.

12. **AFT PASSENGER CABIN**: This is simply a standard Corellian YT-1300 passenger cabin module that has been upgraded with the additional passenger aftermarket customization package. It is functionally identical to area 7.

13. **ENGINEERING STATION**: A small engineering station common to most YT-1300s is positioned here, behind a locking wall panel. The station regulates the power flow between the Quadex power core and the ship's systems, monitors the hyperdrive, allows access to the ship's main computer, controls life-support and gravity systems, and has a number of other features, such as the manual release handle for the ship's docking clamp and a Serv-O-Droid CZ communications droid brain wired into the communications system, allowing the ship to translate nearly all the main trade languages (including Bocce, Nemoidian, and Huttese, among others), as well as providing impressive communications encryption algorithms which Carney was always careful to keep up-to-date. Carney usually kept this panel locked when passengers were on board if the console wasn't in use.

14. **ENGINEERING BAY**: This large room features a floor-mounted cargo lift and direct access to the engine strip at the aft of the ship. At some point in the ship's history, an extra floor access grate was installed, presumably in preparation for an intended hyperdrive upgrade that never materialized. When Carney came into possession of the ship he added a droid maintenance and repair station, complete with tool bench, reprogramming and memory wipe facilities, an oil bath station, and capacity for up to three droids to recharge at once. A set of five single-person Class 1 CEC escape pods are mounted in the floor here; each is a capable if uncomfortable automated life

boat (though this type of escape pod is sometimes derided as a "void coffin" by spacers), including an automated distress beacon and built-in comlink, a field kit (with rations for one week), a medpac, and a Roamer-6 breath mask. The engineering bay can also handle any cargo overflow the ship may experience.

15. **CIRCUITRY BAY**: The ship's circuitry bay grants access to direct repair and maintenance of the ship's systems. Several SCOMP link access ports are located here, for droid access of the ship's computer. This bay is virtually unchanged since the ship was launched, and in fact none of

the prior owners have ever gotten around to updating the ship's analog wall-chart power-flow schematic since adding new modules to the ship (though obviously the computer schematics are up-to-date).

16. **CARGO BAY 2**: This plain room is a cargo bay. A floor grate allows access to ship's systems under the floor.

17. **ESCAPE POD**: The port side passage tube has a Class 6 CEC escape pod situated at the end of the tube. The pod carries six passengers and is a capable automated life boat (though rudimentary manual override controls are available), including
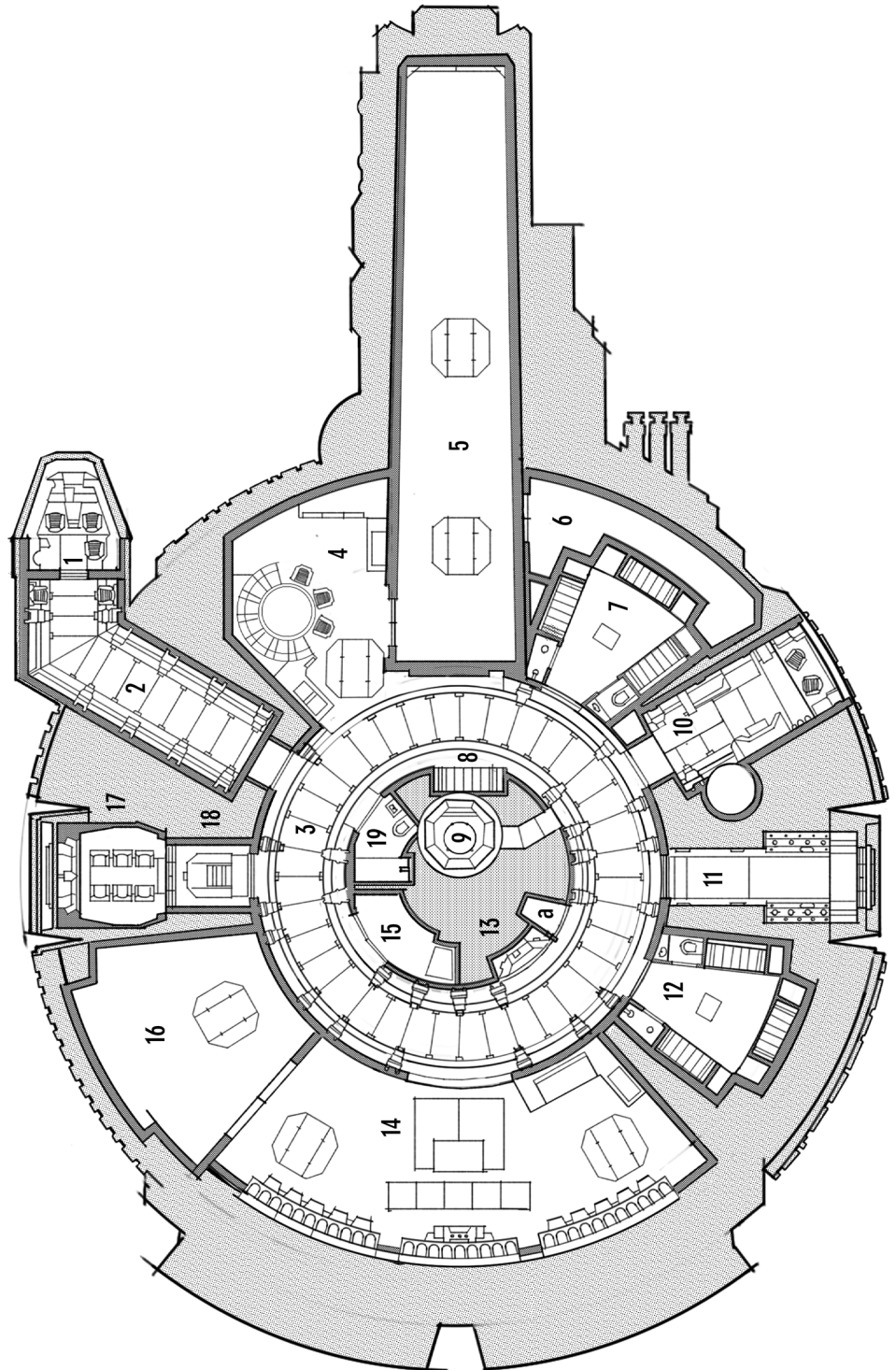
an automated distress beacon and built-in comlink, six field kits (with total rations for six for one week), six single-use medpacs, and six Roamer-6 breath masks. This escape pod is a bit more comfortable and capable than the Class 1 pods in the engineering bay.

18. **Port Side Airlock**: The port side passage tube contains a retractable boarding ladder that extends below the ship, allowing ingress/egress when the ship is landed or attached to a ventral docking port (when the hatch/ladder is raised and locked into the 'floor' position, the rungs flatten into recesses in the deck to allow unobstructed passage through the airlock to the escape pod), and a lift drops from the ceiling to allow access to the dorsal hatch and docking port. The passage can be completely sealed and acts as an airlock, and lockers contain an Immediac Model 10 spacesuit and four Roamer-6 breath masks.

19. **Ship's Refresher**: A fairly standard head, sink, and refresher are available to the passengers and crew here.

Game Stats

Corellian Starduster

| | | | DEFENSE | | | | | |
FORE	PORT	STBD	AFT	ARMOR
4 SILHOUETTE	**3** SPEED	**-2** HANDLING	**1** — — **1**	**4**
			HT THRESHOLD **22**	SS THRESHOLD **12**

- **Hull Type/Class**: Freighter/YT-1300.

- **Manufacturer**: Corellian Engineering Corporation.

- **Hyperdrive**: Primary Class 2, Backup: Class 12.

- **Navicomputer**: Yes.

- **Sensor Range**: Short.

- **Ship's Complement**: One pilot, one co-pilot/engineer (astromech droid can act as co-pilot/engineer).

- **Encumbrance Capacity**: 155 (+5 in secret smuggling compartment).

- **Passenger Capacity**: 9.

- **Consumables**: Two months.

- **Cost/Rarity**: 36,500 credits/Unique.

- **Customization Hard Points**: 3.

- **Weapons**: One Dorsal Turret Mounted Medium Twin Laser Cannon (Fire Arc All; Damage 6; Critical 3; Range [Close]), and One Ventral Turret Mounted Twin Ion Cannon (Fire Arc All; Damage 6; Critical 4; Range [Short]; Ion).

Summary of Special Notes, Modifications, and Add-Ons:

- Modified Hull (added armor)

- Modified Lateral Thrusters (partially compensating for the added cargo pod and armor)

- Environmental Converter (allows any area of the ship to be altered to meet atmospheric needs of most known species)

- Medium Cargo Pod (makes up for some of the cargo space lost to modifications, at a price to Handling)

- Secret Cargo Compartment (also usable as a crude brig)

- A Serv-O-Droid CZ model communications droid brain installed in the communications system, allowing the ship to translate nearly all the main trade languages (including Bocce, Nemoidian, and Huttese, among others), as well as providing impressive up-to-date communications encryption algorithms

- 4-person passenger add-ons (4 passenger bunks were added, but the co-pilot bunk was removed, for a total increase in extra sleeping space for 3 passengers)

- Basic Luxury Upgrade

- Medical Suite with Jury-Rigged Bacta Tank

- Secret Droid Compartment with two refurbished B-1 battle droids, each armed with an E-5 blaster carbine and upgraded with starship gunnery skill modules

- Complete Droid Workshop with repair, maintenance, and recharge facilities

- Intra-Ship Surveillance System with surreptitious command capability and designated access points, including wrist comlink unit

- Cockpit droid socket allowing an astromech droid to act as co-pilot

Notable Quirks

Given that the *Starduster* has been so extensively modified with many custom modifications and jury-rigs to prevent using Customization Hard Points, detrimental quirks were bound to creep into the systems.

- **Handling minor quirk**: The bulky nature and compensating lateral thrusters of the ship mean that all Handling checks made while piloting the *Corellian Starduster* add an extra Setback die (■) above and beyond any others. Players may learn to pilot the ship more effectively and adjust to the unusual characteristics by flying the ship regularly and raising their "Piloting-Space" Skill by one Rank during this time, as judged by the GM.

- **Computer moderate quirk**: If any use of ship's main computer rolls a Setback die with a Threat result (⚙) which isn't cancelling an Advantage result, the CZ communications droid brain will mistakenly encrypt user computer functions for 4 rounds. A penalty of three Setback dice (■■■) above and beyond any others will be added to the difficulty of all computer function skill rolls during this time. This extends to astrogation, sensors, communications, engineering information retrieval, and medical bay systems, but not to functions such as Handling, weapons, or shields.

- Bacta tank major quirk: The Bacta tank controls were poorly grounded when installed. If there is a Despair result (⍟) on any use of the Bacta tank in the medbay, the systems will suffer a power overload: emergency circuits shunt power into an alternate ship's system chosen at random (or by the GM), blowing it out (roll or choose from the systems listed in tables 7-10 & 7-11 on page 245 of the *Edge of the Empire Core Rulebook*). The affected system won't work at all until repaired. If the system in question is in use at the time of the malfunction, it will immediately cease operating.

Using the *Corellian Starduster* in your game

Perhaps the easiest way to use the *Starduster* is to make the ship available for use by your players (see Step 10: Selecting a Ship on page 99 of the *Edge of the Empire Core Rulebook*). With an onboard medical bay, internal defensive systems (the battle droids, the brig, and the Holocams), and plenty of passenger and cargo space, the ship is an ideal vessel for an independent smuggler, salvage, or tramp freighter party.

Conversely, the ship can be used if the player characters need to make a boarding action against another ship, such as in the case of a pirate assault (the stats of the *Starduster* can be used simply as an adversarial ship during starship combat) or action against rival smugglers, or even if the PCs are acting as pirates themselves. The ship need not be in space at the time, perhaps the players need to sneak aboard a docked rival smuggler ship to abscond with, say, an important data pad or other item crucial to the campaign.

The Rogue Droid mini-adventure

Another way to insert the *Starduster* into your game is to use her as an encounter area and introductory mini-adventure for a small party (2-3 PCs). The players could find her adrift in space, in an unpopulated planet area, or in an abandoned and forgotten starship hangar. Exactly how the players ended up finding the ship and why they need to gain entry to her is left up to the GM, as best fits the needs of the campaign.
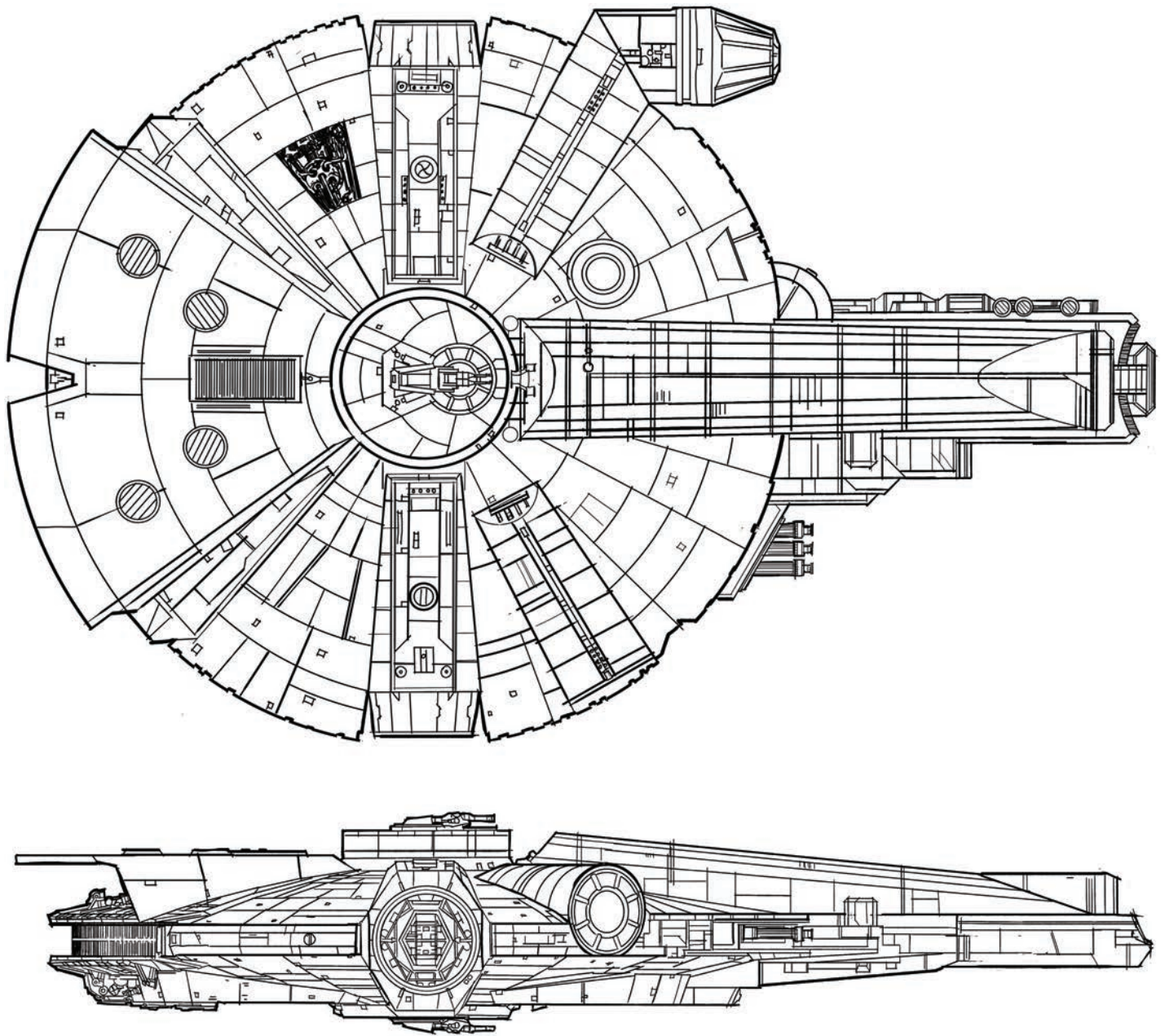
In this scenario, the ship's engine system is inoperable, preventing the astromech droid from running with the ship itself. The two battle droids would be active and controlled by the main nemesis, a deranged R5 astromech droid named R5-T4 (Teefor), who has locked himself on the bridge and is doing his level best to repel any boarders. For R5-T4's stats, use the Astromech Droid stats on page 410 of the *Edge of the Empire Core Rulebook*, but raise the droid's Cunning to 3. Teefor has the ship's control wrist comlink stored in an internal body compartment, and knows how to use the ship's security cameras to his best advantage.

Gaining access to the ship requires a Computer skill check (difficulty ◆◆) to bypass the door security. One battle droid roams the ship freely, responding to any entry attempts with blaster fire. Meanwhile, Teefor and the other battle droid wait in the ship's cockpit for characters to approach. Teefor has squirted oil

on the deck in area 2 to make the approach to the cockpit more difficult, and any Maneuvers or Actions made when a character is in this area result in an additional Setback die (■) added to the check.

When characters have advanced past the bend in the passageway of area 2, Teefor will spray fire suppressant mist throughout the passageway, giving the concealment modifier (+2 Setback dice (■■), see page 213 of the *Edge of the Empire Core Rulebook*) to any ranged combat in the area (note that this works both ways) for 3 rounds, and the battle droid will open fire. When the PCs enter melee range, Teefor will engage with his arc welder.

Scaling the Adventure

To scale this mini-adventure for more player characters, or more experienced ones, add more roaming battle droids (about one droid for each additional two PCs) and a trap Teefor

has set in the Engineering Bay (Area 14) by wiring an electronics panel so he can overload it remotely from the cockpit, causing an explosion (treat as a concussion shock stun grenade, see pages 160 & 165 of the *Edge of the Empire Core Rulebook*) emanating from the point of the GM's choosing. Do not add additional combatants to the cockpit, however, as the area is already challenging and cramped.

Rewards

The encounter ends when the PCs have gained and successfully destroyed or deactivated the droids. The GM should award around 7 experience points to each character for completing this small adventure, unless the adventure was Scaled Up with more droids and the trap in Engineering, in which case more will be appropriate. Naturally, this can be the adventure explaining how the *Starduster* fell into the possession of the PCs. ∎

Through the arcane lens

Six magic spyglasses for *Dungeons & Dragons*

by Paul Hughes

Some might consider the telescope the antithesis of the wondrous magical world of *D&D*. After all, the invention of the telescope ushered in the Scientific Revolution, and, in a way, ended the age of magic. On the other hand, telescopes were as integral to the pseudoscience of astrology as they were to astronomy. And can you have D&D without cackling villains peering into the heavens, waiting for the sinister planetary alignment that will bring an age of darkness to the land?

Johannes Kepler called the telescope an "instrument of knowledge more precious than any sceptre." That's the knock-out argument right there: telescopes officially belong in *D&D*. If there's one thing that PCs love, it's things that are more precious than any sceptre.

Here are four edition-neutral magical telescopes that will be coveted by seekers of eldritch knowledge and treasure hunters alike, and two cursed spyglasses that punish PCs for probing into forbidden secrets.

Spyglass of Metamagical Enlargement

This yard-long brass tube, inscribed with occult symbols, was first commissioned by a conquering king who wanted his war wizards' *fireballs* to fly farther than his enemies' trebuchet stones. It proved an effective weapon, until his overuse of the new toy caused mayhem in his own camp.

If you cast a ranged spell while this telescope is held to your eye, the range of the spell is doubled. You can use the telescope once per day without ill effect. The second and every successive time you try to use the telescope's ability, roll d10 on the following mishaps table.

Spyglass of Metamagical Enlargement Mishaps (roll d10)	
1-5	Spell's range is doubled.
6	Spell's range is doubled. You forget one spell you have memorized, of your choice. If you have no more spells memorized, you instead take 1d6 damage.
7	Spell's range is doubled. Your body (and your gear) becomes attenuated: your height is doubled, and you become correspondingly thinner to maintain the same mass. Your Dexterity is lowered by 4 points (to a minumum of 2). You lose one foot of height per hour until you return to normal size and dexterity.
8	Spell fails. You take 2d6 damage.
9	Spell's range is changed to 0 (centered on you).
10	Spell fails. You are teleported to the point that you intended the spell to target.

Telescoping Telescope

This elaborate device, named with supreme lack of imagination by a single-minded gnomish tinker, can be extended to an absurd degree. It can serve any optical need, from the pocket glass of a sea captain to the great star-probing scope of a magical university. As each bronze tube of the telescope is opened, the machine becomes larger and heavier, and more tripods, dials, and ancillary mirrors are revealed. The Telescoping Telescope has five settings:

Closed: 2x zoom. The telescope allows you to see as if all distances were halved.

Opened to arm's length: 10x zoom. You can see objects a mile away as if they were a mere 500 feet distant.

5 feet long: 100x zoom. The telescope must be mounted on a tripod and takes five minutes to set up. You can closely examine any object in the world to which you have plausible line of sight. Beyond 10 miles or so, few objects are visible above the horizon unless you or they are elevated. Through this scope, even 20-mile-distant mountain peaks can be seen as clearly as if they were a mere 1000 feet away.

13 feet long: 1000x zoom. The telescope requires two tripods, contains several seemingly unnecessary pipe bends, takes an hour to set up, and weighs one ton. Its magnification is enough to locate the largest cities on the moon, or to chart planetary conjunctions that let you predict the ebb and flow of magical energies. If you spend an hour on a clear night consulting the heavens, during the next day you may cast one of your memorized spells as if your Intelligence and level were both two higher.

20 feet long: Cosmic zoom. The telescope takes a day to set up, and requires a special custom-designed mountain observatory of at least 10,000 GP in cost. It has enough power to map the planets around several nearby stars, to view (and be viewed by) the strange behemoths that soar through space, or to chart astral conjunctions that let you predict the ebb and flow of magical energies. If you spend an hour on a clear night consulting the heavens, during the next day you may cast one of your memorized spells as if your Intelligence and level were both four higher.

If you look through the wrong end, the Telescoping Telescope acts as anything from (at setting 1) a magnifying glass to (at setting 5) a microscope capable of seeing the tiny animalcules and homunculi who battle for possession of each dust mote.

Night Glass

A handful of these spyglasses in the hands of a famous admiral allowed her to coordinate precision night raids which her enemies could not match. Her string of naval victories was ended when her foe began a nightly practice of keeping caged basilisks on deck.

The Night Glass not only magnifies, it allows its user to see in the dark as if it were broad daylight. Because of the narrow aperture of a spyglass, it's nearly useless for activities that require peripheral vision, such as navigating a dungeon or blind-fighting. However, it's invaluable for sentry and spy work.

Eyeglass

When you use this spyglass, your eye floats out the other side and can move around (visibly) under your control. The eye moves at your speed, has your saving throws, and has 6 HP and AC 17 (or AC 3 if you are using descending armor class). The eye can travel up to a mile away from you. While your eye is traveling, you can see your current surroundings and the eye's surroundings at the same time. Any special forms of sight you possess apply to both eyes.

Until the eye returns, you only have one eye.

If the eye is destroyed, you permanently lose it. A lost eye may be re-grown with a Restoration spell. Warning: A floating eye is likely to be overlooked by most creatures, but looks delicious to birds. (Having a PC permanently lose an eye is tough, but hey, it makes room for a fun Eye of Vecna plotline.)

Cursed Telescopes

Spyglass of Whispers

This spyglass will transmit enhanced sound as well as magnified images to the viewer. However, if you use the telescope to watch and listen to a conversation, you won't hear the real dialogue: you will perceive the speakers to be conducting a conversation about you, in which they are plotting against you, speaking negatively of you, or abusing your species/nationality, whichever is most plausible and hurtful.

Kaleidescope of Polychromatic Perplexity

When you stare into this brightly-painted tube, you see a fascinating riot of flowing shapes and gemlike colors. If you watch for a full minute, your soul is banished (with no saving throw) to a colorful, ever-changing labyrinth dimension only accessible by the spyglass. While your soul is banished, your body is rigid, paralyzed, and helpless. As long as your paralyzed body continues to look through the kaleidescope, you make progress towards escaping the maze as specified in the Maze spell appropriate to your edition. If someone removes the glass from your eye, you stop making progress until the kaleidescope is returned. At the DM's option, there may be other souls lost in the maze dimension: if so, it's a race to see who solves the maze and possesses your body first. ∎

Tempting Players to Use the Kaleidescope

You can use the following series of clues to entice a player to use the kaleidescope, while potentially allowing a chance to avoid the device's curse. When a player first uses the kaleidescope, and after every six seconds of continuous viewing, ask the character to make an Intelligence check. Depending on edition, you might ask the player to to roll under his or her Intelligence on a d20 or to make a DC 12 Intelligence check. On every success, give the player the next clue to the nature of the kaleidescope. If the player makes seven successes before the minute has elapsed, the item's grim secret will be revealed. If a player puts the kaleidescope down and returns to it later, the number of successes, and the number of seconds before the viewer is trapped, are both reset to zero.

1st success: This is not a simple children's toy. Arcane secrets may be locked within.

2nd success: You're close to a breakthrough in understanding the device. If you put it down, you'll have to start over.

3rd success: The spyglass is actually showing you a distant place of magical power.

4th success: The shifting colors represent some sort of maze. By following certain paths with your eye, you may arrive at a central truth.

5th success: You've got it! Solving the kaleidescope puzzle quickly enough will reveal the secret to a high-level spell. You're almost there.

6th success: The shifting colors represent not just an elegant mental puzzle but a never-before-documented plane of existence.

7th success: The kaleidescope is a trap! Unless you put it down immediately, it will pull you into a prison dimension from which you may never escape!

PULP ERA

by James Carpio, Jon Richardson, Jared A. Sorensen, and Michael Smith

FOREWORD

I published *Orkworld* in 1999, the year I left AEG as the lead writer and RPG designer, having made both *Legend of the Five Rings* and *7th Sea*. As I made *Orkworld*, I kept a public journal on the design of the game, detailing every aspect from rules to setting to hiring an artist and editors to negotiating with a printer. Other than the art and the editing, I did everything myself. Writing, designing, layout, publishing.

Everything. I learned much later that a lot of people used that journal as a blueprint for publishing their own games. Folks told me I had demythologized the process. You didn't need to be a company like Wizards of the Coast or White Wolf or FASA to make a game. You could just be a guy. A guy like me.

But a year later, I was out. It was 2000 and I was living in the Bay Area, working at a video game company. I was invited to a local con as a special guest and I had just finished a seminar on game design. There was a kid in the front row—about ten years younger than me—with a huge black mohawk, leather jacket, big black boots. He was smiling the whole time I talked. After the seminar, he introduced himself. He was Jared Sorensen.

We had lunch in the hotel lobby and we started talking about games. I had given up on RPGs. I mean it. Given up. I published *Orkworld* that year and it was critically and commercially successful, however, I was burned out. Finished. I was ready to move on.

But I met Jared. And his enthusiasm was infectious.

His website had a dozen or more games on it. All of them free. Some of them could fit on an index card. Others were much longer. One of them you played with chopsticks at a Chinese restaurant. He was clever, innovative and charismatic. Jared didn't think outside the box, he threw the damn box out the window without looking at it.

And he asked me a question I have never forgotten. When I said that I didn't run *Legend of the Five Rings* or *7th Sea* the way I wrote them, he asked me why. I said, "Because I guess I write the games so other people can run them with the rules they want."

Then he asked, "Why don't you write games the way you run them?"

I was stunned. I had no answer. And I immediately knew he was absolutely right. I should write games the way I run them.

Something was changing in the game industry right around that time. Jared and I weren't alone. There were others who saw what we were doing and decided they could do it, too. Suddenly, a swarm of "indie games" shot into the market, each driven by personality and sheer will. A community quickly formed, then collapsed, splintering into different communities who all disagreed on everything. Ah, humanity.

But it was an amazing time. People making games that weren't *Dungeons & Dragons*. Games that asked questions. Games with smarts. It was an amazing time.

But then again, so is today.

Right now, if you jump on the internet, you can find games from all over the world. Games that would blow your mind. Little games, big games, friggin insane games. Each of them with different themes, different mechanics and different voices. I always said that playing the same game, to me, was a lot like going to the same restaurant. Eventually, everything on the menu tastes the same. Diversity is the best spice.

And so is innovation. Game mechanics are like technology. There's innovation everywhere. And the best part about trying out new games? You get to bring that innovation back to your favorite game and change it up. Find out a new way to handle hit points, find out a new way to handle alignment, find out a new way to handle magic. Change it up!

It's a big, wide world of games out there. Start with this one. Then, go find another.

Trust me now. You'll be thanking me later.

–John Wick, 2015

The game that we present to you this issue is *Pulp Era*. This game was one of the first free on the internet RPGs to invade cyberspace. Pulp Era was born from the passion of four budding game designers (Jared Sorenson, James Carpio, Jon Richardson, and Michael Smith), who at the time were trying to craft a 1930's role playing game to put on the market. While the game did not make it into the commercial realm as is, the innovative game mechanics went on to inspire Jared's *OctaNe* RPG and John Wick's *Yesterday's Tomorrows*. *Pulp Era* was written before the idea of indie style games (*Sorcerer, My life with Master, Burning Wheel*), so concepts like "The Forge" (a forum for indie game developers to share ideas) had not yet come to life. The game was designed to emulate characters and adventure in the pulps and to break away from "traditional" role playing game tropes (a la D&D) of the time. Look at this game as a blank canvas that had some rough pencil sketches, but the paint has not yet been applied. So please sit back, tune your imagination to black and white, and enjoy a ride into the *Pulp Era*!

–James Carpio, 2015

"Yes Reid, that's just what this city needs — a modern Robin Hood," said the chief of police to millionaire newspaper mogul Britt Reid . . .

–The Adventures of the Green Hornet (1940)

Introduction

It was an average Saturday morning in an average small town in the 1940's. An orchestra played "Flight of the Bumblebee," shaking the walls of the movie house as a hypnotic disk and a large hornet appeared on the giant screen. The serial was "The Adventures of the Green Hornet", one of the many great chapter plays that intrigued audiences every Saturday and had them coming back for more. Five cents was all it took to transport these moviegoers far away from their troubles. America had survived the Great Depression and was enjoying a time of prosperity but a second World War was brewing overseas, a war against a madman named Adolf Hitler and his Nazi party — the cinema was America's only true escape.

Despite the whimsical cartoons, musical sing-a-longs ("Follow the Bouncing Ball!") and Marx Brothers movies, it was the serial that brought the audience running. Each week you could watch your favorite hero escape certain death time and time again. Audiences watched breathlessly as Buster Crabbe (the titular character of Flash Gordon) as he fell into Ming the Merciless' ingenious deathtraps, convinced that their hero was dead. Then, the beginning of next week's episode would reveal that, Flash had managed to escape at the last moment. Those were the serials, also known as "cliffhangers" because the episodes often ended with the hero trapped upon a high cliff, about to fall to his doom. Full of non-stop action, they brought the thrills and chills of the pulp novels to the big screen.

Serials have their origins with the beloved silent films of the early twentieth century like The Perils of Pauline (1914) starring the beautiful Pearl White (known as the "Queen of the Serials") and What happened to Mary? (1912) featuring the lovely Mary Fuller. With the success of the films and others like them, the serial became a Hollywood tradition. Those short films brought excitement and romance to a time when all hope seemed lost. Serials are popular even today, from the classic cliffhanger action of Steven Spielberg's Raiders of the Lost Ark films to the noir feel of Tim Burton's Batman, the pulps are alive and well in all their lurid detail.

So that's why we bring you *Pulp Era*, the game of two-fisted action and adventure — a chance for you and your friends to recreate the intrigue, action and intrigue of those classic Saturday serials. The rules focus on largerthan-life heroes and cinematic action, helping to capture the fun and dramatic atmosphere of this fast-paced genre. Did you ever wonder what it would be like to hang off the wing of a PW-9C biplane as it fell in a full tailspin or of high-rolling with the uppercrust in Monte Carlo's finest casinos? Have you ever dreamed of searching for lost cities deep within the heart of the Amazon or of leaping across the wet rooftops of a dark and corrupt city with only a loaded pistol and a mask to conceal your identity? Well then, True Believers, sit back and enjoy as we take you on a wild ride into the amazing world of the Cliffhangers — a ride into the *Pulp Era*!

"Modern Robin Hood, eh? Okay, Kato . . . we're going to introduce the police chief and the world to the Green Hornet!" –The Adventures of the Green Hornet (1940)

In the pulps, the hero faced the unexpected and the extraordinary with a left-hook and a crooked grin. In *Pulp Era* you are the hero in this sometimes deadly, but always exciting world. Be it a masked crime fighter or a dashing young scientist, a brash flyboy or a Master of the Mystic Arts, the possibilities are as endless as your imagination. This is brand new world to explore, though almost certainly familiar; a long-past age of Black and White, Good and Evil. Though based on the innocent, bygone age of the 30's and 40's, this is not your world. Through your character you can discover lost civilizations, travel to uncharted reaches of Outer Space, or fight with the Allied Forces against the villainous Nazi's. The action never stops… and neither do you! Whether you are a Hardboiled Gumshoe or a Masked Avenger, you'll need more than your skill and your trusty pistol, because when you're brawling on the back of a runaway truck traveling at 80 miles an hour on a cliff-side road, you have no time for fear — disaster is always just around the corner . . .

Character Creation

"Skulls! Powers of Darkness! This isn't right! I was an altar boy, for the love of Pete, at Saint Timothy's! The only power I believe in comes out of the barrel of a gun!"

— The Phantom (1996)

Overview	
1. Choose a Role (or create your own Role)	
2. Assign 25 points to your Styles.	• Mystical characters add the Arcane Style and strange characters add the Strange Style. •Your main Style (the Style that best represents your character) should have the highest rating. •No Style's rating may be over 10.
3. Assign 30 points to your Attributes.	•Your Wounds rating is equal to your Brawn. •No Attribute's rating may be over 10.
4. Assign 15 points to your Merits.	• Each of your Merits must correspond to an Attribute. •No Merit may be higher than half the rating of that Attribute. • Assign Specialty Merits and Flaws (optional).
5. Assign one free Gimmick that fits your character's Type.	• Characters may choose an additional Gimmick for any Style with a rating of 8 or higher (including your Primary Style)
6. Characters start with one Plot Point, plus one Plot Point per unused Merit point.	

Character Roles

In the game *Pulp Era* you will play a larger-than-life character living in the danger and intrigue-filled world of the pulps and serials. To create these characters, we have provided you with Roles, standard characters that have (in one form or another) established themselves in pulp novels, comics, films and radio plays.

These Roles are quick and easy character templates that you can use to start playing *Pulp Era* right away. Roles are also a good way to introduce yourself to the high flying world of the Pulps because, while being specific to the pulps of the 30's and 40's, they're also very generic and well-worn examples of the classic "Pulp Hero." Because the number of roles is so extensive and easy to visualize, you should have no problem finding one that's right for you.

For example, you want to play one of those outrageous wrestling superheroes from the world of the Mexican pulp films? "No problemo!" Just take the "Masked Avenger" Role and add the "Celebrity" gimmick. Or how about a two hundred-year old vampire who works as a cop? Well, he sounds like a cross between the "Hardboiled Gumshoe" and the "Weird Being." You'd be amazed at how many unique characters can be created just by adding Gimmicks to different Roles!

When choosing a Role, talk with other players and with the GM first. *Pulp Era* games are collaborative efforts and require the cooperation and participation of everyone involved. If the GM is running an episode that takes place in Darkest Africa, will your Hardboiled Gumshoe really be appropriate? Don't be afraid to ask questions or even to change your character concept to fit in with the rest of the group. Communication is the key to a successful *Pulp Era* experience.

Each Role consists of the following information:
The Role's name.
Type: Each of the six Types corresponds with a character's Primary Style. Primary Styles in turn are used to calculate how many Gimmicks a character can possess. When creating your own Role, be sure to decide what Type of character your Role concerns itself with. Is the character's style Daring, Ingenious, Crafty, Charming, Arcane or Mighty?
Profile: A short description to assist you in visualizing the Role. Profiles will give you a general idea of how the Role can be portrayed, as well as the various strengths and weaknesses that a Role might offer.
Quote: An example of something a character from that Role might say.
Gimmicks: A list of Gimmicks that the Role may utilize. Gimmicks are theatrical devices that enable *Pulp Era* characters to perform the amazing feats that they portray in the movies and novels.
Gear: A short list detailing the typical equipment that a character from that Role might possess. This list doesn't include possessions granted by Gimmicks like Weird Gadgets or Mystic Relic, it's just an example of items that flesh out a Role and give it that spark of realism.

Roles sometimes also list Recommended Disciplines. These are only suggestions for Arcane Merits appropriate for that Role and are not hard and fast rules.

Characters in the pulps were, for the most part, model citizens. Although moody loners and gritty, angst-ridden characters are sometimes fun to play, they're not appropriate for *Pulp Era*. This is not to say that you can't play a "dark" character (Batman, the Shadow and the Spider were all incredibly dark characters), it's just that their neuroses shouldn't interfere with the game or with the other players.

Another important consideration when creating a *Pulp Era* character is depth. Now most role playing games encourage in-depth, well thought out backgrounds and complete character histories. In *Pulp Era*, it just isn't important. *Pulp Era* isn't worried about minute details, it's more concerned with the "big picture." In a world of well-worn plots and timeless cliches, intensive character backgrounds stick out like, well, a sore thumb! So unless a play-by-play of your character's high school years is integral to the character, skip it… concern yourself with only the details. As a famous cop once said, "Just the facts, ma'am."

Men & Women of Action!

Feats of derring-do are common in the pulps, from jungle queens riding on the backs of rampaging elephants to barrel-chested working-class Joe's duking it out with Nazis on the wings of biplanes. These Men and Women of Action thrill us with their incredible feats of daring It's no coincidence that Daring is their primary Style.

All-American

Profile: As American as mom and apple pie, the All-American is the football hero, star athlete and Golden Boy. All-Americans come from many different backgrounds but share the traits of youth, charisma and athletic prowess. Like the Working-Class Hero, the All-American often finds himself placed in unusual situations, often becoming an unlikely hero in the process. If he has a flaw, it's his refusal to tarnish his virtuous image by being dishonest and playing "hard and fast" wit the rules.

Quote: "Gee, it'd be swell if we won the homecoming game again this year . . . "

Gimmicks: Sporting Edge, Celebrity, Unbreakable Loyalty

Gear: Varsity jacket, sports equipment, class ring

Howling Leatherneck

Profile: The Howling Leatherneck is a rough and tumble member of the Armed Forces. Whether driving a tank over minefields or going mano a mano with Nazis, the Howling Leatherneck is a powerful warrior and patriot. Although a bit gruff at times, his military might makes him a force to be reckoned with!

Quote: "Awright you maggots! Let's do it for the U. S. of A.! Hooo-ahh!"

Gimmicks: One-Man Army, Patriot, True Grit

Gear: Dog-tags, uniform, weapons, cigar

Flying Ace

Profile: The Flying Ace is queen of the skies. An accomplished pilot and aerial daredevil, the Ace can out fly anyone. Flying Aces can be found dogfighting in wartime, dazzling crowds at air shows or acting as transportation for expeditions into far-off lands.

Quote: "Two bogeys on my tail? Hold onto your lunch . . . I'm gonna try something!"

Gimmicks: Signature Vehicle, Fly Anything, "Any landing can walk away from . . . "

Gear: Leather jacket, tools, flying goggles. passport

Noble Savage

Profile: Abandoned and orphaned at a young age, you were raised in the jungle by wild animals. Growing up, you developed into a fierce and beautiful young woman with the ability to communicate with animals of all kinds. You made it your mission to protect your jungle home from invaders until being discovered by a group of explorers. Now, you fight for the welfare of both humans and animals.

Quote: "Know now that this land and its creatures are under my protection."

Gimmicks: Animal Magnetism, Totem Animal, Animal Companion

Gear: Leopard-skin bikini, flint spear or dagger, pouch of rare herbs

Working-Class Hero

Profile: The Working-Class Hero is a catch-all Role for all the firemen, cowboys, truck drivers and blue collar men and women who find themselves in the unlikely role of hero. Humble and honest, he takes unusual or dangerous situations in stride with his simple motto, "All in a day's work."

Quote: "Snake gods? Alien invaders? Criminy . . . I hope we get overtime for this."

Gimmicks: Yankee Ingenuity, True Grit, "Just another day on the job"

Gear: Tools, uniform or work clothes, photograph of "his girl"

Men & Women of Science!

As much as the pulps are known for their fight scenes and death-defying stunts, they're just as well known for their dedicated scientists and mad geniuses, all bent on saving the world from Moon Men, Nazi übermensch and radioactive army ants. The labcoat wearing heroes, while not as glamorous as others, are stars in their own right. Their inventive minds and ingenious exploits earn them Ingenuity as their primary Style.

Child Prodigy

Profile: The Child Prodigy (also called "The Kid") is smart, resourceful and creative. Unfortunately, she is also nosy, impatient and talkative. Her ability to solve problems is rivaled only by her ability to create them. Although she can be a pain in the neck to adults, her cute grin and precocious nature soon endear her to all that she meets.

Quote: "Gosh! The folks back home will never believe this!"

Gimmicks: Animal Companion, Underestimated, Guardian

Gear: Yo-yo, slingshot, magnifying glass, backpack

Condescending Academic

Profile: A font of virtually endless knowledge, the Condescending Academic is also an egotistical, longwinded bore. He seems to be only interested in Science in order to impress women and belittle the "uneducated masses." Still, he holds an impressive number of degrees and can answer any question — he might even have a radio show. He's smart . . . and he'll sure as heck make sure that everyone knows it!

Quote: "This reminds me of my experiences in the Amazon when I was a lad . . . "

Gimmicks: Esoteric Knowledge, Dismissive Attitude, Celebrity

Gear: Pipe, tweed suit and bow tie, musty books

Crackpot Inventor

Profile: The Crackpot Inventor is a genius living on the edge of madness. His theories are implausible, his experiments incredible and his sanity is questionable. Despite his frazzled appearance, however, the Crackpot Inventor is a brilliant scientist. His heroes are Tesla and Edison and his "discoveries" range from energy-dispersal rays, clockwork automatons and the indisputable fact that the earth is hollow.

Quote: "X is equal to minus Pi times the square root of N! It's so simple! Ahahahaha!"

Gimmicks: Laboratory, Weird Gadgetry, Unwavering Faith in Science

Gear: Rocketship blueprints, electrical gizmos and book of radical theories

Dedicated Physician

Profile: The Dedicated Physician is just that: dedicated. A skilled surgeon, confidante and physician, he has dedicated his entire life to Medicine. His devotion runs deeper than anything else; he'll even

risk life and limb to save his most hated enemy.

Quote: "You're gonna make it, son! I won't let you die!"

Gimmicks: ER impresario, 11th Hour Miracle Worker, Hippocratic Oath

Gear: Medical equipment, satchel

Egghead Researcher

Profile: A rarity in the male-dominated field of Science, the Egghead Researcher is analytical and logical in her quest for the truth. Detail-oriented to a fault, the Egghead Researcher spends more time in the lab than at home and feels more comfortable around scientific equipment and laboratory animals than other people.

Quote: "I know it sounds crazy but all the calculations measure up . . . "

Gimmicks: Reputation, Patronage, Unwavering Faith in Science

Gear: Glasses, Lab Coat, Clipboard

Men & Women of Mystery!

"Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men?" With those words, a legend was born. Cloaked in mystery and shadows, these gritty heroes have fought the Mob, German spies and immortal Aztec warriors. Their true identities are often hidden but their cunning and skill always shows through. For that, these Men and Women of Mystery earn the primary Style of Craft.

Fortune Hunter

Profile: The Fortune Hunter officially collects rare artifacts for private collections and museums but she has her own agenda. Be it the sense of duty to protect and preserve, the thrill of adventure of sheer intellectual curiosity, the Fortune Hunter will go to almost any extreme to acquire her prize.

Quote: "That idol must be two thousand years old . . . and priceless, too. Hmm . . . "

Gimmicks: Patronage, Linguist, Well-Traveled

Gear: Pistol, bullwhip, fedora, foreign currencies

Hardboiled Gumshoe

Profile: Hardboiled Gumshoes are the G-Men, private dicks, lone wolves and rogue cops that keep law and order in the Big City. Some are sterling examples of the Badge, others are a bit less scrupulous. When you're one against many, the pressure can wear you down. The Hardboiled Gumshoe stares adversity square in the face and doesn't give up the chase.

Quote: "This is the police . . . come out with your hands up!"

Gimmicks: Safehouse, Contacts, Functional Alcoholism

Gear: Badge or investigator's license, .38 pistol, handcuffs, whisky flask

Inscrutable Sidekick

Profile: The Inscrutable Sidekick is always ready with a wry observation or a swift chop to the neck. Knowledgeable in ancient mysteries and deadly fighting arts, he is an noble opponent and an invaluable ally.

Quote: "An ancient proverb says: One need not strike to be a blade."

Gimmicks: Martial Artist, Inscrutable, Unbreakable Loyalty

Gear: Archaic weaponry, black suit, domino mask

Masked Avenger

Profile: Though some may consider you to be no better than the criminals you fight, you consider yourself a hero of sorts. Cloaked in the shadows of night and armed with only your razor-sharp cunning and your trusty sidearms, you stalk the back alleys searching for wrongs to right. Your methods may be a bit extreme but you hold no pity for the villains you have waged war against.

Quote: "Step aside, scoundrel . . . and face the wrath of my justice!"

Gimmicks: Secret Identity, Reputation, "Where Did He Go?"

Gear: Costume, grapnel and line, twin .45 pistols, utility belt

Shady Character

Profile: A shadowy figure cloaked in mystery, the Shady Character can be a government spook, a snitch or a secret agent. Highly mobile and secretive, the Shady Character is often embroiled in intrigue, conspiracy and pulse-pounding danger.

Quote: "Here's the document . . . now leave. You never saw me. We never spoke."

Gimmicks: Badly-Lit, Voluminous Trenchcoat, Man with No Name

Gear: Dark trenchcoat, cigarettes, mini-camera, numerous concealed weapons

Men & Women of Society!

A far cry from the Sky-Realms of Kazar or the jungles of Borneo, the Men and Women of Society exist within the concrete canyons of the Big City. Money and influence are their trade and nobody does it better. Although they're more interested in stocks, they get their share of excitement. Nightclub shenanigans and midnight car chases are as common as cocktail parties and air-kisses in their world. Charm is the key here, and so it is Charm that is their primary Style.

Ace Reporter

Profile: A savvy journalist with a great pair of gams, the Ace Reporter is always on the look out for a story. Though low in the rankings at her radio station or newspaper, she's eager to advance her position. She also has integrity, a rare quality in the dog-eat-dog world of journalism.

Quote: "Can I quote you on that, Mr. Mayor?"

Gimmicks: Reputation, Contacts, Newshound

Gear: Camera, press pass, notebook

Dilettante Playboy

Profile: High-class and just a bit snobby, the Dilettante Playboy has never needed to work a day in his life. Born with a silver spoon in his mouth, he has money to burn and then some. Sometimes he is a wealthy philanthropist or patron of the Arts and Sciences. Other times he is a spoiled brat or a greedy manipulator. No matter the circumstances, he knows that money is power and power is everything.

Quote: "What a magnificent painting! It will look splendid next to the Van Gogh."

Gimmicks: Estate, Well-Traveled, "Put it on my tab . . . "

Gear: Luxury car, flashy clothing and jewelry, wads of cash

Femme Fatale

Profile: Sexy and sultry, the Femme Fatale seems to be a trouble magnet. When not slinking around piano bars as a torch singer, the Femme Fatale uses her feminine wiles to get what she wants, no matter who is hurt in the process. She's not evil, per se . . . she's just street smart enough not to be taken advantage of. In fact, she'd rather take

advantage of someone else.

Quote: "Hello there, handsome. Would you like to buy me a drink?"

Gimmicks: Looks that Kill, Animal Magnetism, "Put it on my tab . . . "

Gear: Purse, make-up, jewelry, .22 pistol, room key to the "No-Tell Hotel"

Gentleman Spy

Profile: A cultured and sophisticated gentleman, the Gentleman Spy is also a master of disguise, an expert marksman and the quintessential ladies' man. He lives on the edge, but unlike the Shady Character, has not turned his back on creature comforts. Instead, he has embraced them whole-heartedly.

Quote: "Baccarat? Yes, I've been known to play a few hands now and then . . . "

Gimmicks: Debonair, Weird Gadgetry, High Roller

Gear: Disguise kit, fake ID's, silenced pistol, playing cards

Wiseguy Gangster

Profile: The Wiseguy Gangster is the proverbial crook with a heart of gold. He may be a bit of a lowlife and his motives may be questionable but you can't deny that he's a gutsy character. His streetwise attitude, chutzpah and impressive list of contacts come in awfully handy sometimes . . . too bad he's on the other side of the law.

Quote: "Sure, I think I can help . . . but it'll cost ya plenty, see?"

Gimmicks: Patronage, Reputation, Get Out of Jail Free

Gear: Thompson submachine gun, hold-out pistol, fedora, zoot suit

Men & Women of Tomorrow!

The future is full of possibility, and the Men and Women of Tomorrow are living embodiments of that potential. Exploring uncharted reaches of space or battling the forces of Evil, the Men and Women of Tomorrow are fighting today for the rights and lives of all Mankind. To do this takes many things but the most important one of all is their primary Style of Might, the strength of purpose that can overcome all obstacles.

Defender of Humanity

Profile: The Defender of Humanity has been gifted with superhuman abilities and has chosen (or has been charged with) the role of guardian of all mankind. The Defender of Humanity must protect the innocent, right wrongs and always use his powers for the benefit of all. It is sometimes difficult to live up to this code but he cannot fail, lest the forces of evil triumph.

Quote: "Up, up and away!"

Gimmicks: Secret Identity, Reputation, Nick of Time

Gear: Secret headquarters, costume, specialized weaponry

Intrepid Explorer

Profile: The Intrepid Explorer's task is "to boldly go where no man has gone before." Be it by interstellar spacecraft, submersible or hot air balloon, he lives for the thrill of discovering new places — of setting foot where no human has ever traveled before. The Intrepid Explorer can be seen by some as a brash, reckless fool while others will see him as a driven fanatic. Either way, he will never stop journeying into the realms of the unknown.

Quote: "I don't care what the maps say . . . the Lost Isle of the Ancients does exist!"

Gimmicks: Unerring Navigation, Signature Vehicle, Strange Homeland

Gear: Pistol (or "Ray-Gun"), maps of never-before seen places

Mechanical Marvel

Profile: There are actually two types of Mechanical Marvel; the first being a man or woman who uses a suit of battle armor or flight-suit, the second being a fully mechanical creation. In the case of the former, the hi-tech device allows him to fight crime while maintaining anonymity (indeed, the suit may even give him a mysterious, robot-like appearance). In the case of the robotic creation, it may be programmed to act heroically or it might just feel a "need" to prove its humanity (if the Marvel is self-aware).

Quote: "Beep . . . whirrr! Click . . . click . . . "

Gimmicks: Laboratory, Fly Anything, Tireless Worker

Gear: Tools (for repair), power source

Super-Soldier

Profile: The Super-Soldier is the rare Man of Tomorrow who has pledged his services to the military. His exploits are the stuff of newsreels and his image is often used on campaign posters to encourage young men and women to enlist in the armed forces. Still, he's not just a poster-boy for the recruiters and journalists; he's a two-fisted dynamo clad in the Red, White and Blue . . . a hero and inspiration to us all!

Quote: "Those Nazi bastards Blitzkrieg and Red Menace are behind this attack, General . . . I'd bet my stripes on it!"

Gimmicks: Leadership, One-Man Army, Patriot

Gear: Uniform, specialized gear and weaponry.

Thrillseeking Daredevil

Profile: A rarity in the realm of supermen and women, the Thrillseeking Daredevil is in it for the fun. Empowered with mighty abilities at a young age, the Daredevil is a plucky gal with a spirit for adventure and a knack for getting into trouble. Although some eventually move onto more serious endeavors, a few never seem to grow up.

Quote: "If you thought that was keen, check out this move!"

Gimmicks: Nine Lives, Secret Identity, Trouble Magnet

Gear: Mask, comic-book collection

Masters & Mistresses of the Unknown!

The most unusual of all are the Masters and Mistresses of the Unknown. Learned in the Magickal Arts, they are privy to a world that most of us can only dream of . . . a world of ghosts and witchcraft, demons and powerful enchantments. Possessing powers beyond the understanding of mere mortals, they dabble in the Arcane, the source of all their power and their primary Style.

Mystic Guardian

Profile: Schooled in the Occult Arts, the Mystic Guardian (like the Defender of Humanity), has pledged to fight the forces of darkness. Constantly on the watch for invaders from parallel dimensions, she is armed with a lifetime of magickal lore and a collection of powerful arcane artifacts. Mankind may be ignorant of her help but the Mystic Guardian isn't in it for the glory.

Quote: "By the Hand of H'rukk Shabolak I dispel thee, demon spawn!"

Gimmicks: Safehouse, Mystic Relic, Man with No Name

Gear: Spellbooks, scrolls, high-collared cloak

Recommended Discipline: Theurgy

Occult Investigator

Profile: Though he is also concerned with combating malignant forces, the Occult Investigator isn't quite as flashy as the Mystic Guardian. Indeed, he may even act rather skeptical when confronting paranormal phenomena. At any rate, he and the agency that he works for usually deal with strange cases where supernatural activity might be involved. He has seen some odd things in his life, but they're just part of the job.

Quote: "Fangs? Glowing red eyes? Yup — sounds to me like you got yourself a vampire, Mrs. Johnson. Let me get my things . . . I'll be over in an hour."

Gimmicks: Patronage, Faith (or Dismissive Attitude), Voluminous Trenchcoat

Gear: Wooden stakes, silver bullets, cross pendant

Recommended Discipline: Occultism or Spiritualism

Stage Magician

Profile: Clad in the familiar black tuxedo and top hat, the Stage Magician is a charming master of illusions — but he's also a shameless rogue and a sly and clever confidence man. Most of his skill is in fooling people using slight-of-hand and cheap parlor tricks. The real magic, the magic few see, is even more breathtaking.

Quote: "Look! Nothing up my sleeve . . . "

Gimmicks: Debonair, Conjuring, Signature Trick

Gear: "Magic" wand, stylish clothing, white rabbits and scarves

Recommended Discipline: Mesmerism

Venerable Sage

Profile: Impossibly old and wizened, the Venerable Sage is a true master of the Arcane. Always an enigma, he may seem at times a solemn ascetic, a grumpy curmudgeon or a cackling old madman. Despite these outward appearances, however, he is a powerful mage and a harsh, unyielding mentor.

Quote: "It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness."

Gimmicks: Bromide Wisdom, Inscrutable, Esoteric Knowledge

Gear: Robes, staff, divination devices

Recommended Disciplines: Shamanism or Occultism

Weird Being

Profile: Heralding from another plane of existence, the Weird Being is easily recognized as an outsider. Though this can be a handicap, the Weird Being's otherworldly nature has bestowed upon him a variety of strange and wondrous powers. Perhaps he is a ghost, trapped on earth until his death is avenged? Maybe he comes from another dimension where beasts walk on two legs and live like men? Possibly he is from this world, this time — but from a place all but forgotten . . . like the lost continent of Atlantis or the Hollow Earth. No matter his origins, he has adopted Humanity as his extended family and he aims to safeguard it from harm.

Quote: "Grrr . . . "

Gimmicks: Weird Powers, Strange Homeland, Higher

Purpose

Gear: None

Recommended Disciplines: Any Mighty Power or Arcane Discipline

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By now you should have a Role in mind, either one from the above list or one plucked from your own imagination. Now it's time to fill in the blanks and define your character's Styles, Attributes, Merits and Gimmicks.

Styles

25 points to distribute (Max. 10 in any Style)

Styles are the various "styles" that embody the world of *Pulp Era*. Is your hero reckless and daring or suave and charming? Mighty or mysterious? Ingenious or just plain weird? A character's highest Style is called her Primary Style and should coincide with the character's Type. For example, a character whose highest Style is Daring should choose a Man of Action Type. Unlike Roles, Types cannot be changed without great effort. The average Joe's Styles are all 5.

Daring: This Style deals with the courage, gusto and physical excellence that all Men and Women of Action seek to attain. Characters with high Daring can perform amazing stunts, from parachuting from burning airplanes to fending off hordes of alien invaders with only a tire iron.

Ingenuity: This Style deals with invention, creativity and spontaneity — the "Eureka!" factor that all Pulp Men and Women of Science seem to possess. Characters with high Ingenuity can invent bizarre gadgets, repair machines and perform astounding feats of mental acuity.

Craft: What Man or Woman of Mystery could be without their cunning, stealth and strength of will? Characters with high Craft are adept at hunting and tracking, solving crimes and setting traps.

Charm: The beautiful people, the Men and Women of Society, possess this Style (as well as wealth and influence) in abundance. Characters with high Charm are skilled confidence men, persuasive politicians and seductive temptresses.

Arcane: Men and Women of the Unknown seek to explore new realms and to unlock ancient mysteries. Characters with high Arcane are able to cast powerful spells and possess volumes of occult lore. Only Masters and Mistresses of the Unknown may have the Arcane Style.

Might: Might is that strange and rare quality that fuels the fires of the Men and Women of Tomorrow. Characters with high Might are Champions of Justice and are endowed with miraculous powers and abilities. Only Men and Women of Tomorrow may possess the Might Style.

Attributes

30 points to distribute (Max. 10 in any Attribute)

Attributes are the physical, mental and social aspects of a character. They measure a character's intellect, willpower, size, attractiveness and agility. Styles are *how* a *Pulp Era* character does things while Attributes are *what* the character can do. As with Styles, the Average Joe's attributes are all 5.

Brawn: Physical size, strength and stamina. Brawn is also used to determine your character's Wound rating. Your Wounds are equal to your character's Brawn and represent the amount of damage that you can take before becoming seriously injured.

Action: Speed, agility, coordination and manual dexterity.

Smarts: Raw intellect and perception. Your Smarts rating is also important when casting spells using Occultism.

Spirit: Willpower, tenacity and concentration. Spirit is very important in the casting of spells that affect your character or inanimate matter. It also determines your character's Recovery rating. Your Recovery is equal to your character's Spirit and may be used in combat to counter the penalties incurred by injury.

Persona: Character, appearance and charisma. Persona is also used when performing summoning rituals and casting spells on sentient beings.

Merits

15 points to distribute (Max. of 1/2 the governing Attribute)

Merits modify your character's Attributes. They represent exceptional ability or talent, specialized knowledge or superior skill in a given field. Each Merit is given a rating between +1 and +5 (depending on the rating of the Attribute that it will modify). No Merit can be higher than half of its governing Attribute. Players may use one Merit to modify several Attributes but he must still draw these points from the pool of 15 that he starts with.

Example: Jon wants to give his character the Merit of "Imposing Stature" in order to make him more fearsome looking. This Merit would modify his character's Persona Attribute of 6 and so Jon gives him "Imposing Stature" of +3, the maximum Merit rating for an Attribute of 6. Now whenever he needs to intimidate someone with his sizable presence, he can add +3 to his Persona Stunt Roll.

Note that this Merit only works with intimidation tactics. If he was trying to bribe a police officer (a Stunt requiring subtlety and persuasiveness) he wouldn't be able to use this bonus. Merits, as a rule, can be fairly broad (Guns +2) but not all-inclusive (All Weapons Known to Man +2). Be sure to ask your GM if a Merit is acceptable or whether it should be more expansive or limited in scope. You don't have to spend all 15 points. In fact, these may be saved and added to your Plot Points total for future use (see below). Arcane and Might Merits work a bit differently — consult the section on Arcane Disciplines and Mighty Powers to learn how to use them. The Average Joe has 10 points of Merits.

Optional Rule: Specialty Merits

In order for Merit ratings to increase past their limit you can either increase the governing Attribute (a costly task) or you can add a Specialty. Specialties allow you to add an additional point to your Merit by limiting its usefulness in certain situations. For example, if you decide to take the Action Merit of Driving +4, you could add the Specialty of Motorcycles, effectively giving you Driving +5 when racing motorcycles (but not other types of vehicles). No character may have more than one Specialty per Merit.

Optional Rule: Flaws

Flaws work much like normal Merits except that they modify an Attribute negatively. An example would be an opera singer who is hideously scarred (sounds familiar?). In this care he could have the Flaw "Scarred Face" at -2 and thus subtract 2 from his Persona when dealing with people. Of course, his speech would be unaffected, as would his ability to frighten and intimidate others (although in this case, the opera singer doesn't automatically get a bonus to intimidate with his hideous visage — you still need to spend Merit points for that, although this Flaw is a nice way to offset the cost!). Negative points from Flaws may be added to the pool of Merit points that your character can spend or to your pool of Plot Points. Specialties may not be taken for Flaws and no character may have more than 8 points in Flaws.

Gimmicks

1 free Gimmick associated with your character's Type, plus an additional Gimmick for every Style with a rating of 8 or above

Gimmicks define the difference between Average Joes and *Pulp Era* heroes. Whether it's a character's faithful hound, a scientists unwavering belief that "Science can save the day!" or a suave secret agent's ability to always look impeccably dressed (even in a burning glue factory), Gimmicks are those strange abilities made famous at Saturday afternoon Matinees everywhere. Some Gimmicks must be activated using Plot Points, other (like Animal Companion) have no cost to use. Average Joes have no Gimmicks.

Some Gimmicks allow you to "flip" your Stunt Roll. What this means is that you can switch the order of the tens and ones die (so a 52 could become a 25). Obviously, doubles can't be flipped — a 44 would still be a 44.

When selecting Gimmicks, imagine how they'll be used during the game. If you're playing an Intrepid Explorer who is always getting into trouble due to his bad direction-sense, it doesn't make much sense to give him the "Unerring Navigation" Gimmick. Check out the Gimmicks list and pick the ones that are appropriate, even if they're not the "standard" Role Gimmicks. All *Pulp Era* characters have one free Gimmick associated with their main Style, plus an additional Gimmick of any type for every Style rating of 8 or above (including their Primary Style).

List of Gimmicks

Animal Magnetism

Description: Due to his exotic nature, presence or appearance, people tend to react very strongly when first meeting the character. Women fall under his spell and men are cowed by his fearsome demeanor.

How to use it: When meeting the character for the first time, the subject will react in a suitably strong manner (awe, lust, fear, hate). By spending a Plot Point and making a Persona-based Stunt Roll, the character can make this effect permanent. A successful Spirit roll can temporarily negate the effects of Animal Magnetism.

Disadvantage: If the character makes a bad impression, he'll find it difficult to change that person's mind.

Animal Companion

Description: The character has an Animal Companion. The Animal Companion may be of any intelligent species and is loyal to the character (although not to a slavish degree).

How to use it: The character may issue simple commands to the Animal Companion using gestures and speech. The animal possesses the normal abilities of its species shares an empathic bond with the character. By spending one Plot Point and making a Persona Stunt Roll, the character can empathically communicate with his companion. This power may be to send or receive a simple message (Danger! Help! Come!)

Disadvantage: The character may not allow his Animal Companion to come to harm, either through action or inaction.

"Any Landing you can Walk Away from . . . "

Description: The character has the uncanny ability to safely crash-land or otherwise safely stop a crashing vehicle.

How to use it: By spending one Plot Point, the pilot may safely crash-land in virtually any environment, no matter how unlikely.

Disadvantage: Characters with this ability often rely on this Gimmick rather than safe flying, much to the dismay of their passengers!

Badly-Lit

Description: No matter how bright his surroundings, the character's face and/or eyes always seem to be cloaked in shadows.

How to use it: Any character attempting to discern the Badly-Lit character's expression or features must make a Smarts Stunt Roll of Outstanding or better.

Disadvantage: People will often be uneasy or distrustful around the character because of his somewhat unsavory and sinister appearance.

Celebrity

Description: The character is famous and has a following of fans and admirers in certain circles.

How to use it: The player should decide the circumstances of his character's Celebrity. When dealing with fans, the character can flip all Persona-based rolls.

Disadvantage: The character may be hard-pressed to do anything without the public's scrutiny.

Conjuring

Description: The character can magically create objects by pulling them out of a hat, pocket or other small object on his person.

How to use it: By spending a Plot Point, the conjurer may pull out any relatively common object from a jacket pocket, hat or other similar area. The character may not conjure a specific object (a key to a safe, another character's wallet, etc).

Disadvantage: The character may sometimes conjure a useless item . . . or even a dangerous one (a live rattlesnake, a grenade without its pin)!

Contacts

Description: The character "knows people who know people" and may employ these Contacts in order to acquire information, money, assistance or material goods.

How to use it: The character simply needs to get in touch with his Contacts (via phone, carrier pigeon, spotlight signal or interstellar beacon). Contacts are usually on good terms with the character but payment (of some kind) for their services is usually expected.

Disadvantage: Failure to provide adequate compensation could result in the loss of the character's Contacts. Also, those Contacts may someday approach the character for a favor . . .

Debonair

Description: The character is always looking wellgroomed and tailored, even in the most stressful situations.

How to use it: By spending a Plot Point and taking a moment to "tidy up," the character will switch from disheveled and dirty to relaxed and refreshed. A wet, torn suit will revert back to its original clean, dry state, etc. This Gimmick may not be used to heal the character, nor repair non-cosmetic damage to armor or items.

Disadvantage: Debonair characters are often vain creatures, preoccupied with their appearance.

Dismissive Attitude

Description: The character has "seen it all" and is unlikely to be fazed by even the weirdest, most unsettling situations.

How to use it: The character may ignore the effects of shock, surprise or distress by spending a Plot Point. By spending a Plot Point and making a Smarts Stunt Roll, the character may even ignore Wound penalties.

Disadvantage: The character's "Fight or Flight" response is negated, rendering him vulnerable to danger (his intellect is overriding his common sense).

11th Hour Miracle Worker

Description: The character is a modern-day miracle worker and a skilled surgeon, able to pull a patient from the jaws of death without breaking a sweat.

How to use it: After spending a Plot Point and administering first-aid to a fatally wounded character, the Miracle Worker can prevent that character's demise.

Disadvantage: This Gimmick doesn't heal injured characters, it merely stops them from dying.

ER Impresario

Description: The character is a wiz at battlefield medicine, able to perform complex procedures without sterile conditions or adequate medical instruments.

How to use it: The character may perform surgery with a butter knife, dress wounds with palm leaves and accomplish other such medical marvels.

Disadvantage: Your patient may not be as confident of your abilities as you are . . .

Esoteric Knowledge

Description: The character is a virtual font of knowledge regarding any single topic.

How to use it: The character must choose a field of study (Extinct Central American Cultures, Edible Insects, Geology of the late Mesozoic Era) at character creation. After that, the character can spend a Plot Point to gain insight into any situation that can utilize that area of knowledge. If done in an entertaining manner, the character may even apply this Esoteric Knowledge in a more useful fashion.

Disadvantage: The Esoteric Knowledge in question should be fairly esoteric . . .

Estate

Description: The character owns and maintains a large mansion, office building or institution. The Estate is quite valuable and encompasses not only the physical building but also capital, staff and physical assets.

How to use it: The character should choose an Estate that is in fitting with his concept and background.

Disadvantage: The Estate must be maintained (either by the character or another party) or it will gradually lose value.

Faith

Description: The character believes in a Higher Power and may use his Faith in battle with the forces of Darkness.

How to use it: The character repels evil creatures of a supernatural origin and may call upon a miracle by spending a Plot Point and making a Spirit Stunt Roll.

Disadvantage: If the character falls off the path of Light and Good, or doubts his Faith, it will disappear — possibly forever.

Fly Anything

Description: The character instinctively understands how to pilot vehicles and can safely operate them, no matter how complex or foreign their design (from flying saucers to clockwork submersibles).

How to use it: The character should choose a mode of transportation that he is familiar with (air, ground or water) and may use any Action Merits that apply to that type of vehicle.

Disadvantage: This Gimmick doesn't grant the ability to repair or understand the technology of the vehicle, nor does it enable the character to safely ride animals.

Bromide Wisdom

Description: The character knows a plethora of timehonored sayings and aphorisms, which can be used to inspire, motivate, and possibly confuse other characters.

How to use it: If the character can come up some bit of Bromide Wisdom related to another character's Stunt Roll, that character may add 10 points to the Stunt Roll (so a character needing to roll a 45 or below will actually just need to roll a 55 or below).

Disadvantage: Bromide Wisdom cannot be used in the midst of an action scene (like combat). The character's need time to reflect and meditate.

Functional Alcoholism

Description: The character can consume large amounts of beer, liquor or other such spirited beverages without passing out or becoming impaired in action. Martial Artists with this Gimmick are often called "Drunken Masters."

How to use it: Drunkenness does not affect the character's Stunt Rolls adversely. This Gimmick will not render the character immune to toxins or from the affects of other intoxicants.

Disadvantage: Although the character will not suffer penalties on physical Stunt Rolls, he will still exhibit drunken behavior (slurred speech, poor coordination, disheveled appearance).

Get Out of Jail Free

Description: No matter what the charges, they slide off the character like Teflon. If jailed or arrested, he is capable of getting himself out with little trouble.

How to use it: The character spends a Plot Point to have charges dropped against him and/or to be released from prison. The character should decide how and why his freedom is granted (slick legal counsel, a friend on the force, a prison break, etc). This Gimmick will not free the character from a villain's deathtrap, a collapsed mine shaft or other such confinement.

Disadvantage: If overused, this Gimmick will cease to function reliably (if at all).

Guardian

Description: The character has a caretaker of some kind, one that will come to his need in time of trouble.

How to use it: If the Guardian can be contacted somehow, he or she will come to the character's aid.

Disadvantage: The Guardian may also be an authority figure and will most likely not be too keen on having to rescue the character time and time again.

High Roller

Description: The character is accustomed to living the high life. He knows the best restaurants, hotels and casinos and can hob-nob and carouse with the best and brightest.

How to use it: The character is able to travel through the upper echelons of high society. He is adept at baccarat, a master at ballroom dancing and he knows which fork to use first at dinner. He is also on a name-to-name basis with celebrities, politicians and other High Rollers.

Disadvantage: High Rollers are hard-pressed to travel incognito and are easily remembered.

Higher Purpose

Description: The character has a Higher Purpose that he strives to attain, be it to seek vengeance, protect the innocent or clear his name.

How to use it: The character possesses one or more "Golden Plot Plots" that he can use over and over again when pursuing his Higher Purpose (but each of the points can only be used once per Stunt Roll). This Golden Plot Point can not be used to raise Attributes or to buy Merits. It can, however be used to power Gimmicks and utilize Plot Devices. The Higher Purpose should be well-defined and should be determined at character creation. By taking this Gimmick more than once, the character may have up to three Golden Plot Points — of course, the more "High Purpose" Gimmicks he has, the more fanatical he's likely to become . . .

Disadvantage: The character is single-minded and fanatic when dealing with his Higher Purpose, often neglecting his other responsibilities. His zealotry may even prove to endanger his own safety or the well-being of others.

Hippocratic Oath

Description: The character is dedicated to the cause of saving lives. This dedication enables him to perform miraculous feats and even to move the hearts of his most hated enemies.

How to use it: Like Higher Purpose, the character possesses one or more Golden Plot Points. In the case of "Hippocratic Oath," the character may only use these points to

save lives, heal the sick, etc. This ability may only be used to save the life of another individual.

Disadvantage: The character must also use his lifesaving skills on any and all who require them; this includes enemies. Nor may he willfully cause injury to another sentient being.

Inscrutable

Description: The character is cloaked in mystery and intrigue. He is an enigma wrapped in a riddle . . . a puzzle that no one can seem to figure out.

How to use it: If another character attempts to influence or to understand the Inscrutable character's motives, he does so at a Stunt Roll penalty of -10 (a character needing to roll a 45 or under would actually have to roll a 35 or under).

Disadvantage: The character may seem aloof and distant, even to his close associates.

"Just Another Day on the Job . . . "

Description: The character is able to use everyday skills in unusual situations.

How to use it: The character may use any of his Merits in unique and varied ways. For example, a character who is a professional juggler may use his Juggling Merit as a form of attack or defense.

Disadvantage: The character may tend to stick with what he knows (for example, passing up an enchanted sword for his trusty monkey-wrench).

Laboratory

Description: The character has a well-supplied laboratory and access to equipment.

How to use it: The Laboratory can take many forms; a junk-filled workshop, a greasy auto garage or a hitech research building. The character flip-flops his Stunt Rolls whenever working in his Lab.

Disadvantage: The Laboratory, like the Estate Gimmick, requires a bit of upkeep or it will fail the character at inopportune moments.

Leadership

Description: The character is a charismatic and courageous leader, able to take command even in the harshest conditions.

How to use it: The character can flip all Persona rolls involving command or Leadership matters.

Disadvantage: A character with this Gimmick is expected to act like a leader. Frequent displays of cowardice or tyranny may cause him to lose his Leadership ability.

Linguist

Description: The character is adept at mastering languages, both spoken and written, ancient and modern.

How to use it: The character starts out with 3 foreign languages that he can read, write and speak fluently. Additional languages may be learned as needed simply by spending one Plot Point.

Disadvantage: The character cannot use this ability to learn alien languages on the fly (although the player may opt for one of his initial languages to be an alien tongue).

Looks that Kill

Description: The character is stunningly handsome or drop-dead gorgeous. Conversely, the character may possess an incredibly grotesque visage.

How to use it: Whenever using his or her appearance to achieve a goal, the character flip his Persona Stunt Rolls. This includes hideously ugly characters that choose this Gimmick (although their appearances can only be used to shock, frighten and intimidate).

Disadvantage: Characters with Looks that Kill are easily noticed and rarely forgotten.

Man With No Name

Description: The character, male or female, has no record of ever being born. People attempting to trace his whereabouts usually turn up empty-handed.

How to use it: Not only will people tend not to remember the character, they will be hard-pressed to locate the character or find out any information about him. Records and files will turn up missing (or non-existent), paper trails will lead to dead-ends . . .

Disadvantage: Characters with this Gimmick find it hard to establish close relationships.

Martial Artist

Description: The character is proficient at an exotic fighting style.

How to use it: Martial Artists may choose to use either their Brawn or their Action Attribute when making unarmed attacks and also when blocking attacks. The may also use their abilities to parry distance attacks such as throwing knives, arrows and the like.

Disadvantage: Martial Artists must meditate and practice their fighting style every day.

Mystic Relic

Description: The character is in possession of a Mystic Relic.

How to use it: The Mystic Relic is some alien artifact or enchanted item (a talisman, a sword, a pair of ruby slippers) that has strange powers. The number and nature of those powers depend on the number of times this Gimmick is chosen:

x1: The Mystic Relic has a Might or Arcane of 5, and +2 Merits to spend on Mighty Powers or Arcane Disciplines.
x2: The Mystic Relic has a Might or Arcane of 7, and +5 Merits to spend on Mighty Powers or Arcane Disciplines.
x3: The Mystic Relic has a Might or Arcane of 9 and +10 points to spend on Mighty Powers or Arcane Disciplines.

Disadvantage: This Mystic Relic could be highly sought after by the character's enemies.

Newshound

Description: Newshounds are able to find a story in virtually any situation.

How to use it: This Gimmick allows the character to hear "the word on the street" by spending a Plot Point. Although not totally reliable, this information should at least be of some value.

Disadvantage: When Newshounds go looking for trouble . . . they often find it!

Nick of Time

Description: From disarming bombs to getting to his own wedding on time, the character will never be "too late."

How to use it: If the character spends a Plot Point, the GM can slow down events so that the character will arrive just in time.

Disadvantage: Like the flying ace's crash landing ability, the character with Nick of Time sometimes rely on their Gimmick too much and everything becomes a last minute save.

Nine Lives

Description: The character is preternaturally lucky, seemingly able to defy death!

How to use it: The character begins the game with "nine lives." If faced with a hopeless or potentially lethal situation, he can spend one of those lives to ignore damage, escape from a trap or otherwise defy death.

Disadvantage: Once those nine lives are gone, they're gone for good. This Gimmick may not be taken twice.

One-Man Army

Description: The character is able to take on multiple opponents in combat without breaking a sweat. The word "outnumbered" isn't in his dictionary . . .

How to use it: The character can make a number of attacks equal to his Daring Style. Also, he can split up his actions into attacks and dodge attempts (a character with a Daring of 7 could attack four opponents and still have three actions left to dodge any attacks that come his way).

Disadvantage: Characters with this Gimmick think of themselves as invincible, a trait that can sometimes lead to their undoing.

Patriot

Description: The character is Patriotic and his spirit, and his love for his country, can never be broken.

How to use it: Patriotic characters can ignore Wound penalties when fighting for their country's (or planet's) ideals. They also can flip their Spirit Stunt Rolls when undergoing interrogation or even torture. The player should decide to what country (or planet, if the character is an alien) his character's loyalties lie.

Disadvantage: The Patriot is a proud individual who is thin-skinned when others insult his patriotism.

Patronage

Description: The character's exploits are privately or publicly funded by an organization.

How to use it: The character has easy access to money, supplies and information through his Patron. The player should decide the specifics of the Patron organization.

Disadvantage: The character may be expected to undertake missions or otherwise perform favors for his Patrons. Failure to do so could have dire consequences.

"Put it on my Tab . . . "

Description: The character never seems to have to pay for anything.

How to use it: The character has no need for money. Perhaps he's extremely well-known or loved or perhaps he's seen as a charity case. Maybe he's just so rich that money has no meaning to him anymore. Either way, he's set for life.

Disadvantage: If the player abuses this Gimmick, he may find folks are less willing to pay his way . . .

Reputation

Description: The character is famous (or infamous) for some reason.

How to use it: Like Celebrity, the character is wellknown to the public-at-large. The player should decide how he got his Reputation and whether he's popular and trusted or notorious and feared.

Disadvantage: Popular characters tend to be disliked by less-savory elements and notorious characters will have a harder time dealing with John and Jane Q. Public.

Safehouse

Description: The character has a flophouse, secret base or private sanctum where he and his associates can safely rest and recuperate.

How to use it: The character's Safehouse is a place of refuge. Provided he doesn't just blurt out the Safehouse's whereabouts, its location will remain hidden from his enemies.

Disadvantage: Safehouses do not contain any special equipment or posh surroundings. Characters wishing for their own Fortress of Solitude or Batcave should also choose Gimmicks such as Estate or Laboratory.

Secret Identity

Description: The character has a Secret Identity allowing him to perform his exploits without endangering his "normal" life.

How to use it: The character should choose an additional Role that will become his alter-ego. He can also choose additional Gimmicks (one free Gimmick based on this alter-ego Role and an additional Gimmick for each Style of 8 or higher) that his alter-ego has access to. He may only use these Gimmicks when in the guise of his Secret Identity (you don't see Batman writing too many checks for the local charity, do you?)

Disadvantage: The Secret Identity has its good points, but keeping this secret will undoubtedly cause problems for the character.

Sidekick

Description: The character has a Sidekick that can bail him out of trouble.

How to use it: The character should create a Sidekick NPC that can be called on to assist him in time of need. If another player wishes to portray this Sidekick, then the two character have the ability to share Plot Points and spend them on one another's behalf (although Golden Plot Points may not be shared).

Disadvantage: The character may find himself bailing out his Sidekick as well!

Signature Trick

Description: The character is adept at fire-breathing, sword swallowing or other such side-show feats.

How to use it: The GM and the player should decide the parameters of the Signature Trick and whether or not it costs Plot Points to use.

Disadvantage: A consummate showman, the character will often leave calling cards at the scenes of his exploits (like Zorro's "Z" trademark or The Comedian's smiley face buttons). Characters with Signature Tricks rarely display discretion in favor of showboating and theatrics.

Signature Vehicle

Description: The character possesses a unique vehicle equipped with strange gadgets and special abilities.

How to use it: The GM and the player should work out the details of the Signature Vehicle. It can be anything from a jet-car to a submarine to a starship.

Disadvantage: The Signature Vehicle is closely associated with the character and will probably be coveted by his enemies. Also, the character will need some kind of mechanical Merit (or a greasemonkey Contact) to keep the vehicle in working condition.

Sporting Edge

Description: Not only is the character a natural athlete, but he's a natural competitor as well.

How to use it: The character may flip any Stunt Roll where there is an element of competition (a streetfight does not count but a boxing match would).

Disadvantage: The character will almost never back down from a challenge and is eager to prove himself to those who may be more capable than he.

Strange Homeland

Description: The character comes from a remote land or possibly another planet or dimension.

How to use it: The character is a "favorite son" in his Homeland and can rely on his countrymen for assistance if the need arises.

Disadvantage: The character's Homeland might require his assistance at some point in time. Weird Beings without this Gimmick are regarded as outcasts in their Homeland and are seen in an unfavorable light by his former countrymen.

Tireless Worker

Description: The character, be it through technology or magic, doesn't require food, water, air or sleep.

How to use it: Just like it says. This Gimmick is usually only possessed by robots and alien characters. Tireless Workers may also ignore the effects of toxins and diseases if a Plot Point is spent.

Disadvantage: The character may not understand the limitations of his associates, which could cause some misunderstandings . . .

Trouble Magnet

Description: Excitement follows the character like his own shadow. He often lands smack-dab in the middle of an adventure without even realizing it.

How to use it: This is basically a sneaky way of getting the character into an adventure. As a bonus, the character gains +5 Merit Points.

Disadvantage: The character is a Trouble Magnet . . . that kind of says it all, doesn't it?

Totem Animal

Description: The character has a Totem Animal and he may call out to this spirit guide for advice and for assistance.

How to use it: By spending a Plot Point and making a successful Persona Stunt Roll, the character may call upon his Totem Animal for advice. By spending a Plot Point and making a successful Spirit Stunt Roll,

the character may temporarily acquire an aspect of his Totem Animal (for example, a character with a tiger Totem could acquire heightened senses, claws or camouflage ability). Finally, the character gains +10 to his Persona Stunt Rolls when dealing with his Totem Animal (this refers to the animals themselves, not the actual spirit guide).

Disadvantage: The character's Totem Animal may request favors from the character from time to time. Also, the Totem Animal will often place a restriction on the character (like a Wolf Totem Animal will only be called on under the light of the moon).

True Grit

Description: The character is one part crocodile, one part mule and one part grizzly bear. He's tough as nails and will never give up the fight.

How to use it: The character gains +1 to his Wound Rating and can spend a Plot Point to do any of the following:

- Ignore Wound Penalties for the duration of a fight scene

- Ignore the effects of toxins or mind-altering magical spells or powers

- Ignore the effects of hunger, thirst or sleep deprivation

Disadvantage: The character is so stubborn that he won't accept defeat even when that's the rational thing to do!

Unbreakable Loyalty

Description: The character's sense of loyalty is unquestioned. He will go to any length to keep another character's trust.

How to use it: The player should decide where his character's loyalties lie. From then on, the character can spend a Plot Point to ignore any event (torture, magical spells, mind-control rays) that would result in him breaking that trust. The character also gains +10 to any Persona Stunt Roll to (but only when he is telling the truth).

Disadvantage: Obviously, the character cannot lie or act dishonorably.

Underestimated

Description: Whether due to the character's age, size, physical condition or gender, the character is perceived to be less than a threat to his or her enemies.

How to use it: The character is Underestimated by his enemies (for example, if captured he might not be restrained like the other characters).

Disadvantage: The character might develop a bit of a complex about being thought of as "weak" or incapable.

Unerring Navigation

Description: The character will never get lost and seems to always find what he's looking for.

How to use it: The character will always know what direction he's travelling, will memorize pathways and can figure out three-dimensional puzzles such as mazes. He is also skilled at making and reading maps and navigational charts.

Disadvantage: None, really . . . except that his colleagues might not be as sure of his directions as he is!

Unwavering Faith in Science

Description: The character has supreme confidence that Science will save the day, enabling him to solve seemingly impossible scientific dilemmas.

How to use it: The character gains +10 to any Stunt Roll dealing with science or invention.

Disadvantage: The character may rely a bit too heavily on his intellect and scientific knowledge.

Voluminous Trenchcoat

Description: The character has the uncanny ability to hide weapons, secret documents and recording equipment on his person that is all but detectable.

How to use it: The character can conceal any small object on his person with no chance of detection. To hide larger items (up to the size of a sword or tommygun), he must spend a Plot Point.

Disadvantage: The character must be wearing some kind of garment that allows him to hide objects (hat, trenchcoat, cape or baggy pants).

Weird Gadgetry

Description: The character has a stockpile of strange inventions and gizmos.

How to use it: The character has access to a warehouse or storage area where he keeps a large collection of Weird Gadgetry. The gadgets may be his own creations or just unusual items that he's collected over the years. By spending a Plot Point and making a successful Smarts Stunt Roll, the character can locate virtually any odd device or artifact imaginable.

Disadvantage: The character needs a

place to keep all this junk!

Weird Powers

Description: The character has unusual abilities far beyond the realm of mortal men.

How to use it: With this Gimmick, the character may use his Arcane Style for Mighty Powers or his Might to utilize Arcane Disciplines.

Disadvantage: Only non-human characters like the Weird Being may possess this Gimmick.

Well-Traveled

Description: The character is Well-Traveled and is quite worldly.

Plot Points

1 starting Plot Point

The Plot Point is what determines how quickly your character advances in *Pulp Era*. All starting characters receive one Plot Point free of charge. Plot Points can be gained during character creation by not spending Merit points or by taking Flaws. During the game Plot Points can be earned by inspired or ingenious role-playing . . . or be simply making the other players and the GM laugh.

Plot Points are also given out as rewards at the end of an Episode depending on your character's (and the group's) accomplishments. Lastly, Plot Points can be earned by assisting the GM by playing Sidekicks and other Supporting Roles, and through in-game theatrics from giving a rousing speech to launching into a musical number.

Plot Points are also spent in similarly numerous ways. In between Episodes, players can spend their Plot Points to gain new Merits or increase existing ones. They can even increase their Styles and Attributes (though this is much more difficult). During the Episode, Plot Points are used to activate certain Gimmicks or in order to accomplish difficult tasks through the use of Devices.

Plot Devices

Plot Devices are ways that the players can directly influence the progression of the story. Using these Devices, a player can negate damage from an attack, re-roll a failed Stunt, introduce a useful equipment that he never packed or even dole out information to characters in other scenes! Here are some sample Plot Devices:

Training Montage: By spending one Plot Point, the character can use the Training Montage device to gain a new Merit or increase an existing one during the Episode. This is done as a sequence of "training scenes" where the character becomes a student studying under a teacher. Watch virtually any boxing, military or martial arts film and you see a Training Montage. Strangely enough, this Device can also be seen in most '80s teen comedies where the nerdy teen goes to a clothing store and tries on many different outfits, usually to a rockin' soundtrack.

Narration: A staple of pulp detective movies, this device allows the other players to "hear" (and act upon) the character's thoughts by spending one Plot Point to start the Narration. This is a great way of relaying information to your fellow players even if your character isn't with them. Characters with the Animal Companion Gimmick can use this allow the other players to temporarily understand their animal companion. Ever see Lassie? If so, then you know how this works . . .

Flashback: This Device is a good way to build a history between characters who should know each other well but, in reality, have just met because of a new Player or a Game Convention environment. By spending a Plot Point, a character can stop the current flow and momentarily move the game back in time. There are numerous things that can be done with this Device, from imparting items that will be useful to have ("But wait . . . before you go, take this.") to establishing information about the characters themselves ("Back when we were growing up, I was always amazed at the Professor's ability to play hockey . . . ").

Cut-Scene: A very powerful Device, the Cut-Scene costs 5 points to use. By using Cut-Scene the player can effectively say "That never happened" to a scene that happens in the Episode. If your character ever ends up bound, gagged, blindfolded and trapped in a locked safe that's just been dropped from an airplane into the Mariana Trench, this is an excellent time to burn those Plot Points and call for a Cut-Scene.

Re-shoot: An easy one to explain, just spend a Plot Point to re-roll the dice.

Shooting Blanks: The Shooting Blanks Device works on the assumption that none of the violence in the pulps was actually real — it was all done with blanks, balsa wood and paper-mash. Using this device, a player can reduce an attack's Level of Success by one per Plot Point spent. This Device may only be used by the character taking damage. Despite its name, it can be used to reduce the damage of any type of attack.

Final Soliloquy: If a *Pulp Era* hero is killed, he can pass on any remaining Plot Points he may have by speaking his parting words to the other characters. The Soliloquy can take the form of an inspiring "Win one for the Gipper!" speech, or it can be a heartfelt tear-jerker ("My only regret is that I never learned to read!"). Characters who bear witness to these final words receive the deceased's last Plot Points. If there is an odd number of Plot Points up for grabs, these Plot Points are lost. Plot Points may not be passed on in this manner to the player's next character.
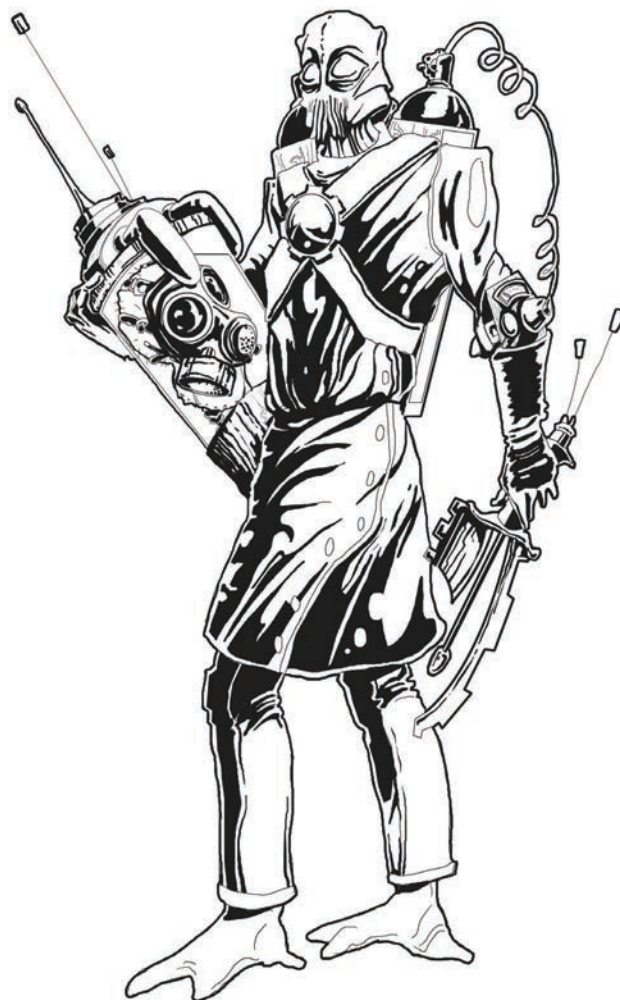
Lights, Camera, Action!

Stunts

Whenever a character attempts to do something risky, its called a Stunt. Keep in mind that "risky" is a relative term. A skilled mechanic can change a flat tire without rolling dice. For another character less skilled at these things, it's going to be tough. And without the right equipment (a spare tire, a jack), it might well be impossible. So before you call for a Stunt, ask yourself the following questions:

1. Could this action be considered either extremely easy or just impossible for the character in question to accomplish?

2. If there is some question as to the Stunt's difficulty, will the undesired result (usually a failed Stunt) brings things to dead stop?

If the answer to either of these questions is "yes," then skip the roll and just declare it a success or failure. Of course, some people like to roll dice for some reason. If you're one of these guys, then go ahead and clatter away. In fact, here's the part where we tell you how to use those dice of yours.

Pulp Era uses two 10-sided (percentile) dice.

When you roll for a Stunt, first decide the Style of the Stunt (chances are, if there's no Style, it's not a Stunt and you should just be able to do it automatically or not at all!):

Daring Stunts: Action-oriented and athletic Stunts, brawling, shooting and driving.

Ingenious Stunts: Building or repairing items, problem-solving, applying scientific knowledge.

Crafty Stunts: Stealth, picking a lock, setting traps, noticing details, playing an instrument.

Charming Stunts: Vocal performances, intimidating an opponent, calming animals, seduction.

Mighty Stunts: Using Mighty Powers.

Arcane Stunts: Using Arcane Disciplines.

Now that you have figured out the Stunt's Style, you need to determine what Attribute is most appropriate for the Stunt — what Attribute will "get the job done." Will it be brute strength or a magnetic personality? Lightning reflexes or an indomitable will? When you're choosing what Attribute to use, remember to factor in any Merits, Specialties or Flaws you might have that are applicable and add (or subtract) them to your Attribute. Note that Styles and Attributes can be paired up in many ways to perform various Stunts and there is no "one way" to do it. Be creative and chances are, your creativity will be rewarded.

Now multiply the Style by the Attribute; the product is called the Stunt Roll. If you roll equal to or less than that number, the Stunt is a success. If you roll above that number, then your character has failed the Stunt. No matter how good or bad your character's abilities are, a roll of 01 is always a success and a roll of 00 (100) is always a failure.

Fighting

Be it on the highways or in the wrestling ring, combat is a fact of life in the action-packed world of *Pulp Era*. As such, the combat system should be fast easy to use, so that when fights do break out (and they will!) they'll enhance the story rather than slow it down to a half-hour of initiative rolls, to hit modifiers and critical hit tables. Combat (especially car combat) should be should be as interesting to watch as it is to participate. And it goes without saying that all combat should be action-packed. The combat scene shouldn't feel like a strategy wargame. It should feel like a scene from a comic book or a dimestore novel. Fast and furious.

Also take into account the overall "feel" of the fight. A gritty slugfest in some back-alley is going to be a lot different than a dazzling display of fencing mastery. The former should be short, brutal and to the point. The latter should be colorful, outrageous and full of reversals and double-reversals. Although either way is fine, *Pulp Era* should keep the "fun" aspect in mind and avoid too much angst and gore.

Every good fight scene is like a little story. To that effect, combat in *Pulp Era* is broken down into three stages: **setup**, **conflict** and **resolution**. Setup defines the conditions of the fight — the location, the goal and the participants. Conflict is when the participants clash with one another. Resolution is when the smoke clears and the outcome is revealed. Sometimes, a fight will only last one round, other times the stages will repeat. GMs and players should take notice when a fight has gone on too long (see John Carpenter's *They Live* for the best example I can think of).

The Setup

The fight's participants act in order of the Style that they are using. Characters using the Daring and Mighty Styles may act first. Next comes Ingenuity, then Craft, then Charm and then Arcane. As you can see, characters who are fighting hand-to-hand or using Mighty Powers will be able to act long before character who are casting spells. Spells require concentration and ritualistic components to work properly. They're not things that can happen easily in the midst of a bar brawl. Ingenuity is used when a character has an inspired idea and acts upon it

(like when a tired Indiana Jones fells the swords-

man in *Raiders of the Lost Ark* with a shot from his pistol). Craft is used primarily in setting ambushes, pulling dirty tricks and sharpshooting. Charm is really only used in combat to intimidate your opponent but other uses are certainly possible. Within each Style, characters with the highest Action Attribute act first (Action Merits may be used to modify this) . If a player is unsure what he wants to do, he may elect to hold his action until everyone else has taken their turn. This is useful when waiting to see what an opponent will do or when dodging attacks.

Example: Rip Rocket is going to blast the demon B'larg with his laser gun, an act of Daring. B'larg plans to summon a ball of hellfire with the Theurgy Discipline, an act of the Arcane. No matter how high B'larg's Arcane Sphere is, Rip is going to get to act first. Give 'em Hell, Rip!

Think of these actions as being "shots" in a movie — attacking with a weapon, punching or kicking an opponent, drawing or firing a gun, casting a spell, dodging or blocking a blow — all be visualized as individual camera "shots." Note that even though these are all simple actions, you can perform several actions if you string them together cinematically. "I draw my gun and fire!" is not anywhere near as cool as "I draw my gun with my left hand, roundhouse kick the thug, and blast him as I catch the gun with my other hand!"

For instance, a character could draw his pistol, grab a rope and swing from a balcony while firing the pistol at the crowd of henchmen below him and that would only be considered one action! In most games, you'd have to spend one action to draw your weapon, use another action to make a Stunt Roll to swing across the room and then use spend another round making a Stunt Roll to fire your pistol. In *Pulp Era*, that's all unnecessary.

Conflict

Now that the Setup Stage has been completed, it's time for the Conflict Stage. Announce your intended action and make an appropriate Stunt Roll (remembering to factor in any Merits, Flaws or Specialties you may possess). Although you may opt to change what kind of Stunt you pull, you can't switch Styles once the Conflict stage has begun. If you do this, you forfeit your turn as your character stares blankly at his surroundings. When you make the Stunt Roll, its effects will vary according to what type of action you took.

Offensive Actions

When making an unarmed attack or when using a heavy weapon or Brawn Powers/Disciplines, use your Brawn Attribute. When making distance attacks (thrown weapons, arrows,

bullets) or when using light edged weapons or Action Powers/Disciplines, use your Action Attribute. If you possess the Martial Artist Gimmick, you may use your Action Attribute when making unarmed attacks. Typically, Brawn attacks focus on smashing your opponent into the ground while Action attacks rely on accurate strikes to the opponent's vital areas. After the attack is made and is successful, your opponent will usually suffer some kind of deleterious effect, which is covered in the Getting Hurt section.

Defensive Actions

When defending against an attack, you must first sacrifice your action for the round. If you have already taken your action, you may not defend. At any rate, the purpose of defending is to lower the damage done to you by a successful attack. There are two types of defensive actions:

Dodging

Dodging is a simple but invaluable skill with only one rule: make sure the bad guy misses! This can range from the acrobatics of a kung fu master to the evasive maneuvering of dogfighting fighter pilots. The major advantage of dodging is that it can be used to evade any kind of physical attack, ranged or close-combat. The disadvantage is that you need room to move — fighting in close quarters makes dodging a virtually impossible feat. Dodging relies on your character's Action Attribute and either it works or it doesn't — you can't really "partially dodge" — that's what getting hit is called.

Blocking & Parrying

Using these methods, you attempt to deflect your opponent either by physically countering his attack (Brawn, or Action using the Martial Arts Gimmick) or by parrying the attack with a weapon (Action). Blocking is useful because you can lower an attack's damage (usually by taking the brunt of the force or re-directing the attack away from a vital area). When you decide to block or parry an attack, you simply roll the appropriate Style + Attribute — success means that you may lower the attack's damage by your Brawn rating. The disadvantage is that because you are putting yourself directly in harm's way, you cannot use blocking or parrying to defend yourself against ranged attacks (although this is permissible through use of the Martial Arts Gimmick, allowing you to pluck arrows from the air or bat them to the side with a sword blade). Also, unarmed characters can only block unarmed attacks (with certain exceptions).

Resolution

Damage is dealt by looking at the "tens" die used in the attack and multiplying that number by the weapon's Damage Rating. Oh, and before you get all crazy on me, that "tens" die is treated like a "ones" value. If the "tens" die

happens to be a 0, the attack only does its rating in damage (so a weapon with a rating of x3 will only do 3 points of damage). Some weapons have a limit to the damage that they can inflict — it's hard to kill someone with a butter knife no matter how hard you try. If your attack's damage is higher than the weapon's damage limit, then you only inflict the amounted listed as the weapon's limit.

Weapon Damage	
Fists and feet	x1, maximum damage is the fighter's Brawn rating
Small blades, clubs and blunt objects	x2, maximum damage is the wielder's Brawn rating
Swords, crossbows, axes	x3, maximum damage is twice the wielder's Brawn rating
Small firearms (hold-out pistols, zip guns)	x4, maximum damage 15
Large firearms, rifles, shotguns	x5, maximum damage 30 (x1 vs. hard targets, no maximum damage)

Getting Hurt

Whenever you are hurt in combat, you take a number of Wounds as determined both by the weapon's type and by your opponents skill. There are three levels of being hurt in *Pulp Era*: Bruised, Hurt and Down. Technically there's a fourth level . . . Dead. That one's self-explanatory but the other three warrant a bit for info.

Bruised: If you suffer any damage, you don't really feel the effects until you hit your Wound rating. You're a bit dazed and sore but you're basically okay. You're Bruised. You don't suffer any penalties but you're obviously banged up a bit.

Hurt: If you suffer more than your Wound rating in damage, you're not doing so well. You're Hurt. You're in pain and it's hard to concentrate. You're probably bleeding or you have a couple broken ribs. All your Stunt Rolls are at -20 (so if you need to roll a 56 or less, you really need to roll a 36 or less). As an added treat, you are also one rung down when determining who goes first during the Setup stage. So a Hurt character's Daring Stunts will occur during the Ingenuity phase. Yes, that means Hurt characters can't use Arcane Disciplines.

Down: If you take more than twice your Wounds, you're Down. Like, on the floor bleeding, writhing in pain, unconscious, etc. If you take any more abuse, you're probably going to die. You can't do anything except (maybe) moan and writhe and feel extreme pain. If you're lucky, you're not feeling anything.

Might & Magic

Mighty Powers

Powers are the strange and often unique abilities that some Pulp heroes may have. There are two basic kinds of Powers in *Pulp Era*: Major and Minor. Major powers are either powerful improvements on existing abilities (invulnerability, lightning-speed) or totally new abilities (teleportation, energy beams). Minor powers are either slight improvements (increased strength, night-vision) or limited forms of Major Powers (radar-sense, gliding). Rather than go through the countless types of Mighty Powers imaginable, you can create your own Powers using this system.

Decide what Attribute your Power is based on.

Here are some examples, see the following Arcane Disciplines for more ideas.

Brawn: Powers relating to the body, strength or endurance of the Hero. *Examples: Super-Strength, Armored Skin, Shapechanging, Claws*

Action: Powers relating movement or Powers requiring agility or coordination. *Examples: Flight, Lighting Speed, Flame Blast, Prehensile Tail*

Smarts: Powers relating perception, reaction or intelligence. *Examples: X-Ray Vision, Danger Sense, Lightning Reflexes, Codebreaking*

Spirit: Mental Powers affecting the Hero's mind or body. *Examples: Telekinesis, Regeneration, Teleportation*

Persona: Powers affecting other people's minds or perception. *Examples: Illusion Creation, Animal Empathy, Vocal Powers*

As you can see, there is some overlap between Powers. For instance, is the ability to change into a bird a Brawn Power or a Spirit Power (like the Shaman Discipline Shape-Shifting)? In cases like this, use your judgement and consult your GM.

Determine the Power's level.

The best way to handle this is to talk through your Power with the GM at the start of character creation. He'll let you know if your power is too disruptive for the game.

Like normal Merits, Minor Powers usually give the Hero an Attribute modification plus the benefit of extra Levels of Effect. Thus, a character with Super-Strength (Minor) of +3 will add +3 to his modified Brawn as well as three additional Levels of Effect for the Stunt Roll.

If a character with Major Super-Strength can lift tanks, then punching out a bad guy should be no problem at all. In the case of Major Powers, assume that the Hero can automati-

cally accomplish all but the most difficult feats. The Hero needs only to roll when attempting something that no ordinary human could do (punching holes through battleship armor, flying faster than a speeding bullet, etc.). In this case, roll as normal using the appropriate Attribute and the Might Style to determine the Stunt Roll.

Determine the cost of the Power.

Minor Powers cost 2 x the Power's level in Merit points. Major Powers cost 10 Merit points.

Arcane Disciplines

Disciplines are "Arcane Merits;" various schools of magic and mysticism that the Masters and Mistresses of the Unknown may learn. Each Discipline covers a wide range of topics and skills and allows the casting of spells within that field. With the exception of Occultism, all Arcane Disciplines modify both Spirit (when affecting the caster or non-living matter) and Persona (when affecting another living being). Also, with the exception of Occultism, Disciplines may not be learned by other character Archetypes.

Occultism

A metaphysical discipline that borders on the realm of True Science, Occultism has been studied by both Eastern and Western mystics and philosophers for centuries. As a form of pseudo-scientific knowledge, Occultism is the only Discipline that modifies the Smarts attribute. Although Occultism can be learned by other Archetypes after a lengthy period of intense study, this knowledge must be limited to one particular facet of the Occult. The following facets of Occultism may be used:

Alchemy

The creation of elixirs, potions, powders and artifacts, Alchemy was originally used for the sole purpose of transmuting lead to gold. A powerful alchemical artifact that is capable of transmuting elements, the Philosopher's Stone, is rumored to exist but has never been found.

Necromancy

Concerned primarily with the concepts of Death and Dying, Necromancy runs the gamut from Voodoo zombie rituals to Egyptian burial rites. Also called Thanatology, it is related somewhat to the Discipline of Spiritualism but differs in its approach: that of studying the physical rather than the spiritual. Despite its morbid trappings and dark reputation, the study of death is useful in learning how ancient cultures lived.

Mythology

A blend of anthropology, theology and magick, Mythologists study legendary heroes and mon-sters, creation stories and tales of Armageddon. Fantastic worlds and creatures also fall into this field, from vampires to werewolves, ghosts to faeries. Using this ability, even the most bizarre occurrences seem to make some kind of sense.

Divination

Also called Fortune-Telling and Soothsaying, Divination is a familiar concept: the art of foretelling the future. Various methods of Divination are often employed: Numerology (like the Kabbalah, a form of Jewish mysticism), astrology, palmistry (palm reading), the Chinese I Ching . . . even analyzing a person's handwriting.

Eastern Medicine

In the pulp era, "the Orient" was a source of ancient and arcane lore that continues to intrigue and mystify us even to this day. Eastern medicine concerns itself with prevention of disease through the manipulation of "Chi" (life-force). Acupuncture, herbalism, feng shui and chi gong (a kind of "laying on of hands") are all used in regulating the flow of Chi and promoting everything from good health to success in business ventures. Although Eastern Medicine like acupuncture is now widely accepted, keep in mind that in the world of *Pulp Era*, this kind of medicine is a rare and guarded secret.

Shamanism

The natural world is the domain of the Shaman. Shamans usually come from Earth-based religions such as practiced by Native Americans, Druids, Aborigines and African tribes. An important aspect of Shamanism is the concept of True Names. True Names are closely guarded secrets that can be used for great harm if found out by an enemy. By calling upon a creature's True Name, the Shaman gains power over it. How this works in game is entirely up to the GM. Another important concept in Shamanism is the belief that all things in nature contain spirits and thus can be spoken to using magic.

Shamanic magic usually incorporates the four elements (fire, water, earth and air), elaborate rituals, music and dance, Shamans can create rain in the hottest deserts, fire in the coldest mountains and some can even tap into wild, untamed forces, allowing them to change their very form! Shamans (also called "Medicine Men" and "Witch Doctors") often use these rituals to take upon the aspect of a totem spirit, an animal guardian that imbues the Shaman with his powers. Some shamanic powers include:

Shapeshifting

The Shaman can assume the form of his totem or another animal. This change is virtually instantaneous and lasts from sunrise to sunset (or vice versa). The Shaman is unable to cast any spells that require speech or gesturing while in this form and is bound by the physical limitations of that form (e.g.: a Shaman who assumes the shape of a fish cannot leave the water).

Weather Control

The Shaman can call upon the forces of Nature to cause snowstorms, gale-force winds, thunder and lightning or dense fog. The Shaman can also heighten or lessen a storm's deleterious effects (powerful Shamans can negate storms completely!).

Vision Quests

Through fasting, ritual torture and/or the imbibing of various substances, the Shaman can enter a deep trance where the past, present and future merge into one. The Shaman can use this state to foresee events occurring throughout the timestream, to speak with spirits and to enter the dreams of those who are asleep. Unlike the Occult field of divination or the Discipline of Spiritualism, the details of Vision Quests are often murky and clouded in cryptic meaning.

Mindspeaking

A form of limited telepathy, Mindspeak allows the Shaman to communicate with spirits of men, animals and Nature. The ability is one of the few that can be used while shapechanged into an animal form. Because Mindspeak bypasses language, it can be used to read surface emotions and to communicate with those who do not speak the Shaman's language.

Berserking

Berserking is a form of battle-lust that a Shaman can enter after a brief but intense period of preparation. While in this state, the Shaman gains the Gimmicks of One-Man Army and True Grit. The side-effect is that the Berserking Shaman is unaware of his surroundings and will attack friend and foe alike.

Spiritualism

Communication with the spirits of the dead is the domain of the Spiritualist, or Medium. Using such paraphernalia as Ouija boards, crystal balls and the trappings of classical exorcists (the infamous bell, book and candles), the Spiritualist is capable of some truly amazing feats. These include the following:

Medium

The Spiritualist is able to act as a living conduit between this world and Beyond. This act involves a limited form of possession where the

SPECIAL INSERT:

Dracovalis

The following two spreads are available in the print edition of *Gygax* magazine as a fold-out spread for ease of use. In this digital edition, they are located in the regular flow of the PDF. Readers may wish to print the maps on tabloid (11" x 17") paper in order to view them as originally intended.

DRACOVALIS

A game of conquest & defense for 2–4 players

by Jeremy Olson

Far across the sea, in an isolated valley there is a small kingdom known as Dracovalis. This valley lived in relative peace and isolation, ruled by Lord Kalepeck and his counsel of wizards.

For hundreds of years, Dracovalis lived in peace. None dare attack the valley because the Kalepeck family knew the secret incantations required to control dragons. The Kalepeck dynasty passed this knowledge on from father to son for generations, always careful to prevent anyone from learning the incantations, especially the wizards.

So when Lord Kalepeck XVIII, heirless, lay on his deathbed, he made a difficult decision. Rather than pass the knowledge to one person, he taught the incantations to the entire wizard counsel and forced them to swear on pain of death to use the knowledge only to protect Dracovlis.

For some years the valley did exist in peace, without any attack either from invaders or from within. But as the counsel grew weary of the oaths they had made and as tensions grew among the counsel without the leadership of a King, it became clear that eventually one counsel member would decide to take sole control of the valley.

As you pat the hot, scaly hide of Calgor, you allow yourself a rueful smile. Although you knew that war would come to Dracovalis, never did you expect that the first wizard to strike…would be you.

Premise

This adaptation of Dracovalis is a game for 2-4 players in which each player attempts to capture towns by attacking them with dragons. Players will receive spell components that enable them to cast useful spells and can decide how to distribute defensive fortifications.

At the end of the game, the player who controls the most prosperity wins by gaining sole control of Dracovalis.

What you will need

Per player:
- 5 six-sided dice
- 1 twenty-sided die
- 1 deck of playing cards
- 2 pawns, preferably color-coded red, yellow, blue, or green (Use: dragon pawns)
- 7-12 small tokens, preferably color-coded red, yellow, blue or green (Use: ownership and progress tokens)
- 4 paper clips

For the group:
- 11 six-sided dice
- 30-40 pennies or other small tokens (Use: fortifications)

illustrated by Aaron Williams

Short
Long
Brynioth
2
3
4

Short
Long
Anenmir
2
3
4

Short
Long
Craostein
2
3
4

Short
Long
Tchenadearc
2
3
4

Aldcrest
(A)

Sev's Creek
(7)

Jordhollow
(1)

Kalepe

Northmeadow
(9)

Tharston
(3)

Toofletan
(2)

Estermarsh (8)

ck Keep
K)

Queenston
(Q)

Tannerly
(10)

Foolsgulch
(4)

Calgor

Short
Long

2
3
4

Ekjahyrr

Short
Long

2
3
4

Hydra

Short
Long

2
3
4

Glaerong

Short
Long

2
3
4

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ACOMMODATE GATEFOLD

Figure 1: Game Board

TOWERS: This is your dragon's home. There are four towers, one in each corner of the map. They are unlabeled. When your dragons complete their actions, return the dragon pawns here.

TOWNS: Towns will develop at squares labeled with town names, with a maximum 4 prosperity and 3 fortifications.

CASTLE: The Castle grows slightly faster than other towns, and additionally can have a 5 prosperity and 4 fortifications. There is only one castle, labeled *Kalepeck Keep*. It is in the middle of the board.

DRAGON SYMBOL: (On the progress track) Indicates that the second dragon will enter play. (Players begin with 1 dragon in play.)

Setup

Each player keeps their playing cards in separate decks.

Remove all diamonds from your deck and set them aside in a separate stack. The stack containing the diamonds is the command deck. It is used to assign actions to dragons.

Clubs, spades, and hearts are used for the spell components deck.

Set the 5 and 6 of diamonds and jokers aside. They will not be used.

Each player additionally will need a wizard card corresponding to their position on the board/color:
Ignus (red), Solestria (yellow), Azuroth (blue) or Verdalia (green). The wizard cards can be cut out or copied from the last pages of these instructions. The wizard cards are used to randomly grow towns.

Remove the gameboard from the magazine. Each player should sit near their respective corner. Each player must place one progress token on the first space of the progress track. When any progress token is on the last space of the progress track at the end of the progression phase, the final round is triggered.

Place a d6 on Kalepeck Keep with 3 pips showing, as well as 3 pennies (3 fortifications). Place a d6 on both Queenston and Jordhollow with 2 pips showing (2 prosperity) and 2 pennies (2 fortifications) on each.

> If your playing card backs are different than another players, it can be very helpful to exchange command decks. This will cut down on confusion during play; it will be easier to tell the difference between your spell components and commands.

Dragons

Dragons have two statistics:

1) Range- This determines how far a dragon can travel. All towns at the board center are short range. Additionally, each tower is adjacent to a town, which is short range for that particular wizard. Long range is any town adjacent to another wizards tower. (i.e. Aldcrest, Tootletun and Foolsgulch are all Long range for Verdalia. Every other town on the board is short range for her.)

2) Fight- The fight score indicates the number of dice in the dragon's pool when engaged in combat. (Indicated by the claw symbol.)

Each player begins with 1 dragon in play. Range and Fight start at the minimum values; place paper clips over the minimum values of the starting dragon. (Short range and 2 fight.) The statistics can be improved by casting Swiftness or Strength as the game is played. When the second dragon enters play, begin that dragon with short range and 2 fight as well.

Gameplay

Each turn consists of the following phases:

1) Grow Towns

2) Set Orders

3) Resolve Orders

4) Fortifications

5) Progression

1) Grow Towns

At the beginning of each round each player draws 2 spell components.

Each player rolls his or her twenty-sided die, and compares the result to his wizard card. The roll will correspond to a town from the town-growth chart. If the town is not yet in play, place a Prosperity 2 town on the board, indicated by a 6-sided die with 2 pips showing, then add 2 fortifications. If there is already a town, and it is uncontrolled (a "free" town), increase the town's prosperity by 1 (up to 4) and add a fortification (up to 3). If a town is controlled, (i.e. somebody's ownership token is placed on it) increase the prosperity but do not increase the fortifications.

A town cannot have a prosperity higher than 4 or more than 3 fortifications. If a roll would increase a town's prosperity beyond 4, the prosperity remains at 4. If a roll increases fortifications beyond 3, the fortifications remain at 3.

The castle can grow up to 5 prosperity and can have up to 4 fortifications.

> Each wizard's die-roll chart is weighted differently. The two towns closest to a wizard's tower will only be rolled by that wizard. i.e. Tootletun and Estermarsh will only be rolled by Azuroth.

2) Set Orders

During the Set Orders phase, players simultaneously assign orders to their dragons.

Each player secretly assigns a square to each dragon in play using the command deck. Place the appropriate card face-down next to each dragon in play.

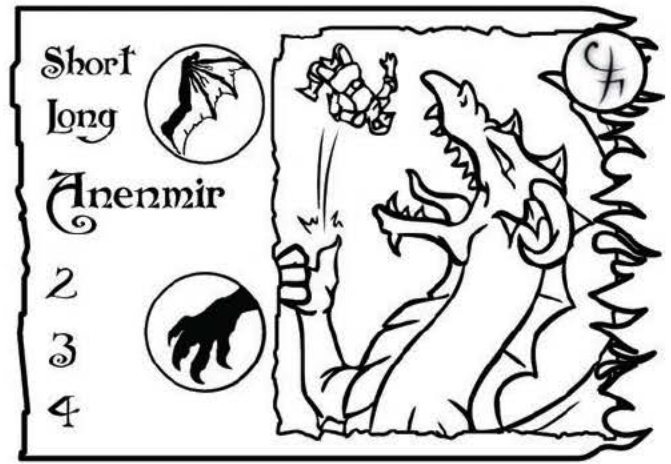When setting orders, ensure your dragon has enough range to travel

Figure 2: Dragon

to the location you have selected. All towns in the board center are short range towns. Additionally, the town adjacent to your own tower is short-range. Towns adjacent to your opponents towers are long range. Figure 3 shows short-range towns for Azuroth as an example.

All players keep their orders secret until everyone is ready. Once all players are ready, everyone reveals their orders and places their dragon pawns next to the corresponding towns.

> Until your progress marker reaches the second dragon symbol, you will only have one dragon to control.

3) Resolve Orders

When dragons land at a town, they will first fight any other dragons present. After the battle, the victor must attempt to capture the town/ castle, and the losing dragons should return to their respective towers.

> When there is a question regarding the order that battles are resolved, start with Kalepeck Keep (K) and progress sequentially from Kalepeck (K) to Aldcrest (A). (K, Q, J, 10, etc)

Fighting dragons

When more than one dragon attacks a town or castle, the dragons fight each other before anything else can be resolved.

Before the dragons enter combat, each player has a chance to declare and cast one combat spell. (Look below to Spellcasting for instructions on casting spells.) Once all spellcasting has resolved, combat begins.

Town Growth

- Towns enter play free with 2 fortifications and 2 prosperity.

- Free towns gain 1 fortification and 1 prosperity when rolled.

- Controlled towns gain 1 prosperity when rolled.

- Towns have a maximum of 4 prosperity and 3 fortifications.

- Kalepeck Keep has a maximum of 5 prosperity and 4 fortifications.

Figure 3: Town growth

All players simultaneously roll a number of six-sided dice equal to his/her dragon's fight, modified by spells as applicable. Any die that rolls 3 or higher is a success, and any die that rolls 2 or 1 is a failure. Once all players have rolled, each player removes all failures from their pool.

• If a player has no remaining die, that player has lost. His/her dragon returns to it's respective tower.

• If at least one player has 2 or more dice, all players with remaining dice simultaneously roll again.

• If all players have only 1 die remaining, the battle enters sudden death.

• If all players lose simultaneously, the battle enters sudden death.

• Sudden death: Each player rolls a single die and adds this number to the dragon's fight score. The high score wins . . . ties are re-rolled.

> All dragons on a given town fight at once; no matter how many dragons attack the town, all players roll pools and remove failures simultaneously as above.

Capturing towns

When one dragon remains on a town, the player may attempt to capture that town.

As before, a player has one chance to declare and cast one spell. (See below.) If an opponent controls the town, that opponent also has a chance to declare and cast one spell. Once spells are resolved, to capture a town, roll your dragon's fight pool and compare the successes to the number of fortification markers the town has. For each success, remove one fortification token. If any fortification tokens remain on the town, the fight is over; your dragon has failed to capture the town. Return it to your tower.

If all fortifications are removed, the town has been successfully captured. Reduce the town's prosperity by 1; your dragon did some damage! (If this reduces the prosperity to zero, the town is gone.) If the town was occupied, remove the ownership token. Place your ownership token on the town.

A player does not need to roll to capture a town without fortifications. Reduce the town's prosperity by 1 and place ownership tokens as above.

> You may send your dragon to your own town to defend from other dragons. Your dragon does not need to attack your own town…once your opponent's dragons have been fended off, your dragon simply returns to the tower.

Fortifications phase rewards		
Towns controlled	Fortifications received	Spell components received
0	–	2
1	2	1
2 or 3	2	–
4+	3	–

Figure 4: Fortifications and spell components table

4) Fortifications

Once all dragons have resolved their orders and returned to the tower, each player collects fortifications and spell components according to the number of towns they control. (See below.) Any fortifications that cannot be placed immediately become lost. (For example, if a player only controls towns that have maximized fortifications, they will not be able to place any, so they receive no fortifications.)

5) Progression

At the end of each turn, each player moves his progress token one space forward on the progress track. Casting the Hasten progress spell will also move the progress token one space forward immediately.

When a player's progress token lands on the dragon symbol, that player's second dragon enters play immediately.

If any progress token is on the last space of the progress track at the end of the Progression phase, the final round of the game is triggered.

6) Spellcasting

Spell	Cost	Effect	Timing
Swiftness	♡♡♠	Dragon's range increases permanently	Any time
Strength	♣♣♡♠♠	Dragon's fight increases permanently	Any time
Hasten Progress	♣♠♠	Move forward 1 square on the prgress track.	Progression
Fury	♡♠♠	Dragon recieves 1 extra fight (temporary)	Combat
Shield	♣♡♠	Town receives 1 extra fortification (temporary)	Combat
Curse	♠♠	Dragon must re-roll first 2 successes	Combat
Bless	♣♡	Dragon re-rolls first failure	Combat
Precise Strike	♣♣	Do not reduce prosperity if town is captured	Combat
Stonewall	♣♣♡♡	Place 2 fortifications (permanent)	Fortifications

Figure 5: Spellcasting table

There are three steps to successfully cast a spell:

1) A player must first declare what spell they are attempting.

2) That player will then play from their hand any number of cards. At least one card must be played from the player's hand.

3) The player deals an additional 4 cards from the deck face-up next to the card(s) played from his/her hand. For each face-card played from the hand, (K,Q,J) that player deals one extra card.

If all components needed to cast a particular spell have been played or drawn, the spell immediately takes effect. Whether the spell is successful or unsuccessful, all spell components played or dealt for the spell are spent and go to the discard pile. A player can shuffle discards back into the spell components deck at any time between spell casting attempts.

Figure 6 shows odds of casting a spell. (Full moon = 93% or greater probability of success, half moon = ~50% Probability of success)

Example: Joel and Katy both attack Kalepeck Keep on turn 4. Joel decides to cast Fury to enhance his chances of winning. Unfortunately, Joel only has in his hand the King of hearts (K♡) and Ace of spades (A♣). Fury requires one heart and two spades.

Joel consults the spellcasting probabilities table. (Figure 6) There are three approaches Joel could take to cast Fury. He could lay down just the K♡, just the A♠, or both.

If Joel laid down K♡ only, he would have roughly a 50% chance of success. (He uses the "draw 5" column because his King allows him one extra draw, and he uses the "2 cards, 1 suit" row because he needs 2 spades to complete his spell.)

Joel decides that capturing Kalepeck Keep at this point is important, so he elects to play both cards from his hand. He will draw 5 cards because of the King played from his hand, and will only be looking for one additional spade, so he will have roughly a 90% chance of success.

Find	Draw			
	4	5	6	7
1 card	◗	○	○	○
2 cards, 2 suits	◗	○	○	○
3 cards, 3 suits	◑	◑	◗	○
2 cards, 1 suit	◑	◑	◗	◗
3 cards, 2 suits	●	◑	◑	◗

Figure 6: Spellcasting probabilities table

There are some restrictions on combat spell-casting.

1) A player may only cast 1 combat spell per encounter. If the spell fails, another cannot be attempted for that encounter.

2) A player may only cast a spell if their dragon is present or if they

Figure 6: Spellcasting probabilities

control the town being attacked.

3) Spells cannot be cast once combat dice are rolling…both players must agree to roll dice before combat begins.

It is possible, although perhaps not advisable, to attempt to cast a spell using a card that's unrelated to the spell. For example, you can attempt to cast Fury playing a ♣ from your hand, but you will need to deal ♡♠♠ with only 4 cards from the deck.
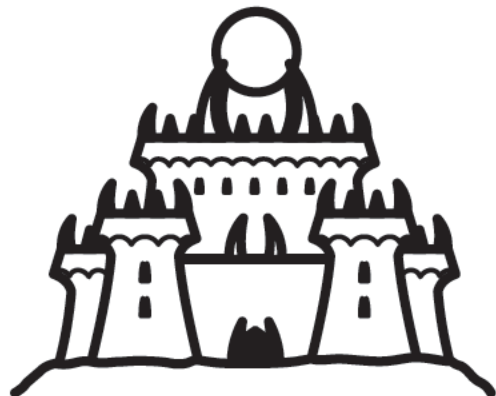
Winning

The game ends after the Resolve Orders phase of the final round. Each player adds the prosperity (# of pips shown on each die) from all towns that he/she controls. The player with the highest total prosperity wins the game.

In the event of a tie, the game is decided by the dragons. The tied players each choose a dragon to fight, and the dragons return once more to the castle to have one final battle using the same rules for fighting dragons above. Whichever dragon defeats the other dragon(s) in battle wins the game for his or her master. ∎

IGNUS

Turn order

1) Grow Towns
2) Set Orders
3) Resolve Orders
4) Fortifications
5) Progression

Town growth

1 to 7	Aldcrest (A)
8 to 12	Sev's Creen (7)
13 to 14	Queenston (Q)
15 to 16	Jordhollow (J)
17 to 20	Kalepeck Keep (K)

Fortifications phase rewards

Towns controlled	Fortifications received	Spell components received
0	—	2
1	2	1
2 or 3	2	—
4+	3	—

Rules for town growth:

Towns enter play free with 2 *fortifications* and 2 *prosperity*

Free towns gain 1 *fortification* and 1 *prosperity* when they are rolled

Controlled towns gain 1 *prosperity* when rolled

Towns have a maximum of 4 *prosperity* and 3 *fortifications*

Kalepeck Keep has a maximum of 5 *prosperity* and 4 *fortifications*

Odds of removing *fortifications*

Fortifications	Dragon Fight			
	2	3	4	5
1	○	○	○	○
2	◐	◐	○	○
3	●	●	◐	○
4	●	●	●	◐
5	●	●	●	●

VERDALIA

Turn order

1) Grow Towns
2) Set Orders
3) Resolve Orders
4) Fortifications
5) Progression

Town growth

1 to 7	Thurston (3)
8 to 12	Northmeadow (9)
13 to 14	Queenston (Q)
15 to 16	Jordhollow (J)
17 to 20	Kalepeck Keep (K)

Fortifications phase rewards

Towns controlled	Fortifications received	Spell components received
0	—	2
1	2	1
2 or 3	2	—
4+	3	—

Rules for town growth:

Towns enter play free with 2 *fortifications* and 2 *prosperity*

Free towns gain 1 *fortification* and 1 *prosperity* when they are rolled

Controlled towns gain 1 *prosperity* when rolled

Towns have a maximum of 4 *prosperity* and 3 *fortifications*

Kalepeck Keep has a maximum of 5 *prosperity* and 4 *fortifications*

Odds of removing *fortifications*

Fortifications	Dragon Fight			
	2	3	4	5
1	◐	○	○	○
2	◑	◐	○	○
3	●	●	◐	○
4	●	●	●	◑
5	●	●	●	●

Ignus

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2" rowspan="3">

Rules for spellcasting:

</td><td colspan="4" align="center">Draw</td></tr>
</table>

Rules for spellcasting:		Draw			
		2	3	4	5
Declare spell being cast	1 card	○	○	○	○
Play at least 1 card from the hand	2 cards, 2 suits	◔	○	○	○
Deal 4 cards from the deck plus 1 extra card for each K, Q, J played from the hand	3 cards, 3 suits	◑	◔	○	○
	2 cards, 1 suit	◕	◑	○	○
If the spell cost is revealed, the spell is cast.	3 cards, 1 suit	●	◑	◔	○

Spell	Cost	Effect	Timing
Swiftness	♡ ♡ ♠	Dragon's range increases permanently	Anytime
Strength	♣ ♣ ♡ ♠ ♠	Dragon's fight increases permanently	Anytime
Hasten Progress	♣ ♠ ♠	Move forward 1 square on the progress track	Progression
Fury	♡ ♠ ♠	Dragon receives 1 extra fight (temporary)	Combat
Shield	♣ ♡ ♠	Town receives 1 extra fortification (temporary)	Combat
Curse	♠ ♠	Dragon must re-roll first 2 successes	Combat
Bless	♣ ♡	Dragon re-rolls first failure	Combat
Precise Strike	♣ ♣	Do not reduce prosperity if town is captured	Combat
Stonewall	♣ ♣ ♡ ♡	Place 2 fortifications (permanent)	Fortifications

Verdalia

Rules for spellcasting:		Draw			
		2	3	4	5
Declare spell being cast	1 card	○	○	○	○
Play at least 1 card from the hand	2 cards, 2 suits	◔	○	○	○
Deal 4 cards from the deck plus 1 extra card for each K, Q, J played from the hand	3 cards, 3 suits	◑	◔	○	○
	2 cards, 1 suit	◕	◑	○	○
If the spell cost is revealed, the spell is cast.	3 cards, 1 suit	●	◕	◑	○

Spell	Cost	Effect	Timing
Swiftness	♡ ♡ ♠	Dragon's range increases permanently	Anytime
Strength	♣ ♣ ♡ ♠ ♠	Dragon's fight increases permanently	Anytime
Hasten Progress	♣ ♠ ♠	Move forward 1 square on the progress track	Progression
Fury	♡ ♠ ♠	Dragon receives 1 extra fight (temporary)	Combat
Shield	♣ ♡ ♠	Town receives 1 extra fortification (temporary)	Combat
Curse	♠ ♠	Dragon must re-roll first 2 successes	Combat
Bless	♣ ♡	Dragon re-rolls first failure	Combat
Precise Strike	♣ ♣	Do not reduce prosperity if town is captured	Combat
Stonewall	♣ ♣ ♡ ♡	Place 2 fortifications (permanent)	Fortifications

Azuroth

Turn order

1) Grow Towns
2) Set Orders
3) Resolve Orders
4) Fortifications
5) Progression

Town growth

1 to 7	Tootletun (2)
8 to 12	Estermarch (8)
13 to 14	Queenston (Q)
15 to 16	Jordhollow (J)
17 to 20	Kalepeck Keep (K)

Fortifications phase rewards

Towns controlled	Fortifications received	Spell components received
0	—	2
1	2	1
2 or 3	2	—
4+	3	—

Rules for town growth:

Towns enter play free with 2 *fortifications* and 2 *prosperity*

Free towns gain 1 *fortification* and 1 *prosperity* when they are rolled

Controlled towns gain 1 *prosperity* when rolled

Towns have a maximum of 4 *prosperity* and 3 *fortifications*

Kalepeck Keep has a maximum of 5 *prosperity* and 4 *fortifications*

Odds of removing *fortifications*

Fortifications	Dragon Fight			
	2	3	4	5
1	○	○	○	○
2	◐	◔	◔	○
3	◕	◐	◑	◔
4	●	●	●	◕
5	●	●	●	●

Solestria

Turn order

1) Grow Towns
2) Set Orders
3) Resolve Orders
4) Fortifications
5) Progression

Town growth

1 to 7	Foolsgulch (4)
8 to 12	Tunnerly (10)
13 to 14	Queenston (Q)
15 to 16	Jordhollow (J)
17 to 20	Kalepeck Keep (K)

Fortifications phase rewards

Towns controlled	Fortifications received	Spell components received
0	—	2
1	2	1
2 or 3	2	—
4+	3	—

Rules for town growth:

Towns enter play free with 2 *fortifications* and 2 *prosperity*

Free towns gain 1 *fortification* and 1 *prosperity* when they are rolled

Controlled towns gain 1 *prosperity* when rolled

Towns have a maximum of 4 *prosperity* and 3 *fortifications*

Kalepeck Keep has a maximum of 5 *prosperity* and 4 *fortifications*

Odds of removing *fortifications*

Fortifications	Dragon Fight			
	2	3	4	5
1	○	○	○	○
2	◐	◔	○	○
3	●	◕	◑	◔
4	●	●	●	◑
5	●	●	●	●

Azuroth

Rules for spellcasting:

Declare spell being cast

Play at least 1 card from the hand

Deal 4 cards from the deck plus 1 extra card for each K, Q, J played from the hand

If the spell cost is revealed, the spell is cast.

	Draw			
	2	3	4	5
1 card	◯	◯	◯	◯
2 cards, 2 suits	◑	◑	◑	◑
3 cards, 3 suits	◑	◑	◑	◑
2 cards, 1 suit	◒	◑	◑	◑
3 cards, 1 suit	●	◒	◑	◑

Spell	Cost	Effect	Timing
Swiftness	♡ ♡ ♠	Dragon's range increases permanently	Anytime
Strength	♣ ♣ ♡ ♠ ♠	Dragon's fight increases permanently	Anytime
Hasten Progress	♣ ♠ ♠	Move forward 1 square on the progress track	Progression
Fury	♡ ♠ ♠	Dragon receives 1 extra fight (temporary)	Combat
Shield	♣ ♡ ♠	Town receives 1 extra fortification (temporary)	Combat
Curse	♠ ♠	Dragon must re-roll first 2 successes	Combat
Bless	♣ ♡	Dragon re-rolls first failure	Combat
Precise Strike	♣ ♣	Do not reduce prosperity if town is captured	Combat
Stonewall	♣ ♣ ♡ ♡	Place 2 fortifications (permanent)	Fortifications

Solestria

Rules for spellcasting:

Declare spell being cast

Play at least 1 card from the hand

Deal 4 cards from the deck plus 1 extra card for each K, Q, J played from the hand

If the spell cost is revealed, the spell is cast.

	Draw			
	2	3	4	5
1 card	◯	◯	◯	◯
2 cards, 2 suits	◑	◑	◑	◑
3 cards, 3 suits	◒	◑	◑	◑
2 cards, 1 suit	◒	◑	◑	◑
3 cards, 1 suit	●	◒	◑	◑

Spell	Cost	Effect	Timing
Swiftness	♡ ♡ ♠	Dragon's range increases permanently	Anytime
Strength	♣ ♣ ♡ ♠ ♠	Dragon's fight increases permanently	Anytime
Hasten Progress	♣ ♠ ♠	Move forward 1 square on the progress track	Progression
Fury	♡ ♠ ♠	Dragon receives 1 extra fight (temporary)	Combat
Shield	♣ ♡ ♠	Town receives 1 extra fortification (temporary)	Combat
Curse	♠ ♠	Dragon must re-roll first 2 successes	Combat
Bless	♣ ♡	Dragon re-rolls first failure	Combat
Precise Strike	♣ ♣	Do not reduce prosperity if town is captured	Combat
Stonewall	♣ ♣ ♡ ♡	Place 2 fortifications (permanent)	Fortifications

Pulp Era

spirit in question temporarily "inhabits" the Medium's body, speaking and acting as though still alive. Of course, this is not without an element of danger as the "visiting" spirit might not want to leave . . .

Astral Travel

Also called an Out of Body Experience, the Spiritualist enters a deep trance and her spirit actually leaves her physical body. While in this "Astral Form," the Spiritualist is invisible and intangible to the physical plane (but not the Astral Plane, of course), tied to her dormant body by a silver cord.

She can fly around, unfettered by natural forces, and pass through solid matter, effectively a ghost for the duration of her journey. Again, this is not without some danger as the Astral Plane is the domain of real ghosts, not all of which are of the friendly variety, and should her silver cord be cut, her body would die instantly, leaving her to wander forever as a spirit herself.

Clairvoyance

Clairvoyance allows the Spiritualist to see and hear the dearly departed as they float through the Astral Plane. It can also be used as a kind of "remote viewing," allowing her to see and hear events taking place in distant locations.

Aura Reading

A form of ESP, this enables the Spiritualist to see the "soul" of an individual. Auras are multi-colored fields of energy that surround all living things. By analyzing the colors of these fields, the Spiritualist to discern emotional states, amongst other things.

Exorcism

Using this power, the Spiritualist can cast out an unwanted presence from a human host or locale. Exorcisms are rarely routine and the whole process is extremely dangerous and physically demanding for all parties involved.

Summoning

Similar to the Theurgist ability, the Medium may request an audience with a specific spirit. The Spiritualist must possess the name of the spirit, as well as a personal item once belonging to the deceased, in order to establish contact. Note that not all spirits enjoy being summoned . . .

Theurgy

Theurges (also called Hermetics) are the classic wizards of fantasy literature and while the Spiritualist's role is to walk the line between the two worlds, the Theurge's strength is his ability to summon those who dwell in other planes of existence. Some of these beings are benign, others are malevolent. The Theurge must master the powers of summoning, binding and commandment lest he lose his very soul! Hermetics are most often associated with demonic powers and employ pentagrams, candles and magical sigils to protect themselves.

Summoning

The Theurge can summon an entity that is known to him in a manner similar to that of the Spiritualist. Only the entity's name needs to be known (although a True Name must be used to summon an entity against its will).

Warding/Binding

By inscribing various sigils on herself and her surroundings, the Wizard can prevent a summoned being from entering or leaving an area. These sigils (the most common being circles of protection and five-pointed stars) may be created with virtually anything (even a finger tracing the air) but these methods may create an inferior Ward. Binding is simply establishing a written or verbal agreement with a captive spirit (the neophyte Theurge should beware of demonic contracts . . .).

Commandment

This powerful and exceedingly hazardous art allows the Theurge to outright force a summoned being's will to her own. Most Theurges use this on weaker, less intelligent creatures, often issuing simple commands such as "Guard!" or "Attack!" Demonic entities can only be Commanded by the most powerful (or most foolhardy) of Wizards.

Mystic Bolts

Mystic Bolts are missiles comprised of magickal energy that are summoned from the Aether. They can be fired with great accuracy and can cause any number of effecting; from the burning of flame to the corrosive nature of acid.

Mystic Shield

Similar in composition to its offensive counterpart, the Mystic Shield can be conjured from the Aether to protect its creator from any one type of damage (fire, cold, acid, electricity).

Mesmerism

The Mesmerist's power lies in the infinite resources of the human mind. Not only are Mesmerists skilled in the art of Hypnosis, they can actually send and receive thoughts and bend wills to their own. Some may even render themselves invisible, merely through the power of suggestion. Mesmerists are a subtle lot, needing only the sound of their voice or a piercing stare to entrance someone. Hand gestures and small props are often employed for that "special touch" (pocket watches and crystal pendants are widely used in the regard). Some of their unique abilities include:

Hypnosis

A common use of Mesmerism, Hypnosis allows the Mesmerist to cause someone to fall in a deep, trance-like state. The only requirement is the sound of the Mesmerist's voice. In this state, the sleeper can be forced to remember aloud long-buried memories or to bury them deep back into his subconscious. Using this art, the Mesmerist could squeeze out the location of the enemy's HQ or cause a man to forget his wife's maiden name. Either way, the difficulty of the task is directly related to the importance of the memory being manipulated.

Suggestion

With a simple word, the Mesmerist can trigger an immediate response in a subject although the command must not directly conflict with the target's nature (commanding a bored security guard to "Sleep!" would work. Issuing the same command to a vigilant, highly-trained MP would not). The Mesmerist must establish eye-contact with his victim in order for this power to work.

Implant

A combination of Suggestion and Hypnosis, Implant allows a command to be carried out upon a trigger ("When your hear the clock strike midnight, you will feel the urge to go out for a long walk . . . "). Aside from that wrinkle, it works much the same as Suggestion. Falling asleep or losing consciousness will negate the effects of the Implant, as will the conditions of the trigger not being met (ie: if the subject never hears the clock, the Implant won't activate). The subject must be in a hypnotic trance for this ability to work.

Cloaking

Cloaking is a form of telepathically-induced invisibility; that is, concealing oneself by limiting the perception of others (think of "The Shadow"). Although the Mesmerist employing this ability is still visible, his victims will simply ignore his presence. Dropping the cloak will negate its effect, as will calling attention to yourself. For some reason, this ability has no effect of animals or young children.

Death Trance

The Death Trance is a strange ability of mind over matter. With it, the Mesmerist can enter a trance not unlike the Zombie of Voodoo lore, feeling no hunger, thirst or pain. He can even slow his bodily processes to such a state that even a skilled medical examiner would be hard-pressed to locate a pulse . . . ∎

Rituals: more than just magic

New paradigms for rituals in role-playing games

by Eytan Bernstein

One of the most intriguing innovations of the last few editions of *Dungeons & Dragons* is the concept of rituals. A ritual is a form of magic than can be performed by a spellcaster without using memorized or spontaneous spell slots. The magic of the ritual has been performed so many times that by merely enacting the words and gestures, a spellcaster can achieve the magical effect.

While this article has a focus on *Dungeons & Dragons*, the ideas presented can be adapted to any game in which player characters (PCs) perform spiritual acts in the name of their belief systems. In particular, the concept of paradigms should be easily adapted to many game systems, some of which may already include a similar concept. *Shadowrun*, for example, allows shamans to choose a totem that illuminates the way they practice magic. In *Mage*, PCs perform rotes that represent the ritual acts that allow them to exert their influence over reality.

It is possible to view rituals from a strictly mechanical perspective. When PCs go about their adventuring, rituals provide them with the flexibility to solve problems, but without using precious resources needed for survival. It is unlikely that an adventuring party would need to be able to breathe water or purify tainted food every day, but rather than be completely unprepared when the need arises, rituals allow PCs to be prepared for any eventuality. Alternatively, they could be seen as acts so ingrained in the spirituality of their performer that they no longer require conscious thought.

While the mechanical aspects of rituals are important, what is even more intriguing is how they relate to the PCs' worldviews. PCs can choose to see ritual as akin to a spiritual act, such as taking communion during mass, performing a harvest rite during the autumnal equinox, fasting during Ramadan, saying the Shema upon rising or before bed, or refraining from eating a certain food other luxury during Lent. These acts have a cyclic, enduring legacy that ties those who perform them to past, present, and future participants.

Spiritual connection

Rituals can be seen as akin to mantras. The soothing, repetitive aspect of performing a certain act every year or every day; at the same time; and using the same words, gestures, tools, and offerings; allows the ritual performer to free herself of mundane concerns and focus on her spiritual connection. She no longer has to think about what she is doing,

With that in mind, PCs and game masters (GMs) can work together to tailor rituals to a PC's back-story that links to that PC's belief system. Perhaps the PC was an initiate at a temple, who learned by rote the sacred precepts of her goddess. She recites these in a litany, the act focusing her mind to produce a blessing upon her companions.

Another PC might have been trained in a druid's grove, making use of holly, mistletoe, and pine in sacred purifying ceremonies to heal the forest. Every gaming group can decide how involved they want to be in the intricacies of ritual magic. Most likely, particular PCs will work with their GM to emphasize ritual and practice to the extent that they are comfortable and that is meaningful to them.

Ritual feats

The feats below are designed to provide more options for 5th Edition *Dungeons & Dragons*. They also allow for quicker and more flexible rituals.

Ritual Master

Prerequisite: Ritual Casting as a class feature

You have delved deep into the mysteries of ritual. You gain the following benefits:

- If your ability to perform rituals comes from having levels in wizard, bard, or warlock with the book of ancient secrets invocation, you may perform a ritual from your class spell list in 1 minute, instead of 10.

- If your ability to perform rituals comes from having levels in cleric or druid, you may perform a ritual for any spell you are capable of preparing, even if you have not prepared it. You can take this feat a second time, gaining the ability to perform rituals from your class spell list in 1 minute, instead of 10.

Improved Ritual Caster

Prerequisite: Ritual Caster feat

- When performing a ritual inscribed in the ritual book you acquired when you gained the Ritual Caster feat, you may perform it in 1 minute instead of 10. You only need to take this feat once, even if you have taken Ritual Caster multiple times. When you take this feat, it applies to all instances of the Ritual Caster feat that you have taken.

Groups that choose to emphasize the spiritual nature of performing ritual magic are encouraged to choose or create a ritual paradigm. A paradigm is a vision that ties a PC or NPC's spellcasting to the tenets and beliefs of their faiths. A character can have only one paradigm, and that paradigm adds small requirements and benefits to those who follow its guidelines. Several paradigms are outlined below, with one, the Earth Spirit paradigm, being fully described.

House rule: paradigms

The paradigms below describe how practices inherent to a belief system might affect a ritual caster. The individual players and GM should work together to create a paradigm that works for their game world, religions, and play style. The paradigms described below have been left deliberately broad in their scope so as to allow for adaptation to the specifics of a game. Players and GMs are encouraged to tailor the existing paradigms to their own game or create their own. Finally, while these are written with the mechanics of the 5th edition of *D&D* in mind, they can easily be modified to fit other games as needed. In a given game, it is likely that religions may mix and match some or all of the paradigms presented below, or may have their own, wholly different ones.

Practices: Players should work with GMs to ascribe one or more of the following practices to specific rituals they know, and those should be the same each time, barring some event or change that alters the PC's belief. Performing one or more of the practices increases the caster level of the ritual by the number of acts performed. Practices can be "saved up" if appropriate, though all must be used on the next ritual casting, and no ritual practice can be performed more than once. While it is recommended that a PC still be able to perform a ritual without these extra components, GMs can choose to require that PCs perform these acts any time they do the ritual. It is also possible that the GM might impose some minor penalty if a practice is not performed.

Adaptation: With only a little work, these ideas can be adapted to other games. Instead of a bonus to caster level, these practices should give a small bonus to the mechanic used to represent magical power. In *Shadowrun*, they might provide bonus dice on rolls to cast spells. In White Wolf games, they might decrease the target number or the number of successes needed. In *Legend of the Five Rings*, they might give a small bonus to the total of the roll the shugenja makes to cast a spell. Most games do not have D&D's mechanic of allowing for longer spellcasting times to perform rituals, but there is nothing stopping GMs from incorporating specific practices in spells that already are performed out of combat.

Pagan

A pagan ritual paradigm is meant to connect ritual acts to nature and the life cycle. Rituals are often centered on natural cyclical events, such as the harvest, equinoxes and solstices, cycles of the moon, and planetary movements. The term pagan is a rather large one that can encompass many specific traditions. It is common for practitioners to use natural implements and components, such as mistletoe, pine cones, specific flowers, wreathes, and harvest fruits and vegetables. Sometimes, altars devoted to a goddess or concept are created. Holy places, often in the wild, at specific points along ley lines, in groves, or at standing stones play important roles in pagan practice. This paradigm emphasizes the constant, yet cyclic power of nature, and the spirit that runs through all beings and objects.

Historical examples

Wiccans, Celts, Arthurians, Earth Mother worshippers, druids, shamans

Associated classes

Druids and rangers are most associated with nature, making them common choices for character ascribing to a pagan paradigm, but any PC with access to rituals can tie them to a pagan paradigm.

Sample Practices

- **Sacred haven**: The ritual is performed in a sacred space, such as in a circle of standing stones, a holy grove, a blessed pool, or other natural site.

- **Offering**: The PC offers a seasonal fruit or vegetable offering of a quantity commensurate with the level of the ritual. Alternately, the PC might bring a live or hunted animal as part of the ritual, depending on the beliefs of their tradition. The hunt itself may be part of the ritual.

- **Skyclad**: The PC performs the ritual while completely nude. GMs and players are encouraged to choose this option only if other players express no discomfort at the idea.

- **Times and places of power**: The PC performs the ritual at a specific point on a ley line or during a time viewed as spiritually significant to her faith.

- **Song or dance**: The ritual involves a dance, a song, or both as part of its performance. The PC need not be the musical performer, but must in some way be involved in the performance, such as dancing or beating a drum.

Ancestor

Ancestor worship is a ritual paradigm centered on the veneration of elders, parents and grandparents, and ancestors of the honored past. In an ancestor worshipping culture, age is equated with both wisdom and power. The worship of ancestors may be the prime mode of worship or it may be only one aspect of a religious system. Common symbols, holy sites, and implements of ancestor worship include heirloom items, bones and relics, tombs and altars, ossuaries, or ancestral homesteads. The examples below are real world cultures that venerated ancestors and elders.

Historical examples

Aborigines, ancient East Asians, Egyptians, Native Americans, Norse

Associated Classes: Any ritual casting PC might invoke ancestors as a prime component in their practice. The few rituals barbarians can perform are commonly tied to ancestors, and clerics of ancestral deities (typically racial deities) might have an ancestral paradigm.

Sample Practices

- **Relics**: The PC incorporates an ancestral relic, such as the bone of an ancestor, an ancestral sword, a shroud, or ashes into the ritual.

- **Purification**: The PC purifies himself prior to or as part of the ritual. This can be achieved through fasting, sweating in a sweat tent or sauna, bathing in a sacred spring, or abstaining from intercourse and intoxicants.

- **Ancestral home**: The PC visits a space sacred to the ancestor, such as a tomb, temple, cairn, or shrine. The blessing from the space lasts for one week, or another period determined by the GM.

- **Offering**: The PC presents a sacrifice or offering to the ancestor on an altar or at a shrine. The offering should be appropriate to the ancestor and commensurate with the power being requested. The GM can determine how long the blessing from the offering lasts. Particularly impressive offerings may last a longer time.

- Elder's Blessing: The PC receives the blessing or approval of a village elder, or perhaps seeks out a sign or omen from his ancestors that a

course of action is appropriate. This is a precursor to performing the ritual, or may even be part of the ritual if it is one of divination.

Deific

Deific worship is a ritual paradigm centered on the worship of a single god or a specific pantheon of deities. The worship of a god or gods is central to most ancient cultures and may overlap with any or all of the other paradigms presented here. Common symbols, holy sites, and implements of deific worship include relics, churches, sacred weapons, holy water, phylacteries, incense, and holy vestments.

Historical examples

Christians, Jews, Muslims, ancient Greek polytheists, Zoroastrians

Associated Classes: Any ritual casting PC can choose this sort of paradigm, though it is most commonly associated with clerics and paladins.

Sample Practices

• **Relics**: The PC incorporates a relic of her god, such as the bone of a saint, a sacred weapon, a particular fruit, or a prayer book.

• **Purification**: The PC purifies himself. This can be achieved through fasting, ritual bathing, abstinence, confession, asceticism, or self-flagellation.

• **Asceticism**: The PC retreats to an isolated place, subsisting on just bread and water, and maintaining a vow of silence. Other ascetic forms appropriate to faith are equally valid.

• **Tithe**: The PC tithes some percent of wealth or livelihood to the church, temple, or other religious organization surrounding his faith. The blessing from the tithe lasts a month, or some other period determined by the GM.

• **Sacrifice**: The PC presents a sacrifice to her deity, appropriate to the faith. An animal, harvest fruits and vegetables, or wealth are common, but some faiths may even include animal sacrifice or the sacrifice of blood or body parts.

• **Readings**: In a ritual involving divination or guidance, the PC looks for patterns in entrails (extispicy), tea leaves, or flock of birds. Or it might require the reading of an omen, casting of bones, tarot, or dice. ■

Policing the stars

Interstellar patrols in superhero settings

by Steve Kenson

Space is vast and — in most superhero settings — filled with intelligent life. Where you find intelligent life, unfortunately, you also find crime and injustice. Throughout history, some have taken it upon themselves to fight crime and injustice, not just on their homeworlds, but throughout the galaxy and even the universe. It is a herculean task, but such is the stuff heroes are made of.

In this issue, we take a look at the notion of policing the stars, the kinds of organizations and individuals that do so, and how they can fit into your superhero setting. Throughout this article, "the police force," "the force" and "the patrol" are used as generic terms; substitute whatever your particular organization may be called.

Creation of an Interstellar Force

The first questions to answer are "who created the force, what resources do they have, how are they organized, and whom does the force serve?" These answers affect the tone and style of the force and of the characters serving in it.

Sources

A force typically arises from one of three sources: a powerful and influential patron or patrons, an alliance or governmental organization, or a freelance entrepreneur who offers the force's services to various clients.

A powerful patron may range from nearly omnipotent to merely wealthy and influential. The key is the patron lacks either the power or the inclination to take on the patrol's duties personally (otherwise they're not patrons, they're officers). It might be

that the patron prefers to remain aloof and uninvolved in galactic affairs, except for supporting the patrol. Powerful patrons may be carefully conserving their strength to deal with things beyond the understanding of most creatures, or they may be so powerful themselves that they have taken oaths of non-interference in order to preserve the balance of the universe. A highly evolved patron race may consider it their duty to help guide younger races toward their evolutionary destiny, while interfering in the outcome as little as possible.

In some cases, a world or alliance of worlds may take it upon themselves to create a police force to deal with crime, either on the worlds, in the space between them, or both. This kind of police force is most likely to show up in interstellar civilizations composed of many inhabited worlds. A police force created by an alliance is usually made up of members from alliance worlds and dedicated to protecting the alliance from crime and outside threats. Alliance police forces have to deal with more red tape and bureaucracy than organizations with wise, nigh-omniscient patrons, and they resemble a conventional, earthly police force more.

Finally, a person or group may take it upon themselves to create an interstellar police force for hire, providing services to "subscribing" or "member" worlds at a price, which helps support the force and perhaps generate a tidy profit (depending on how altruistic the patrol's founders are). The force's client list affects its jurisdiction and resources. Such a mercenary organization also has to deal with getting new clients, keeping current clients happy and settling disputes between clients on occasion. There's also the matter of where the patrol draws the line between "interstellar police force for hire" and "mercenary army."

Evil Patrons

It's also possible for powerful patrons to create criminal or totalitarian organizations, opposed by peaceful and law-abiding forces. Game Masters can use the existence of powerful evil patrons to create opponents for an interstellar police force. There's also the possibility of an evil patron creating a space patrol for its own nefarious purposes, with the officers unaware that their patron is actually worse than the criminals they pursue! An interesting series can be built around uncovering the corruption within the patrol, and following back to the evil patron who's pulling the strings. Can the patrol survive the discovery of the truth?

Resources

Space is vast, and any organization that intends to patrol space needs a lot of resources to get the job done.

What sort of resources does the force have at its disposal? A force with a powerful patron may have nearly unlimited resources. On the other hand, patrons may prefer to limit the patrol's resources in some way for reasons of their own. Government organizations are limited to the resources provided by the member world(s), while mercenary organizations are limited to what their clients pay them.

What are the patrol's personnel resources? Can it afford to support a huge number of personnel (enough to have a branch headquarters on every world it protects, for example, or even every city on an inhabited world)? Or is it limited to a smaller number of elite personnel who patrol large areas of space? Forces with the resources to support larger numbers of officers may choose not to do so for other reasons, of course.

Does the police force have access to any specialized equipment or similar resources? Patrons may provide officers with special equipment or the patrol may simply have top-of-the-line regular equipment like energy weapons, body armor, and starships, depending on the technology of the government or organization that sponsors it. Special equipment may be distributed based on rank, with elite forces having access to special equipment, while the grunts and "beat cops" have to make do with more standard issue.

Chain of Command

How is the patrol organized and what ranks does it have? A patrol may have a vast and complex structure, or it may be relatively simple. The larger the patrol and the more personnel it has, the more complex its structure tends to become.

- **Patron:** At the top of the chain of command is whomever the patrol ultimately answers to. This may be a patron or a governmental body. The patrol's patron may have little to do with its day-to-day operations or may take a more "hands-on" approach and oversee the organization's activities, possibly binding up officers in bureaucratic red tape.

- **Director:** Immediately below the patron, at the top of the organization's structure is its chosen leader or director. This is the individual (or possibly committee) responsible for the regular operation and administration of the patrol. Some groups may not have a leader other than their patron(s). Others do have a single director. The director may be chosen by the patrol's patron or hired in some other way.

- **Administration:** After the director comes any regional or local administrators the patrol may have. Since they cover such a large area, space patrols may need many administrators, or they may have none, giving officers greater authority and freedom to handle their affairs. Like a director, administrators may take a hand-off approach or they may micromanage officers, depending on the patrol's regulations and their personal style. An overbearing manager can certainly make life difficult for a group of patrol officers, if the Game Master is looking for a subplot.

- **Officers:** Then come the ranks of the officers themselves, the personnel who get out into the field. Officers may be divided into different ranks, with "beat cops" on routine patrols, "detectives" or "investigators" handling various sorts of crimes

over a larger area and "elite" personnel dealing with the most serious threats directly. A patrol may also be made up of "enlisted" and "elite" personnel, such as officers to handle routine operations and a cadre of elite members with various super powers who tackle the tougher jobs. Some organizations are even made up entirely of super-powered personnel.

- **Support Staff:** Don't neglect the possibility of a large "civilian" support staff to help maintain the organization. A patrol may need personnel to handle record keeping, supplies, public relations, accounting, paperwork, and similar tasks. The more powerful and capable the individual officers are, the less likely they'll need this kind of support.

Jurisdiction

Where does the force derive its authority to patrol space and what are the limits of its jurisdiction? A space patrol deals with a wide range of planetary and interstellar governments, each with their own laws (and perhaps law-enforcement organizations).

In some cases, officers of the patrol are "above" the laws of individual worlds or even interstellar civilizations. Powerful patrons can create a patrol by fiat and

enforce its jurisdiction in the same way. Alliance groups may only have jurisdiction over their member worlds, while for-hire patrols only have jurisdiction of its client worlds. If a patrol officer pursues a criminal to a planet where he's not wanted for anything, will the local authorities cooperate? What if they consider the criminal a good citizen, or even a hero, and refuse to allow the officer to arrest him?

Although the cosmos is a big place, jurisdiction can, and will, overlap from time to time. Patrol officers have to deal with local planetary governments and possibly other interstellar organizations. What happens when a patrol officer from one group shows up on a planet in the midst of negotiations with another, similar organization? What if a cartel of interstellar criminals hit upon the idea of creating their own "police force" as part of a protection racket? "Clients" pay a fee to the organization for "protection," meaning that elements of the criminal fleet won't attack their world or their ships. How do officers deal with such an obviously illegal operation if the "victims" not only won't cooperate, but actively support the scheme?

Game Masters can use issues of jurisdiction to add spice to space patrol missions, but should be careful not to bog the game down in needless legal wrangling, or else the players are likely to get bored. Encourage players to look for alternate solutions that don't violate the new rules they have to work with.

Patrol Areas

How large an area does the force patrol and how does it divide up its "beat"? A patrol may handle an area as small as a single planet or solar system, or as large as the universe itself. Divisions may be based on stellar features, such as each planet or star system constituting a "precinct" or "sector". Or the divisions may be arbitrary, based on breaking the area down into equal sectors.

In most patrol organizations, the local officer or administrator has authority in their own area. Visiting officers are expected to defer to locals of the same or higher rank and inform them of any investigation that crosses over into their territory, although this courtesy is sometimes violated by officers in a "hot pursuit" or similar situation.

Getting to the Scene

Any organization that's going to patrol space has to have access to some form of faster-than-light travel to get from one solar system to another in time to answer distress calls and the like. Either that or the patrol has to have agents everywhere, able to respond at a moment's notice. They may

have a fleet of fast starships or officers may be able to travel between the stars under their own power.

There's also the matter of how quickly the members of the police force can communicate over interstellar distances. Can officers quickly and easily contact headquarters for information and authorization or are they largely on their own once they're on the scene? Likewise, if communication is easy, does headquarters expect regular (or even constant) reports from officers, and are superiors always looking over their officers' shoulders and meddling in their activities?

Usually it's best if the officers have a fair amount of leeway in the field and only have to contact their superiors in the most serious circumstances. Of course, the Game Master can always have their superiors turn out to be unavailable, or have some sort of "spatial interference" blocking communication, if the adventure requires it (although these sorts of heavy-handed methods should be used sparingly).

Patrol Officers

At the heart of a stellar police organization are its officers, those who fight the good fight for law and order every day. Game Masters should carefully consider who makes up this corps of chosen law-enforcers, how they're trained, what abilities they possess, and what duties they carry out. There's the matter of what happens when one of these chosen guardians of civilizations happens to go bad.

Recruitment

How does the patrol choose recruits? Odds are the organization can afford to choose from among the very best, so competition (if it's allowed) is likely to be fierce, unless service with the organization is so miserable that nobody sane would sign up for it.

An organization with wise and powerful patrons may choose its own recruits, seeking out suitable individuals and offering them the opportunity to join up. Government-run organizations are more likely to recruit widely, perhaps setting up an academy or school where promising new officers can be trained. They tend to be limited to accepting recruits from among the patrol's member governments, although exceptions are made in some cases. Mercenary organizations are more likely to become home to "strays" without asking too many questions about their background, and may be open to officers from just about anywhere.

While many of the abilities necessary to become a patrol officer can be taught (see

Training), there are still going to be some minimum standards a would-be officer must meet in order to even be considered. The Game Master should decide in advance what those standards are, and what disqualifies a candidate from membership.

Training

Once a recruit is chosen, their training begins. Some services may require considerable training (at an academy or the like) before even granting a candidate a position within the organization. Other forces may favor "on the job" training. Training may be a formal course of study (like that of a college or police academy on Earth) or it may be informal and tailored to suit each individual student. Whoever is in charge of the organization can, of course, waive certain training and eligibility requirements when necessary.

The Game Master may want to create a "training package" for the patrol. These are the game traits an officer of the patrol can be expected to acquire as part of "basic training."

Uniforms and Equipment

A patrol is likely to have a standard uniform and insignia worn by its members, although individual variations may be allowed (even required in the case of non-humanoid patrol officers). The agency may also provide its people with special equipment for use in the field. In fact, special equipment is often what gives patrol officers the power necessary to carry out their duties.

Powers and Abilities

In some cases officers of an interstellar police agency may have certain powers and abilities of their own, in addition to whatever special equipment or powers they're provided. A patrol might specifically recruit such agents, perhaps as an "elite force" that can handle the most difficult assignments. Game Masters can use this approach to create a patrol that resembles a more traditional super-hero team, with each character having a unique set of powers and abilities, but unified by a common cause.

The other case of patrol officers with powers usually involves the natural abilities of certain alien races. Game Masters can encourage players of a multi-species interstellar team to give their characters some minor interesting powers to help differentiate them from the other characters in the group, rather than having everyone just play a humanoid with different-colored skin.

Duties

What do space patrol officers do? Well, most likely they'll have their hands full trying to patrol their designated sectors of space. There are many different assignments an officer may be expected to handle, depending on the jurisdiction and regulations of the patrol. Here are some of the major patrol assignments:

- **Prevent Crimes:** The officer is charged with upholding the law, which means trying to help prevent crime from happening and intervening to stop crimes in progress. In the case of some patrols, the officer may be expected to enforce the laws of individual worlds. In others, petty crimes committed on individual planets are of little concern and officers may not be expected to deal with them. Generally speaking, the larger the officer's particular "beat," the more he or she is expected to focus on the "big picture" and overlook the small stuff.

In some cases a space patrol may have no jurisdiction on individual planets at all, focusing entirely on the space between planets and stars. Their bailiwick is interplanetary and interstellar crimes like space piracy, hijacking, raids on inhabited worlds, smuggling, and similar activities: protecting worlds from outside threats, but allowing them to deal with crimes within their society as they see fit.

- **Investigate Crimes:** Officers may be called in to investigate crimes and track criminals. They may do so on their own initiative or may require the permission of the local authorities to intervene. Some local agencies may be jealous and territorial when it comes to dealing with the patrol, making the investigation more difficult, although most are grateful for the help, especially when dealing with threats they can't handle. As with preventing crimes, the "small stuff" tends to be beneath the notice of the patrol unless they have a lot of officers to handle all of the many cases vying for their attention.

- **Arrest Criminals:** Patrol officers are expected to take criminals into custody and ensure they are punished for their crimes. In some cases, the patrol relies on the individual judicial systems of various worlds to punish and imprison criminals, turning them over to the local authorities. (Note this may cause conflict if the local judicial system is particularly alien, what if they *eat* convicted criminals there?) Other agencies may have the authority to try and punish criminals on their own.

Of course, to arrest criminals, the officer must find them first, and may have to use force to get them to surrender. Tracking a criminal across the universe can lead to problems of jurisdiction if the criminal seeks shelter on a world where the patrol has little or no influence. Officers may or may not be empowered to use force (deadly or otherwise) in dealing with criminals.

- **Keep the Peace:** Officers work to maintain peaceful relations throughout their area. This usually happens on the level of relations between planets rather than handling domestic disputes. Of course, in many cases, officers are forbidden to interfere with things like wars between nations and worlds. They try to contain the fallout and prevent it from affecting other areas, and offer their services as arbitrators, but otherwise can't do much. In other cases, the patrol does take a hand in stopping wars, particularly when a stronger power preys on a weaker one, or both sides are subject to the patrol's authority.

- **Negotiation and Arbitration:** Although they might not stop wars and other conflicts by force, most interstellar law enforcement agencies are happy to help settle things peacefully through negotiation. They make excellent "third parties" to attend or host treaty negotiations or peace talks. Of course that can sometimes put them in the middle of things if hostilities erupt again, or someone attempts to disrupt those negotiations for their own gain. Game Masters can create interesting change-of-pace adventures based around characters assisting with a delicate negotiation or arbitration. In some cases, different agencies may get involved on opposite sides of the issue, further complicating matters when it all comes to the negotiating table.

- **Disaster Prevention and Relief:** Although their primary purpose is enforcing the law, most interstellar police agencies also do what they can to help prevent natural disasters and supply aid to their victims. A natural disaster can stretch even the powers of an interstellar patrol officer when it comes to diverting the course of a rogue asteroid or comet, or finding a way to evacuate a world of billions before its sun goes nova.

In situations where officers cannot prevent disaster, they can offer aid and assistance to its victims. Supplies of all sorts, particularly food, water, and medicines, are needed, along with restoring damaged infrastructure like power systems, transportation, communications, and the like. Order needs to be maintained, and there may be riots, looters, and other threats to deal with. If the patrol tried to prevent the disaster and failed, there may also be resentment among the local populace, leading to violence or attacks directed at the patrol itself.

- **Protecting Civilian Populations:** One particular type of "disaster" is attack from outside, from raiders, pirates, opportunists, and would-be conquerors. Although sometimes reluctant to interfere with internal affairs of a world, most agencies see these things as clear violations of interstellar peace and step in to prevent them when possible. This may leave a small number of officers facing an entire invasion fleet, so even the most powerful must sometimes rely on cleverness and outwit their foes.

Lockup

The Game Master should consider what the patrol does with the criminals it captures. Are they turned over to the local authorities no matter what? Are there exceptions when the patrol may imprison a criminal itself? A prison run by the patrol offers opportunities for adventures. First there can be a prison breakout, either by one or two clever prisoners or a mass breakout caused by an accident or engineered (perhaps to free a particular prisoner and provide cover for his escape in the confusion). A prison-break can be a tense scenario for a group of officers to deal with. Another possibility is for falsely accused characters to end up in the prison and have to plan an escape to prove their own innocence.

Defying Expectations

A common theme in space patrol stories is to take an otherwise ordinary or routine looking assignment and turn it on its ear by using the players' (largely Earthbound) expectations of the situation against them. Space is vast, and there's nothing to say that alien worlds and cultures are anything like what we might expect on Earth.

For example, an officer comes upon a world that's apparently torn by savage and senseless war. Only it's actually a highly ritualized institution on this world, a tradition that's been going on for so long that both sides don't even know why they're fighting, except that it's what they've always done. Does the officer intervene or leave things as they are? Likewise, a "natural disaster" threatening a planet might actually turn out to be a part of the planet's natural life cycle. The "symptoms" its inhabitants are "suffering" from turn out to be part of their evolution into a new form of life suited for the new environment. Attempts to "save" them from this process could prove disastrous.

Take the opportunity to defy the players' expectations of a given situation every

now and then, just to keep them from getting complacent and to emphasize the alien nature of many of the worlds they encounter.

Rules and Regulations

Enforcers of the law on a cosmic scale, officers of a space patrol are expected to follow the rules (even if they may bend them occasionally in order to get the job done). Give careful thought to the rules and regulations of the patrol and how they affect officers. Too many restrictions will make it difficult for players to enjoy their characters' missions while too few might lead to abuses of power. Remember that the goal of most patrol organizations is to keep the peace and disrupt other societies as little as possible.

Discipline

Not following the organization's rules results in some sort of punishment for the officer(s) involved. The exact punishment depends on the nature of the infraction and the patrol's own rules regarding discipline. Patrols with powerful patrons may have more arbitrary discipline — the patrons hand down their judgments, and there is no appealing

them. Other patrols may have court-martial hearings or similar procedures for dealing with serious disciplinary problems.

The lightest punishment is a reprimand. This is simply an official note of the infraction in the individual's personnel file or record, which may affect the chances of promotion or being assigned important duties in the future. Multiple reprimands show the individual is a problem and may lead to further disciplinary action.

After reprimands come the assignment of "scut work," tasks that are generally unpleasant and seen as punishment. They may range from doing dirty clean-up jobs to temporary reassignment to an isolated, dull, or even dangerous patrol sector.

An officer may be suspended for some infractions, particularly serious ones that require an investigation. The officer is temporarily relieved of duty and all

authority with the patrol, and is required to surrender any special equipment during the suspension, which can last days, weeks, or even longer.

Demotion usually follows as the next most serious punishment. The individual loses rank in the patrol and the benefits that come with it, being placed in a less important position and forced to work back up through the ranks and regain the organization's trust. This can range from the loss of some special privileges to being assigned a "desk job" and removed from field duty altogether.

The most serious form of "demotion" is expulsion from the patrol. This is reserved for serious offenses. The officer is stripped of all authority and rank, must surrender all patrol equipment, and is returned to the civilian world. Expulsion from the patrol may result in a serious stigma on the officer, depending on how well respected the patrol is.

Finally, a patrol may choose to imprison or even execute its own personnel for the most serious offenses, depending on the local laws and the patrol's own regulations. In many cases, criminal officers are simply discharged from the patrol and turned over to local law enforcement for punishment, but in some cases the patrol will take matters into its own hands.

The Space Patrol Series

A superhero Game Master can run an entire space patrol series, with the players taking the roles of officers with the patrol, carrying out their duties among the stars. Before the series starts, the Game Master should decide whether to use an existing patrol organization or create a new one and what the parameters of character creation are.

Types of Characters

Consider whether patrol characters derive their powers primarily from special equipment or abilities granted to them by the patrol or if they are expected to rely on their own, unique, powers and abilities. Both approaches have their advantages.

If characters are expected to get their powers from the patrol, they may seem a great deal alike. So the Game Master should encourage players to give their characters distinctive appearances, secondary abilities, and even minor powers to help make them unique. This can be an advantage, since it helps focus players on the characters' personalities and backgrounds rather than their powers. Also consider encouraging the players to specialize. One character might be an expert on engineering and technology, while another handles social situations and diplomacy better and a third is a brilliant investigator and criminologist. This gives each character the opportunity to shine.

If characters rely more on their own abilities than those granted by the patrol, then the advice for creating a regular super-team applies: try and ensure each character has a particular specialty and a role on the team. Make sure the patrol package includes a means for surviving in space and interstellar-travel for characters who don't have the necessary powers to do so. Encourage players to take the opportunity to play alien characters with unique backgrounds if the patrol allows different species to serve. ∎

FIREFLY puts you right in the middle of the action of the wildly popular television series, outrunning Alliance cruisers and trading bullets with fearsome bounty hunters, folk who want what you have or want to put out the light of hope that you represent. This game uses a freewheelin' version of the award-winning Cortex Plus System to bring the 'Verse to life at your table or online.
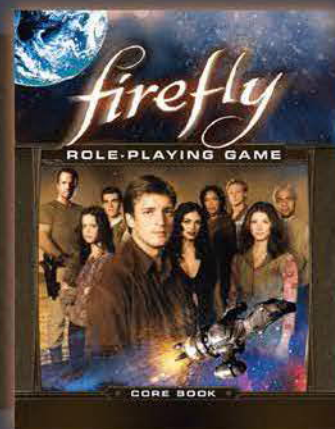
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The Cortex Plus Hacker's Guide gives you articles, essays, and three complete reference documents to bring action, drama, and heroic fantasy to your game table. From science fiction to school yards, from the end of time to the outskirts of imagination, the building blocks of your next Cortex Plus game are right here!
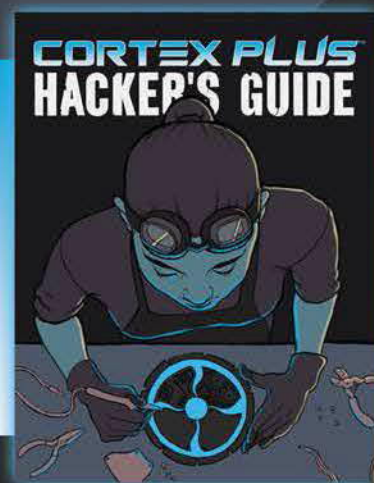
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Panel 1:

AFTER WEEKS OF QUESTING, YOU'VE FINALLY ARRIVED AT ONE OF THE *HIDDEN VAULTS OF THE ANCIENTS!* UNLIKE ALL THE OTHERS, THE SEALS ARE STILL *INTACT.*

I WONDER WHY WE DON'T ALSO FEEL THE NEED TO HIDE LOADS OF WEAPONS AND MONEY?

BECAUSE WE KNOW PEOPLE LIKE *US* WOULD JUST *STEAL* IT AGAIN.

WE BREAK THE SEALS ON THE DOOR AND PREPARE TO *EXPAND OUR INVENTORY!*

Panel 2:

YOU SEVER THE BONDS THAT HAVE HELD THE VAULT SHUT FOR OVER *TWO THOUSAND YEARS.* MIST HISSES FROM BETWEEN THE CARVED SLABS AS THEY SWING OPEN TO REVEAL...

IS THE APOCALYPSE OVER? DID THE MAGIC WARHEADS GO OFF? ARE YOU THE RESCUE TEAM?

Panel 3:

THIS IS A *TRICK*, RIGHT? HE'S A SHAPESHIFTED ELDER GOD OR SOMETHING?

IF THIS GUY IS TWO THOUSAND YEARS OLD, HOW CAN WE UNDERSTAND HIM?

I GUESS LANGUAGE DRIFT IS OVERRATED.

Panel 4:

THE MAN SHOWS YOU SEVERAL ROOMS OF PERFECTLY PRESERVED FOOD AND SUPPLIES THAT--

CAN WE BACK UP TO THAT "APOCALYPSE" THING?

IT FELT LIKE WE JUST STEPPED IN A BIG, STEAMING PILE OF *LORE.*

Panel 5:

WHAT'S WRONG WITH GIVING THE WORLD A LITTLE *BACKSTORY* THAT ISN'T JUST "THE GODS MADE EVERYTHING, WELCOME TO MEDIEVAL STASIS FOREVER?"

BACK UP *AGAIN.* DID THE GUY WE JUST MET MENTION *MAGICAL NUKES?*

HEY, THAT'S RIGHT. I WANT ONE. *TWO* IF I CAN DUAL-WIELD THEM.

I'D BETTER GET XP FOR THIS... I ASK HIM ABOUT THE VAULT...

Panel 6:

SO WHAT EXACTLY IS *IN* THIS PLACE?

IT'S MOSTLY THINGS WE NEED TO RESTORE CIVILIZATION. I'VE GOT SEEDS, TOOLS, MATERIALS, LOADS OF THINGS FROM THE IKEA GUILD...

I'VE SEEN THIS PAGE IN THE PLAYER'S HANDBOOK BEFORE.

THE STUFF WE ONLY BUY IF WE GET BLAMED FOR BREAKING IT, YEAH.

Panel 7:

AND YOUR PEOPLE WERE FOND OF BUILDING *HUGE, UNDERGROUND COMPLEXES*, RIGHT?

WE *HAD* TO, ONCE MAGICAL WARFARE STARTED RANDOMLY ENCHANTING THE LAND. IT WAS TAKE SHELTER UNDERGROUND OR DEAL WITH THE *FIRE-BREATHING LIZARDS* THAT WERE POPPING UP EVERYWHERE.

Panel 8:

THEN YOU'LL BE *THRILLED* TO HEAR THE PLANET IS WALL-TO-WALL ANCIENT RUINS WITH SO MUCH *SUBTERRANEAN SPRAWL* THAT IT CONSTITUTES ITS OWN *LAYER OF STRATA.* THERE ARE SO MANY *INHUMAN MONSTROSITIES* RUNNING AROUND THAT A FEW OF THEM HAVE BECOME PLAYABLE RACES.

PLAYABLE...?

FORGET THAT LAST PART.

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